

Creativity is an uncommon characteristic of the Kingdom of Heaven and rightly identified as one of our “Heavenly 7.” It is uncommon because you rarely hear it spoken about from a Christian or church perspective. Though uncommon, creativity is truly an awesome characteristic of not only the Kingdom of Heaven but is an intrinsic and invaluable ingredient to the church as we co-labour with Jesus in its building.

Creativity is multi dimensional in nature and hard to capture in just 30 minutes. Creativity is a spiritual, a mental and as well as a social process involving the generation of new ideas and concepts. Creativity is the ability to see new thoughts or perspectives, or new associations between existing ideas or concepts. **William Plomer** an African born English writer once said this; “Creativity is the power to connect the seemingly unconnected.”

Create interestingly enough is the first verb used in the scriptures – **Genesis 1:1** is the first recorded action of God and says, “In the beginning God created” And of course we know that it was the heavens and the earth He created. Theologians help us to understand the disposition of creativity as this act of God is referred to as creation ex-nihilo or creating something from nothing – truly a miraculous act of God.

God is a creative God, He is a creator! This is His nature – this is the essence of His being – creativity is a characteristic of His spirit, His heart and His core. We are desperate for a new picture of who God is and what God is like. Let me explain. God is not boring, tedious, dull, conventional or predictable. God at His core is remarkable, original, imaginative, inventive, artistic, and inspired. God is a lover, an artist, an architect, a poet, a sculptor and a musician! He created giraffes and hippopotamus – He created the platypus and the emu. God is fun, He possesses a sense of humour, He laughs, and He is passionate. God is an enthusiastic creator – as **Henry David Thoreau** said, “The world is but a canvas to the imagination.”

In **Romans 1:19-20**, Paul so eloquently records, “... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Isaiah records the voice of God in **Isaiah 40:26**; listen to what God says, “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

But the Genesis account of God's creativity doesn't just stop with the heavens and the earth. The scripture goes on to record in **Genesis 1:27** that “God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” I like the Message translation of that verse God spoke and said: "Let us make human beings in our image; make them reflecting our nature God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature.”

The bible says we were created in His image; created to reflect His nature. What this means is that God has given us the ability to be creative as well. We have been gifted by our Creator with a spiritual and intellectual faculty that when engaged gives us the ability to be innovative, imaginative and inventive – in short God has gifted us to create just like Him! When we create we are exercising an ability to act like God and reflect His nature. The whole concept of the church is that it is supposed to be a reflection of God on earth.

In early English writing the word creative was used to describe the actions of imagination – the Hebrew word create is often times used along side of words like “produce” or “make” – in the first instance it is God who creates but this innate ability as we have seen has been passed on to mankind as well. Just as God is a creative genius He imbues us with this same capacity of genius! We are a people called out by God to reflect His nature and creativity is a part of that nature – it is indeed an uncommon characteristic of the Kingdom of God.

Creativity though originally a reflection of the divine nature is actually neutral in value and amoral in character until it is utilised by us. Let me explain further; you can create something of value or you can create destruction. Your creation can be a blessing to others or it can be a curse to many. Your imagination and innovation can create an internet environment someone else’s imagination can use it for the wholesale proliferation of pornography. You can rightly align your life with God and His word and create an awesome environment or culture in the church where people flourish or you can out of offence or a wounded spirit create a negative atmosphere where people languish and die. But there remains no doubt, creativity is one of the most powerful, influential and impacting virtues communicated to mankind from God!

Other words that go hand in hand with creativity are words like innovation, originality, invention, imagination, inspiration, ingenuity, resourcefulness, inventiveness and vision. You can begin to see why it is a characteristic of the Kingdom of Heaven and why it is in such demand in these days for the church. **Matthew 16:18** declares “I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.”

The church of Jesus Christ was never meant to be predictable or boring! The church’s heritage, its very DNA commanded that it be a hot bed of creativity and originality – reinventing itself for every new and successive generation. Jesus designed His church to be a truly contemporary church alive at the same time as the world around it – a glorious church, a city on a hill, a church with passion, enthusiasm and the expansive energy for persistent growth!

The architect’s intent was for a fresh bold church – an outrageously innovative church – a fearless and courageous church a church willing to step out of the box placed around it by the religious and the times we live in. A glorious church with a fresh creative edge, a church inspired with blue prints for a revolution and a church with a loud and resounding voice of a generation rising! A glorious church not peripheral to the world; but a church so radiant, so dazzling, so brilliant, so original, so essential, so inventive that the world will have no other option but to take a second place and to be truly peripheral to the church in all its glory.

But there have been some churches throughout history and even today that have disengaged from the ultimate cause of Christ they have been mired in the downward spiral of irrelevance. In many parts of the world the church has become just the opposite of innovative, original and creative. **Mal Fletcher**, a social commentator and futurist, has said, “The church’s greatest sin is its own predictability!”

Throughout history England has produced heroes of faith and they have changed both home and abroad by preaching Christ to the masses and establishing strong churches. Once again in this 21st Century England and Europe stands at the crossroads. More than ever, this generation needs to hear the creative voice of the church. Our response to this urgent hour is to become a church with something to say, a church that has earned the right to speak into the situations confronting the 21st Century. To build a church that is not only a platform for today but also a legacy for tomorrow.

