

PREFACE

Something kept tickling me. It landed delicately but kept hopping around. I couldn't swipe it away.

I swatted. Out came the juice of this book. It poured out like the spritz of a bee sting, burning under the skin of Biblical training, my much-appreciated training of God, The Image, The Person and Work of The Christ, and it stung in the void of training about the ongoing problem that God, in His humor, had made me *creative*. I had straddled the line - for decades, running my course in the conflict of mind and spirit, sweating and compromised. Unfortunately, compromise is not all it's cracked up to be.

There is a Jewish proverb that reads, "Before every person there marches an angel proclaiming, 'Behold, the image of God.'" And, what can we do with such poetry?

Articulating a theology can make for a ticklish situation in defining and quantifying one's own experience of being faithful and being a creative. I've decided to run this race in the light.

Why?

A Biblically minded creative desperately needs to understand a basis for why he or she exists as well as simply needing some practical guidelines for navigating this life.

If you were given a very valuable gift, completely unexpected, wouldn't you unwrap it, open it, be in

awe, look it over and inspect it, read the warranty? Wouldn't you ask why? Wouldn't you look at the kit instructions or the operating manual? Wouldn't you become a good steward of it — if it were a car, learn to drive, a vacation home, learn to care for the plumbing, insurance, and gardening?

As I was preparing a publisher's presentation for a homeschool conference related to our first two years in operation at Capture Books, my notes grew exponentially. Letters swept into the cloud and did not flutter down into place until after the event was over. Tragically confused, I tried to wing it.

Afterwards, I understood from the variety of encounters at that convention, that this book was sorely needed. As a publisher, I offer it to inform others about my literary concerns and what is important for authors publishing with *Capture Books*. As a Christian creative, I offer it for the long overdue discussion and debate about Biblical wisdom and ingenuity.

BEING CREATIVE offers to highlight the fact that CREATIVITY is a gift of divine proportions from the Creator, Himself.

For anyone reading this who does not understand the term, "creative", read on prayerfully and more will be revealed. One may drop into your mind or onto your doorstep providentially as you experience these chapters. Maybe you will discover a label for which you have been searching a long while.

Think of these rules as an invitation to succeed.

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WELCOME TO BEING CREATIVE!

WHY DOES ANYONE STRUGGLE FOR BELONGING? If the human impulse to create is a reflection of the Creator's image shaped inside of us, then why does a sense of value and purpose seem so elusive? *Maybe it's because we creatives don't quite understand our origin.*

Does a hub for creativity even exist? Isn't it up for grabs, just anyone's best guess?

The purpose of this book is to help us integrate the revelations of the triune God with our finite creativity. It is not so much a "how to write, draw, sculpt, or make films" sort of book; it is a means to think about artistry in a tradition of faithful revelation. I hope to not only articulate a sacred basis for art, but also to inspire creatives to propel themselves into their own purpose for existing. Perhaps some ideas contained in these pages will encourage the more utilitarian individual to make a proper setting—or be creative with more settings—in which to launch the excellent work of creatives and also as a means to bring them the proper honor for what is learned from their expressions.

The Creator's ingenuity is expressed in the ever-living Logos. God's speech did not flow out in a single human language because His expressions are beyond the ability of any single human tongue. He breathed anyway, and expounded His image into stories that were written in tribal languages, king's languages, and then human flesh, with expressive lips and eyes, and with abilities to interpret and understand, with dexterity of digits to articulate through touch and handling. He breathed many gifts into human blood and genes. His most clearly executed point was made in the personification of Himself, the person of Jesus, the Word in 3-D.

He continues to execute His argument for Himself in you. Yes, He breathes through YOU.

He breathed into the world a variety of organizational systems, a hierarchy of many offices of responsibility, and a purpose of bearing a bounty of spiritual fruits throughout the world. Radiant in nature, this same Ingenious Revelation also expressed His love for society through giving His laws comprised of justice and mercy.

If all of that weren't enough, when mortals damaged His Image of Earth and His Word to all on it, the expression of God personified Himself in the flesh of the Savior. As the Savior's departing gift, the Spirit of the Godhead "went live" on Earth, making all the spoken and written Word, all bodily communication that is of Him, all energy, all light and flesh to "go live" too.

Whether you consider yourself a creative, or whether you are attached to one through bloodline or through

other ties or links, these ten game rules will inspire good will and good work.

The term *shivoo* is Australian lingo meaning a boisterous party. It depicts not only the sounds and tastes of imaginative processes, but it also depicts the finale of a creative celebration. A *Shivoo!*—from beginning to end—is a delectable onomatopoeia for the truest celebration. I intend for this book to be one.

The best parties and mind-bending games don't just happen. Our lives are not accidents. But, a successful celebration takes a lot of strategy, some heart, a list of resources, and a guest list. If you are interested in becoming an event organizer, you probably need someone to mimic. When you go through the event process countless times, you eventually become an expert party planner yourself. Living your best life takes some direction, nurture and practice.

Nursing a child is the most vivid image of nurturing. Yet, there are those who nurture through a variety of life's passages. Showing how to do homework, to negotiate food choices, to find better ways to socialize: all of these areas of life are nurtured by someone who knows. There are Bible colleges and seminaries for those who want to make a career of ministry, but what if scripture applies equally to nurturing musicians, artists, film-makers, crafters, and writers?

It is easy for anyone to lose their way on the winding, bumpy, intersecting paths of life without having the benefit of a central axis, so giving an axis to a creative entrepreneur is particularly important.

Creative individuals need that hub on which to spin their wheels because they have voices and images that are apt to be used, LORD willing, in public. Who do they mimic, then? Who are their mentors?

When a creative understands the rules to a game set placed on a table, he or she will begin to set up winning strategies and choose the right playing pieces.

In this game, note that there can be many varying degrees of winners because each person is being summoned to an individual path toward a unique land of stewardship. *Nevertheless, the stakes are high.*

Those who balk at the Creator's game rules may damage the gameboard and may be swept away by their errors. Those who follow them are promised rewards and blessings on earth (See, Psalm 37, and otherwise enumerated in this book, find God's appointment of skillful artisans to perform oversight of creating holy decor of the tabernacle. Also, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 30:15–20, Jeremiah 18:7–10, Proverbs 10:22, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Corinthians 4:7–18, 1 Peter 3:8–9) and eventually glory (See Daniel 12:2–3, Matthew 25:12, 21 and 23, Luke 16:10–12; and 19:17–19, Romans 8:18–25, Romans 8, specifically 18–25; Ephesians 1:3–14, 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20, 1 Corinthians 9:25, Hebrews 11:6 and 13, 1 Peter 1:4–7, and 5:4, and also 2 John 1:7–8).

Enjoy the points of discussion, and make the most of your sacred and creative game.

CAPTURE BOOKS

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6 FIRST *9

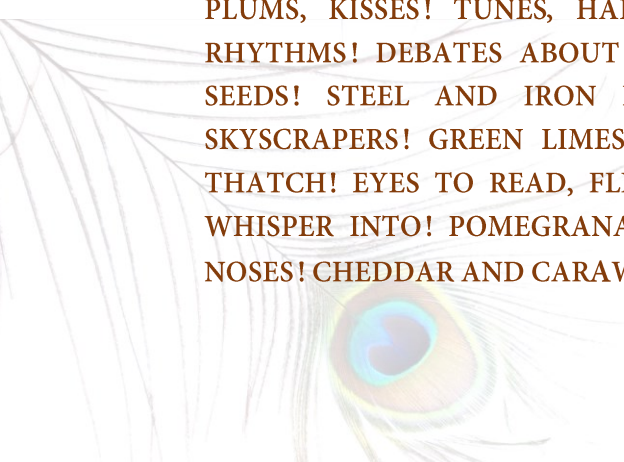
MEANS

PRIORITY

What does John 1:1 mean? “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. *Nothing* exists without this Word.”

Just imagine, in the beginning, God announced the news, “Hey, watch the beginning of EVERYTHING!”

“SUNRISES! SUNRISES AND SUNSETS
COMING! SUMMERTIME SWIMMING IS JUST
AROUND THE CORNER! WHEELS ON THE
DUSTY ROAD AHEAD! FRESH PEACHES IN
THE NEWS TODAY! CHERRIES, LAUGHTER!
PLUMS, KISSES! TUNES, HARMONY, AND
RHYTHMS! DEBATES ABOUT ENGINEERED
SEEDS! STEEL AND IRON HIDDEN FOR
SKYSCRAPERS! GREEN LIMES! GRASS FOR
THATCH! EYES TO READ, FLIRT! EARS TO
WHISPER INTO! POMEGRANATES! ROMAN
NOSES! CHEDDAR AND CARAWAY!”



God announced everything with the Word of Life. Did you know that Christ was already in the beginning, *not created* by God, but being fully God, this God? Jesus, the Christ, is not only the Savior, but was this Logos Who summoned it all into existence. Colossians 1:16–18 explains that in *Christ* all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. Christ is before all things, and in Christ, all things hold together. He is also the Head of the Church, the first to rise from the dead so that in everything, He has the preeminence in and for Life!

His most clearly executed point of argument for Himself and His message to Earth was made in the flesh, the personification of Himself, the person of—

JESUS—WHO WAS, AND IS THE LOGOS!
WATCH FOR HIM.

I can see it now: God the Father and God the Word breathed, in the beginning, which light appeared on the waft of the Holy Spirit. Three Persons, One Front, so unified that They could only be separated for one sacred purpose. And, even on that painful separation, They were agreed.

His Word didn't fall with gravity from lips as we understand lips. But lifted by the experience of creating our planetary spheres including Earth's own boundaries, He planted objects. The Word began to fill up the void with the sound and the activity of an announcement

breeding results. God's own language began to shine. To find life, *ongoing life in a myriad of defining ways*.

Notes on the page began to sing their tones, their lengths, their harmonies, and together they scattered upward into the heavens, a choir.

With another word, the waters of the heavens were layered for God's purposes and they began to flow. The sea was then separated from the dry land. Animals were created—each after their kind—on another breath, another heavenly word. The seeds and leafy vegetation began to spring from the earth and curl into patterned whorls on another spiritual exhale, another word of inspiration. Then, God formed flesh. In God's image, both male and female.

I'm curious, though. How did God breathe His full expressive Self into the flesh of Christ thousands of years later? And, how did God insert the Logos into a living, written Word that lies published on a coffee table, bookshelf or on a desk seemingly inert, or in the pockets of so many? Was God's language only a verbal expression, "The Word?" Or, did it include physical energy flung like stones into a pool, some physiological forms of communication as well?

Referring to "The Word" in a Biblical sense is a mystery to Earthlings. We search our alphabet for symbols and references of connotations to the "Logos" because it is so difficult to understand the term, the God-breathed WORD.