Mal Fletcher writes; “A new church is emerging in Europe, a church that is, Fresh and invigorated, bold and outrageously creative! Relevant and in touch with the times, a church impacting emerging generations and radical cultures and working for only one cause – the cause of Christ to seek and save that which is lost.”

If what Fletcher says is true then the greatest asset of the church is its bold and outrageous creativity and its greatest resource is those who are creative and innovative. The plus point for the church needs to be its imagination, its originality, its willingness to be different from the expected and the ordinary. If it is our predictability and staleness that dooms us to mediocrity and irrelevancy then will it be our creativity and innovation that will determine our destiny and ultimate God ordained impact on the world today? I believe it is.

Let me ask you some questions:

- If as redeemed human being we can reflect our creator’s nature and ability to also create what could happen if we were to positively align our lives with God’s purpose in Jesus Christ?
- What would happen if we accurately aligned ourselves with the power and influence of the word of God and sought to creatively communicate the timeless message of salvation in a way and fashion others of this day would find interesting and fascinating?
- What supernatural empowerment could take place if we decided to position ourselves in His church and be connected and engaged in His agenda? What change would take place in our life, thoughts, attitudes and behaviour if we were positioned with the power of a creative spirit?
- If all of our energies, divine and human, were focused upon seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness could we not then call upon His supernatural power to be the remarkable, amazing and imaginative people on the earth – are not dream and vision the language of God’s creativity in us?
- What could happen if we were truly planted in His house, not just a casual attendees but a people bent on serving with all the creative juices flowing to reach our generation – what incredible ideas could we have to be relevant, fresh, impacting and influential? What amazing strategies, structures and systems could we come up with to touch our generation?

The problem faced by many in the church is that their creativity has been blunted by cynicism. **Esa Saarinen**, who is a highly acknowledged lecturer at Helsinki University of Technology, says quite frankly, "The opposite of creativity is cynicism." He suggests that if creativity had an opposite it would be cynicism. A cynic is of course a person who through disillusionment and disappointment has a particular point of view that leads them to question the motivation of others. A cynic tends towards pessimism, distrust, suspicion and is usually critical, negative, bitter and doubtful. All of these attitudes destroy a creative spirit. A cynic though incredibly intellectual, analytical even articulate at times, often times lacks the courage of convictions and tend to hold back, to be weak in faith and adverse to risk or trying something new. They choose to view creative people as merely dreamers.

The answer to this cynicism is of course is to innovate by repositioning and realigning your thoughts and your attitudes so as to take full advantage of the empowering of the Holy Spirit and to exercise your creativity which is the reflection of God's nature.

Over 4,000 years ago King David penned these words in **Psalms 92:12-14**, "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green."

The answer to cynicism is reengagement with God the source of all creativity. The answer to cynicism is reconnection with His glorious church the platform for our service and innovation. For some it is a re-planting of themselves in the good soil of God's house. In the words of **Edward De Bono**, "Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way." For the cynic it means breaking out of old, tired and worn out modes of thinking and reacting and to embrace the truly remarkable, the genuinely inventive and the absolute genius of a creative God whose desires is to use you to build His church.

Paul puts it this way in **Romans 12:2**, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will." This scripture speaks about breaking out of ingrained patterns of thought and renewing the spirit of your mind. Paul and De Bono though separated by 2,000 years of science and thought have come to the same conclusions – we need to divorce ourselves from the base need to be negative and cynical and rise to reflect creative God's nature.

Earl Nightingale says this, "Creativity is a natural extension of our enthusiasm" Being passionate about God is a precursor to creativity. **Albert Einstein** said. "If at first, the idea is not absurd, there is no hope for it." To me this speaks of faith, risk, uncommon vision and the courage to go out and have a go. But one of my favourite quotes comes from the master of creativity and innovation – out of his life has flowed originality and the unexpected – his name is Walt Disney and he said this - "If you can dream it, you can do it."

The dream faculty in man is from God – your creativity flows out of the mind, heart and spirit of God. When we are connected with God that same spirit flows into us and God

actually encourages us to live like this. We discover that our creative God speaks to us in the language of dreams and vision – vision so large it takes the absolute commitment of God to make it happen. A dream so big that it becomes bigger than just you – a dream so large that it requires the engagement and involvement of hundreds if not thousands to make it reality!

Conclusion: Matthew 5: 48 we read the words of Jesus who said, "In a word, what I'm saying is, grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."

The most creative act of God was seen in the story of redemption – a young virgin found pregnant, Jesus born in a Middle Eastern dustbowl in a town so obscure you couldn't find it on a map. A young man who at the age of 30 commenced a ministry which only last three years but had the impact of changing the way people thought about God.

He never travel outside of a 30 mile radius, He wrote no books, was never on TV – never produced a CD box set and didn't have a website –yet Jesus has influenced the lives, the thinking of countless billions thought the last 2,000 years – a man who life split history between BC and AD – a man who words have changed and transformed millions and man whose death rescued the world – His blood was shed to purchase for us redemption and the forgiveness of our sins. He died and rose again from death to secure eternal salvation for us.

In conclusion Paul the great Apostle of the early church wrote these startling words about this Jesus we speak of: **2 Corinthians 5:17**, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

A new creation!