I just love word definitions and following their connotations through. So, when I looked up the term,

“word,” the meaning of this verse invited me in for a deeper look.

The Word, translated, does not mean an English language noun. It does not mean the Word existed only after Gutenberg’s first publishing of the Bible. It does not mean that God generated His impressions only to the left side of the human brain, which tends to control aspects of language and logic, or to the right side of the brain, which tends to handle spatial and visual comprehension.

The LOGOS, in its essential definition, means the Essential Point of Expression or Argument.¹ In this case, the Biblical author, John, uses the Logos creatively by applying it to the greatest argument for the living God, as the incarnation of God, begotten Son, superlative human, fully lit up for all to see.

“Word” is actually an incredibly cryptic translation of logos. The specific term, logos, in Greek philosophy, means “the central, defining principle or idea of an argument or philosophy.” In fact, it is the hub upon which all else within the system turns!²

So, “in the beginning,” as the beginning relates to Earth, our Father God and God the Son expressed what the Godhead wanted the world to know by:

- 1) personally mingling, walking, and talking with those created in His image,
- 2) lavishing on them a perfectly-created universe and the human form with perfectly working systems, expressions, and a will to act bodily, and
- 3) offering a unified form of necessary imagination and communication to people: the elegant and sword-

like word of God full of history, math, law, natural science, prophecy, injunction, psychology, mercy, testimony, and justice. “Word” was the argument passed from generation to generation tucked inside image, song, drawing, story, human example, nature, and writings.

The Word then, in every other sense of creative expression, is everything else—all the bits and pieces—that God wants us to know about Himself. From the gifts of music which evoke rooted emotions without lyrics, to ever-changing projections of His hand-eye coordination in nature. From the heavens and the earth, to the comical animals and the fierce, to the fragrant and shady foliage, in diverse human abilities made in His image and imagination, and in the continuing recreation of this world’s cycle of each day and night. The heavens declare the glory of God. His harvests provide food for hungry mouths, showing the Father’s care. It is in the expression of God’s law, ordinances, statues, poetry, drama and peace in the testimonies, stories and letters of love in the Bible, that the oil flows. All of this is God’s intentional Word to us.

How safe are we as co-creators, as copycats of Christ, since He is the Head of the Church³, since He goes before us in every creative aspect and since He also sits as the Preeminent Judge of all?⁴ When I discovered this truth, my insecurities about my desires to create, the process of creating and researching whatever I was creating, the editing of what I’d created and the length of time it took to express myself properly, the space taken up in my room, the messes—I stopped apologizing. Instead, I

focused on how to make everything I do, write, eat, drink, sing, love or serve, an expression of worship.⁵ Artists are not necessarily lazy. We live midst the tensions of the unknown, distractions of creating, sin, and glory.

I often interrupt a creative process to answer the phone or doorbell, to do something more pragmatic, more pressing, more fun, or more financially necessary. I am a conflicted soul. Are most maker types this way? Some are more defiant in protecting their creative interests. But if someone asks me, “Whatcha doin’?” I’ve been known to say, “Oh, nothing. What are *you* doing?” as a means of deflecting attention away from having to explain my art, my source of reflection, my songwriting, or my poetic process.

What a weird person a creative can be!

For years, I secretly recorded music I’d written by squirreling away money and scheduling studio time when my husband wouldn’t notice. He was a rocker. I was folk singer experimenting with improvisational jazz. He ducked my hints of going to concerts and festivals for dates. He desperately hoped I would not start hauling him off to bars to listen to music every weekend. I hoped to have a career somehow, someway, in some form of music making.

Of course, CDs appeared out of nowhere. After the second one, I assessed my gut instinct. Could I really see myself singing in bars or churches or maybe coffee shops? It didn’t seem likely. I had become too much of a homebody. At the end of seven years and two “almost-

had-a-moment” CDs, I realized the headaches in the studio were due to a variety of limitations. I also realized my duplicity.

My husband and I had an all-out battle and then a cold war about the holes in our budget and our mutual feelings of betrayal.

What I couldn't wrap my mind around at the time, was the purpose of my being created creative.

I couldn't decide what was paramount. I was all over the place.

Things are quite different now, he brags on me—to my chagrin—because he's amazed at my ongoing creativity in every phase of life; to my chagrin because, I never did anything more to develop the potential of my songs. Recording turned out to be an important means of escapism, and also therapy, to bring me through some difficult years.

I learned to be generous to others who don't share my vision. I learned to live life on life's terms between the partly swept clouds and the dust. I learned to be busy and content in the same space. I learned what a great fortune it is to be married to my adventurous and kind husband in poverty or in wealth. I learned to turn my awe of other's accomplishments into happiness for their creative paths and gifts. I learned there is a time to latch on like a catfish, and another time to let go of the ropes. I absorbed God's goodness and faithfulness like the oil of Vitamin E on a scar. I learned that the law was a world of rules and creativity unto its own – more about that later. All these things and many more were inherited

from my years of musical experimentation and building houses. Sometimes a creative's road to hope and self-discovery are as important as influence and success.

What priority has God Himself put on making things?

FIRST ISN'T EVERYTHING, BUT FIRST IS PARAMOUNT.

In the beginning, God revealed Himself by creating. Apparently, this was His heart's desire. To create things, to be creative.

I see a pattern of firsts because the phrase, "In the beginning"⁶ is combined with, "God created" meaning His first entrepreneurial acts.⁷ These phrases are found in the first book of the Bible. *First, first, first.* The first book of the Holy Bible. First in our time (beginning), and first in God's activity on our behalf (He is First). God's Word was effectively creating (wording, speaking, breathing, expressing) light into the cosmos. And He keeps spreading understanding from the corporate office of the Godhead. God's creativity skillfully set the stage for your personal salvation.

You could argue that creating was more of necessity than priority. But an author sets the rules of His created world, and in the case of Earth, God's rationale was to create first, and the finest creativity was set into a pocket of belonging to Him. He is our Creative Hub. Knowing Him is the beginning of learning His secrets.

The Father and Holy Spirit did this with the best form of persuasion. By offering His creative subjects a place and a time, growth and purpose, with also a genetic

footprint and bloodline, God gave every living thing a place to belong. God's creative joy mingled with the first humans, almost as though a writer had entered into his own plot—becoming a character in his story.

In the beginning, there was, and is, *The Being*. There was, and still is, *The Being's energetic self-expression. Creating. Persuading.* Through His artistic activity in nature, through many varied forms of communication, the revealed Logos set about welcoming human beings. He expressed *Himself* as their place of belonging. He offered this belonging to anyone in the world, for God so loved the world.⁸

WHY ARE WE IMPORTANT?

In one extraordinary move, God said, "Let's make someone like us."⁹ He differentiated this living human being from His high ministering angels, from the low minerals of Earth, from all the flora and fauna, from breathing-yapping emotional animals procreating after their own kind, and from the asexual sun, moon, singing stars, and orbiting planets, by anointing the first man and woman with a measure of His own creativity. "I want family!" God declared. Hebrews 2 tells us that Jesus calls us brothers and children. He is the One Who set us apart, and the ones set apart are of the same family.

With a breath of His inspiration, humanity received layers of First Adam gifts: inspiration, imagination, the ability to love, and to learn in complexity. "Belonging" was defined as an ability to know Him personally, to be

with the One who knows all things, to walk, work, and play in His gifts. Then, Christ died to redeem us from sin's domain. Creativity came prior to salvation, to evangelism, to preaching, and teaching.

The Son, Jesus, was God's creative power expressing His heart for a story and a place of belonging for all life. If you study it, the gift of creation, sin, and plan of salvation makes little sense to us. When this plan is fulfilled, it proves God's creative excellence.

In the beginning, the incomprehensible Being expressed His attributes and benefits to us via the incredible architecture of His ongoing universe. With particularity, He measured and engineered systems so that the world became a place of belonging for us.

Without God's wisdom in creation, nothing exists. Yet, this creativity is ongoing. When we work along with God's inspiration, He offers us authority for this world and into the next. We've inherited enough of His legacy, enough purposeful cunning, and His Holy Spirit to help us understand and implement the Logos together.

Understand, the Godhead always creates first in the Spirit with His Word. He creates for His own circle of joy! His creation formed and decorated a setting for us to *experience* belonging. And, a continuum.

When we express our own innovation with God's blessing, we can differentiate a new species, discover a new form of things. New combinations of ideas and skills rise to divine innuendoes under His guidance. We join with Him for contemporary or future purposes.

Focused, thinking analytically, we can understand

and implement science and physics well, write new books, design new designs, find new markets. We express more joy, broader peace, deeper concern, a purity, a true meekness, and wondrous self-confidence by accepting God's mysteries. Let's look for His ironical purposes, shall we?

- **Here's one.** Seek to become a more righteous character from day-to-day.
- **Here's another.** Exemplify sheer delight by writing around the secrets as you explore them yourself.
- **Here's yet another!** Write until intrigue infuses itself, beckoning you to spin off from the worn path, exploring the mysteries.

The Logos created the human mind to capture and direct paths of electricity, velocity, biological genes and viruses; to make engines, imagine wheels, design homes, plumbing, space shuttles. In other words, God gave us each a measure of His own creative intelligence.

Throughout the day, can you imagine bits of the Creator's glory breaking off like breadcrumbs, dropping a trail of joy in our processes, leading us on to the big Shivoo? Joy is the present assurance of the glory to come. We can sense hints of this glory in God's own feats.

The Creator often communicates through natural wonders to which adults become accustomed. It is the child who asks, "*Why, how, who, what and where?*" Adults mostly try to analyze wonders away scientifically, as if these explanations substitute for the deeper truth that God designed physics for His creative purposes.

Just listen.

When you stop using your eyes you are engaging a different part of your functioning brain, which God created for other unique purposes.

Close your eyes and consider this verse from Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning

God *created*.

Here, we have enough to contemplate a coupling.

“In the *beginning*”

and, “God created.”

Two things combined to form a priority in time and in doing.

The rule of firsts is the rule of priority.

When we mimic God’s creativity, we

mimic His **priority**.

SPIRITUAL THEATER VERSUS MAGIC

Magic and alchemy are both popular descriptors. Even Christians use them. Creatives can try to employ magic in a spiritual, holistic sense as though they were only metaphors or an allegory, but the practice of magic is not even close to the Biblical ideas of imagination, wonder, miracles, transformation, and illumination. Magic removes the Wonderful One from the equation of creation by mimicking true wonder with a sleight of hand.

Cutting these cords between the wonder and the Giver may feel fanciful, however, the end of this story is separation from God. An illusion can be a purposeful sleight of hand, but magic is using deception to transform, confuse, snare, and kill. Alchemy removes God's essential design.

It was only when Adam and Eve broke confidence with their Creator¹⁰ that the wonder of God's Spirit separated from them because God is Holy and cannot mingle with sin.¹¹ The result was dying and death.

In love and goodness, the Lord devised another means of expression through connective blood and tissue in His covenant with us.

Imagine that God's covenant was depicted in the performance of theatrical rituals and sacrifices. Did God mean to command that His people were to engage in the theater for purposes of illumination?

Imagine, also, that community laws and festivals were meant to help those practicing gain a better

understanding of His goodness and love. Imagine that they *did not* believe these edicts to be legalistic.

How did it work?

Reenacting the Lord's dramatic events kept His purposes in mind. They helped people look honestly at processing life His way. The codes and laws provided a means to treat others respectfully and compassionately.¹²

And, many of these feasts and played-out dramas were great experiences for the communities of the twelve tribes. For individuals, they gave pause for reflection. Because sin had begun to mar God's creation. But, God would implement new theatrics, special works and mighty wonders, to rescue people as He'd promised them time, and time again. Theatrics, like Moses and Aaron's feats before Pharaoh's court, were *theatrics of grace*.

In the escape from Egypt, lifting up the walls of the Red Sea, God separated all Israel from their captors forever. Providing enough oil to get His people through an assault was a miracle during God's great silence. Bringing birds and manna to eat; later, feeding the thousands with a loaf of bread and a few fish, were all images of God's grace and lovingkindness. Preserving His own. Time and time again. The drama of Queen Esther and Mordecai saving the Jews, Daniel in the lion's den, Joseph's technicolor coat, and the dramas of David and Goliath are still favorites in the theaters of the faithful.

Christ, in the matter of creation, showed that being creative as a lifestyle is His priority. Then, He showed off His mastery of creativity by rising from the dead! Every

day, He is creative. When you rise to see the colors of dawn every morning, you know this. At some point, many a child will cease to wonder and accept others' limited explanations about nature's wonders. Yet some adults continue to experience awe of nature's wonders.

In God's ongoing creativity, He contemplated rescue for any who were deaf, blind, lost, or paralyzed. He even contemplated resuscitating all those who die in Christ.¹³

Passover and Resurrection are the primary and unique colors of God's creativity. He saves souls who claim His mark, the smear of lamb's blood. The substitution of the innocent lamb's death for the penalty of our sin allows the angel of death to see our shield of protection and forces him to move along. The creative and very real story of Jesus' death and resurrection has the power to transform destruction into everlasting life.

So while God is primarily creating, rescuing, resuscitating the dead, we are co-creating, co-rescuing, co-resuscitating the dead. How is this so?

If you have been taught that winning souls is a fruit of the Spirit, check again. Winning souls is the duty of the Lord. But, we can help hand surgical tools to the Surgeon, can't we, and fertilizer to the Gardener? Let's say these represent the nine fruits of the spirit as they are listed in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Benedictine monks would call these spiritual practices "the conversation of life."¹⁴

When the father of the prophet, Sampson, was first visited by the Angel of the Lord, the father asked, "What

is your name?” The angel said His name was beyond understanding, secret and wonderful. Then, while the parents were offering a sacrifice, the angel ascended in the smoke of the fire (Judges 13:17–20). Recognizing that only the Angel of the Lord could rise into the air with the smoke and disappear, the parents fell on their faces, freaked out. Wouldn’t you be? The Lord’s mysterious events on Earth are wonders to us because they come from the Wonderful One and from a different heaven, say, a different dimension.

It wouldn’t surprise me to discover that as we are working out our own salvation in our creative and everyday lives, spiritual fruits will appear as choices. Yes, tools for God’s work will appear as choices in writing themes, and in the stressors of life’s interactions with others. These fruits will also aid in winning souls. So, practice drawing from the tree of life in your artistic depictions of life and in your theatrics of human relationships. Work counter-intuitively.

Theatrically, Yahweh commanded his prophet, Hosea, to marry a “wife of whoredom”.¹⁵ This Hebrew term indicates illicit sexual behavior. Moses also used the word in Genesis 38:24 to refer to Tamar’s posing as a shrine prostitute in order to entice Judah to do his duty under the law by her since he had refused to give her his son in marriage, as was her God-ordained right of survival. In both cases, these theatrical acts were ordained by God for purposes that took time to unfold and to be understood. Sometimes, images are offered to creatives to use in our work. These images and tools are

gifts entrusted to and for us for our good, and then as we hone and share them, they become gifts to others.

Art indeed mimics life, but art and theater can also mimic God's grace in a deep, resonating way. Hand over the good fruit to your audience, dramatic fruit connected to the Giver, the Source. Do not hand them the poison apple, the disconnected magical fruit.

EXAMPLES OF GOD'S THEATRICAL FIRSTS

1. **God *must* create before any of His other plans** take hold, according to His own ordinances. As a plan, salvation was, and is, the evidence of God's creativity. We have to assume that the Lord enjoys being creative just because it is His nature. The details of God's law, the written word, and fleshing out the Christ, came much later in human history and in God's revelation, after "in the beginning God created."

2. **Giving back the first crop.** There is another treasure hidden in the theme of the first fruits. It is the story of honor and dependance.

What does it mean to have the first fruit crop and to actually give it back to God, the first fruits of your labor? Imagine a seed germinating underground in the winter and then springing to life with the first buds of summer, becoming fruit. Is this some kind of cruel joke? Are we the peasants and Christ, a medieval lord of the manor?

Giving our first fruits creates an image of personal absolute reliance in the goodness of the Creator, that He will supply all you need.

Additionally, this reliance is a form of giving deference and honor. It is a model of how to weave life together within His community of faith. He indicates this tithing is for sharing with the community depending upon His care, and for charity.

3. **The significance of the first child.** What does it mean in priority, to have a first child? We know that in Biblical history the first child obtained the first and best, most complete blessing. The first male was dedicated to God because God claimed him.¹⁶ He was destined to assume the role of family leader, given authority, double inheritance, and special rights. The Law forbade the disinheriting of the firstborn.¹⁷ The first animal to breach the womb was to be sacrificed to God or redeemed by an offering.¹⁸

When God reached over the first to bless the second child, He was making quite a scene. Putting the second first, made news several times over in scripture. Jacob and Esau experienced it.¹⁹ Jacob later reenacted the experience with Ephraim and Manasseh.²⁰ Reuben's right as the firstborn of Jacob was taken away because of sin.²¹ When God made the earth, giving creative-mimicking powers to the first man and woman, He signified a right, rule, and inheritance over the animals and plants and other created things. Yet, in Colossians 1, Paul uses the word, "preeminent" to express the position of Christ in relationship to all things in heaven and on Earth. Christ was the second Adam.

Jesus, the Second Adam, displaced our assumption of ourselves being front and center. He has all rights to

everything. These instances are recorded because of the theatrical anomaly: the rule of firsts was broken.

“The Word,” *personally* refers to the Son of God come as the incarnation of the Father, taking on baby flesh comprised of honor and glory as humanity beheld Him full of grace and truth. Our most specific right, rule, and inheritance is found in Emmanuel. Not only is He LORD, but He is also our dramatic well to drink from, and our dramatic pattern. Believers are foreordained to be conformed to His image as we draw close to Him and allow His Spirit to infuse our spirits with His life, His ideas, and His authority.²²

This Word of flesh creatively clothed Himself in humility, even washing the dirty feet of His followers. Do you see the theatrical character arc? Now the first becomes last. The Prince becomes the menial servant.

Christ obeyed His unique purpose to redeem us not by trading places to become our servant, but by lowering Himself more, to accept the place of a murderous, thieving criminal. Taking the punishment of a criminal, dying a torturous death, He bought us back. He paid every debt we owed to God. His change of places reconciled us with our Maker.

He imagined, ordained, and accepted His own drama on the cross for the joy that was set before Him. Separated from God the Father in death, He was raised again in triumph. Jesus is the *dramatic* first fruit of the resurrection from the dead in this drama of blood and life,²³ and many will follow Him in the twinkling of an eye.²⁴ Why should we not allow our own personal dramas

to play out? Why not stage dramas for viewers? How many more stories can be gleaned from the stories of preeminence and patterns of firsts?

4. **Primarily, Gifts are for the Community of Believers.** God's gifts are more than benefits. Both spiritual and physical giftedness from God are reflections of the Giver's heart for you and me. If you take note of the treasures you find walking with Him, you see these to be God's personal embraces of you. And, through you, His gifts may offer some primary nutrition for the community of faith. Maybe also your gifts and talents will become opportunities for strangers and foreigners outside the family of faith. The Father does treat His family specially well. We can trust Him to protect and provide for us. Isn't this provision in itself a witness and testimony to others and a means of wooing them to the kingdom? Our cups should spill over.

Is being creative our sole aim?
If not, what is the aim of being creative?

UTTER DEPENDENCE

The first thing we understand as creatives and makers is that we are utterly dependent on something or Someone higher in power and creativity than ourselves. If we breathe in and breathe out with intention and cognizance, we can suddenly experience this human dependence on a Giver of Life and breath and health.

Consider expression as an abundance of physical acts of the will and of our unconscious behaviors e.g., facial expressions that escape the body with or without words. Adam received the first body with fingers to wield tools to put inspiration into existence, to create things. Without a physical body, how would all this godlike inspiration find a use, an expression, or an outlet?

There are a myriad of expressions in the Logos to draw from. Wine makers understand they are completely interactive and dependent upon the weather and soil.

Much of your own creative success lies beneath the surface until it begins to resonate with what others are thinking and feeling. Comedians find their talent because they discover that others find them funny. It is a gift. So, in the beginning, God's gift is your raw material. What you pull together and release into the world will make for a fine tribute to God as it helps others.

Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright offers the idea that if a set of actors faithfully followed a director, a script, and the stage direction to act out four scenes of a written play, they could also be trusted to faithfully improvise a fifth act.²⁵ *Memorizing the details, understanding the writer's theme, and embodying the director's flow of this story would be critical to pulling off an improvised fifth act, wouldn't it? What fifth act is God calling you to improvise in your life today? Can you safely move onto the stage, face the other actors, and fill the theater with a visual and verbal embodiment of grace or mercy?*

Your creativity, at first, is not often the finest expression. It shows spirit, but may lack gloss, detail,

proofreading or testing. The hook, the skill, the expert choice of the right material may be missing. The performance style may need direction, and sometimes your work even lacks the proper context. Some things are invented before their time, and because they are out of pocket, people don't recognize the significance of what has been created. This, too, is a gift.

Leonardo da Vinci created many mechanical tools and systems because people needed them. On the sly, Leonardo's God-given creativity caused him to experiment with medicine and cadavers. He was looking into things banned as unorthodox at the time, but which later were proven to be medical breakthroughs.²⁶

As a creative, do you ever find yourself confused about how to prioritize your interests and activities? Do you feel like a jar of river water all shaken up, unable to determine what's most important? Sometimes, just processing through the things that interest us begins to help us understand what is important. Learning the nature of things takes time as water separates from silt.

In her book, *Plain and Simple: A Woman's Journey to the Amish*, Sue Bender wrote, "I never thought to stop and ask myself, 'What really matters?' Instead, I gave everything equal weight. I had no way to select what was important and what was not. Things that were important didn't get done, and others, quite unimportant, were completed and crossed off the list."²⁷

Sue was referring to her habits of keeping her house clean, grading papers, and visiting friends, and to her desire to produce art that was special so that she would

be thought of as special. “Accumulating choices was a way of not having to make a choice, but I didn’t know it at the time. To eliminate anything was a foreign concept. I felt deprived if I let go of any choices.”²⁸

As we consider the meaning and value of things, the King of Creation orchestrates the events of life. Occasionally, He lets us in on His secrets. As we write or produce art, He’ll help us process it for His purposes.

BEING CUNNING WITH RAW MATERIALS

We don’t really create in a void, but sometimes it feels like we’re tasked with creating something from nothing.

Creating in a personal void is really creating with the raw materials given by the Heavenly Father, both the acid and the sweetness in a life, and the opportunities given by the Great Designer. As a child is utterly dependent upon his or her parent for the raw materials of life, and for some directives and guidance, so a Creative is dependent on the Creator’s supply and purposes. If He stops everything, that’s it. If He opens an avenue, a journey, and favor in a direction, that is the direction we will most assuredly take and find purpose.

Jesus went to the desert to be alone with His Father God for 40 days.²⁹ Moses ran from Pharaoh into the desert where he stayed for the rest of his life as a nomad.³⁰ Not all who wander are lost. Jesus became so full of His experience with His Father that when Satan came to tempt Him, Jesus’ retorted, “I have food you know nothing of.”³¹ When Moses left all of the riches,

authority, and the attachments of his stepmother and her royal household behind, he found his exquisite wife and became the leader whom God intended for him to become.³² All this came to being through communion with God. To find meekness through self-examination as Moses did, or strength to face all the temptations of life as Jesus did, consider the solace of the Father's company alone when you need direction.

Creativity is, *in essence*, being “cunning.” This word has taken on a sour connotation, as has the word “creative,” but Biblically, cunning is only defined in the positive sense. It means being ingenious, gifted with finesse, wise.³³ Yet, if you set something newly created before an audience, it might not appear *all that* cunning. You might get a stunned look, a jail sentence, or nervous laughter for reward. Being a creative person requires that you continue to focus on the standards of the craft to improve.

Standards belong to the Lord. Ideas, lyrics, melodies, and fairy tales improve their purpose and communication with honing, with accountability and with renewed teamwork. New renderings and settings often improve upon the original. But, we have to accept the gift in its original form first.

People try to quantify what Christian books or Christian art is. Some people require the name of Jesus to be announced like a seal of “Christian” work. Some require a clear narrative of the cross and resurrection of Christ in every story. But, if this were the only aspect to a godly life, only the book of John would exist in

scripture. Do you know, all good ideas, all good results from hard research, all good inspiration, are by the Creator's hand. He often gives His inspiration and anointing to those who do not even recognize Him at work? In fact, there is so much more to absorb through nature, through what the various books of the Bible teach us, and through what the Holy Spirit invites us to.

Our creative expressions should aim to be true to nature as God designed it. Labels are judgments that only God can determine.

Everybody serves God's purposes. God uses whom He uses for different purposes. His purposes are above ours. Still, I would rather be a friend of God, a beloved of the Creator, than a mere servant. Wouldn't you?

I hope you understand that you, personally, are of high priority. "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."³⁴

Rule 1: ACCEPT THE GIFT. Let your body and mind marinate in this wonder, this awesome gift of being creative. Imagine His creativity seeping into each part of your body.

From the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, W.L. Walker explains the biblical use of the term “cunning:”

“kun'-ing (chakham, chashabh): In Bible-English "cunning" means always "wise" or "skilful"; the word does not occur in the bad sense, and it is found in the Old Testament only. The chief Hebrew words are chakham, "wise," "skilful" (2 Chronicles 2:7 the KJV "a man cunning to work in gold"; 2 Chronicles 2:13, Isaiah 3:3 the KJV, etc.); chashabh, "to think," "devise," "desire" (Exodus 26:1, 31; Exodus 28:6 and 15 the KJV, etc.). We have also da`ath, "knowledge" (1 Kings 7:14 the KJV); bin, "to be intelligent" (1 Chronicles 25:7 the KJV); machasbebeth, "thought," "device," "design" (Exodus 31:4; Exodus 35:33, 15 the KJV); 'aman, "artificer" (Songs 7:1 the KJV); yadha`, "to know," once translated "cunning" (Daniel 1:4 the KJV). For cunning the ASRV gives skilful" (Exodus 31:4, etc.; Isaiah 3:3 "expert"); for "cunning work" the work of the "skilful workman" (Exodus 26:1, 31, etc., the ERV "cunning workman"); for "curious," "skilfully woven," the ERV "cunningly woven" (Exodus 28:8, etc.).”

2

ACKNOWLEDGE THE CREATOR

To acknowledge means to recognize, to credit, to put what you know on a platform. It's right in the word.

If we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit that we don't know where our best ideas come from. They are given to us through a series of ideas and events. Sometimes we solve problems in our sleep. Sometimes, we wake up with the lyrics to a song, or a twist in a story. God helps us create even while we are unconscious. Psalm 16:7 says, "I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me."

When you are in awe of a scent, a flavor, a life, a single act of kindness, give thanks.

A child can be taught to say "thank you", but for a child to experience gratitude, he or she must experience a sense of wonder or meekness. It is the same for adults.

If creativity is a gift, there is a source. The gift did not magically appear out of nowhere.

The gift has a giver. There is a source.

If ingenuity comes to you as a lark, let some tremulous harmonies flow from your heart for a

blessing. Experience goodwill in tasting a flavor. You've been blessed for purposes unknown. Give thanks.

- “Thank you, God, that in the beginning, and ongoing, all creation sprouts from Your Good Character.”
- “Thank you, God, for occasionally putting me into a corner to think through details, temperature, space, time, and physics.”
- “Thank You, God, for the fat, the herbs, and the spices I can eat, making things good.”
- “Thank You for the sigh of relief in going to the bathroom.”
- “Thank You, God, for painting the clouds in prisms at day’s beginning and day’s ending.”
- “Thank You, Lord, for Psalms, for thoughtful secular music, and spiritual songs to sing. Thank you, that when I sing, something unique changes in my brain function.”
- “Thank You, God, for language and cultural accents, codes, secrets, and revelations.
- “Thank You for gender, sexuality, and sensual communication.”
- “Thank You for the organization of time.”
- “Thank You, for helping me create a legacy.”

- “Thank You, for making me work with those who humor me and those who compel me.”
- “Thank You, God, for inviting me to work with both sides of my brain, and with the gray matter as well as the white matter.”

Jot down something that occurred to you in gratitude. For, this is the proverb for beginning a journey in wise creativity: “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths, making the rough places smooth and the crooked straight.”^{xxxv} Creativity begins with a sense of awe, and meekness. It leads to gratitude, authenticity and hope.

A comedic story by Jon Courson was published in *Searchlight*. Attributing credit to whom credit is due can be a blind spot. “An elephant and a flea walked over a creaky wooden bridge. When they reached the other side, the flea said to the elephant, ‘Wow! We sure made that bridge shake, didn’t we?’”^{xxxvi}

"Trusting the LORD with all your heart,
Not putting confidence in your own understanding, in
all your ways acknowledging Him, by recognizing His
character is at work and at play, so that you can have the
confidence to work, walk or dance in faith. Walking
with Him, submit to Him, and
He will direct your path."

Proverbs 3:5–6

Creating great work, being cunning and skillful, always starts with an dedication, ultimately to the

Creator.

"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed,
do it in the name of the LORD Jesus Christ,
giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."
Colossians 3:17

CHAPTER ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1: FIRST MEANS PRIORITY

¹ I credit Robin Bownes, at Robin B Creative, www.Bownes.co.za, with providing to me the ancient Greek definition of Logos used in this book.

² "Logos," Logos, Wikipedia, last modified on December 9, 2019, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos>.

³ Eph. 5:23 New King James Version

⁴ Ps. 98:9.

⁵ 1 Cor. 10:31.

⁶ Gen. 1:1.

⁷ Gen. 1:1.

⁸ John 3:16.

⁹ Gen. 1:26 Easy-to-Read Version.

¹⁰ Gen. 3:7 Berean Study Bible.

¹¹ Gen. 3:23–24.

¹² Lev. 1–27.

¹³ Matt. 11:5;.

¹⁴ "Benedictine-Values," MaterChristi, last modified 2019, materchristi.edu.au/benedictine-values.

¹⁵ Hosea 1:2.

¹⁶ Exod. 13:2; 22:29–31; 34:19.

¹⁷ Deut. 21:15–17.

¹⁸ Exod. 34:19.

¹⁹ Gen. 27:1–29 BSB.

²⁰ Gen. 48:13–22.

²¹ Gen. 35:22; 49:1–4.

²² Rom. 8:29.

²³ 1 Cor. 15:20.

²⁴ 1 Cor. 15:52.

²⁵ N. T. Wright, “How Can The Bible Be Authoritative?,” *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991), p.18.

²⁶ “Science”, Anatomy in Leonardo da Vinci., N.P., <https://www.leonardo-da-vinci.ch/science>.

²⁷ Sue Bender, *Plain and Simple: A Woman’s Journey to the Amish*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 89.

²⁸ Bender, 141.

²⁹ Matt. 4:1–11.

³⁰ Exod. 2:15–21.

³¹ Matt. 4:1–4.

³² Exod. 2:15–21; 3:1–Deut. 4:5. These passages of Moses' life tell of how he met and married his wife, and how he became the leader God intended him to be leading Israel from captivity and later provided Israel with God's own instruction on how to live.

³³ W. L. Walker, “Cunning” In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by James Orr, N.P., 1915. <http://classic.studylight.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T2446>.

³⁴ Col. 1:9–10.

CHAPTER 2: ACKNOWLEDGE THE CREATOR

^{xxxv} Prov, 3:6 New King James Version.

^{xxxvi} Michael Hodgin, *1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 207.