



CREATIVITY

May I submit that if you deny your creativity, you suggest a deficiency in God’s creation. The idea that only a gifted minority of human beings are creative is one of the most persistent and pernicious myths there is. It is totally false. Yet it dies with great difficulty.

—Howard Hendricks, *Color Outside the Lines*

Summary: You can be a person of deep conviction but still have no direction. In order to move forward, leaders need imagination to see the connections between their unchanging convictions and life in an ever-changing world. Creative leaders imagine the way forward. That’s why we need God. God is the Creator. He has the best imagination. He created everything out of nothing at all. He sees the way forward through chaos and disorder like no one else. With God on our side, we see a brighter future for the communities where we lead, and we inspire others to join us as we pursue that God-given vision. (*Leadership Mosaic*, p. 63)

Definition: Creative leaders imagine the way and inspire others forward.

Myths vs. Truths of Creativity

Read and review the chart below; then engage the questions.¹

| <i>The Myths of Creativity</i> | <i>The Truths of Creativity</i> |
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| <p>The Genius: “You have it or you don’t.”</p> <p>“Creativity is merely a personality type.” The myth says, “Creative types are born that way. You are creative or you aren’t.”</p> | <p>Imago Dei: “Everyone is creative.”</p> <p>“No more believing the lie that creativity is for the select few. I was made to create and celebrate creativity.” But if creativity is simply the ability to make connections, it’s a gift that every person can cultivate through disciplined work, preparation, and evaluation.</p> |
| <p>“Creativity is for experts.”</p> <p>The myth says that those with the deepest knowledge in a domain are most likely to have breakthrough ideas.</p> | <p>“No more forfeiting creativity to the experts, gurus, and professionals. I have a part to play in God’s creative mission.”</p> <p>In reality, a certain level of expertise leads to narrowed thinking and can even decrease creative output. The toughest problems are often solved by people at the edge of a domain, those with enough knowledge to contribute but enough ignorance to take innovative paths.</p> |
| <p>The Artist: “It’s a mystery. It can’t be bounded or understood.”</p> <p>“Creativity requires complete originality.” The myth says we come up with new ideas ex nihilo.</p> | <p>The Community: “Creativity is rarely singular activity; breakthroughs are in collaboration with God and others.”</p> <p>“No more working in isolation. I am dependent upon others for creative leadership.” If creativity is part of the imago Dei, creative leaders in every domain can learn—and “steal”—from a whole history of creative problem solving.</p> |
| <p>“Creativity requires unbounded freedom.”</p> <p>The myth says that creativity is dampened by constraints.</p> | <p>“No more excuse making for my lack of creative output. I am a creative leader.” In reality, order and boundaries fire creative energy. One example is the twelve-tone musical scale, which resulted in the greatest explosion of musical creativity in human history.</p> |

(Chart adapted from *Leadership Mosaic*, p. 71)

1. Subpoints adapted from David Burkus, *The Myths of Creativity*.

1. What myths have you believed most prominently in regard to your creativity?

2. Which truths resonate most deeply? How could you apply or step into these truths today?

3. Where does your organization need to say one of the “No mores” to start your next meeting?

It is helpful to recognize the myths, but we need to remember that they are more than myths. These are lies about the fundamental nature of what it means to be human. These lies obscure our imago Dei and cannot be tolerated. Fundamentally, they are lies about who we are; we resemble God being his image to the world. Resembling God is being his image to the world and in the world and includes at least five dimensions that help to shatter the lies we’re tempted to believe about creativity.



Implications of Being Made in God’s Image

- We are *relational*. God made us for community, because he exists eternally in community.
- We have *emotions*. God made us to feel, because he experiences emotions and feels deeply.
- We have *desires*. God made us with longings, because he has desires for the world.
- We *think*. God made us to think and organize, because he is a God of order and not disorder.
- We *value*. God made us to assign value, because he is the Judge of all things.



(Leadership Mosaic, p. 82)

On being made in the image of God, ponder these questions:

1. How does our relationship with God, others, and self affect our creativity?
2. How does being self-aware of our emotions give us the ability to find creative solutions?
3. What happens when we diminish one of the five dimensions of being made in the image of God?
4. How is organizing and thinking clearly impacting the way you do or don’t create?
5. How do your standards or ideals affect the way you create? Are your ideals too high or too low?

We create like God, yet our creating is different. In every stage, God’s creation work is amazing.

When we make things, we're like Steve Jobs and Picasso. We have to "steal." We use materials at hand. If you wanted to make a piece of artwork, you would take a blank piece of paper or a canvas. Then you would use acrylic, ink, watercolor, pencil, or maybe crayon to create something on that blank page. You might even cut out clippings from a magazine and use glue to paste them into a collage. But God didn't create that way. He didn't have any materials or supplies. God not only made everything; he alone creates *ex nihilo*. He made everything out of nothing at all. Catherine Vos sums it up nicely in *A Child's Story Bible*: "When a man builds a house, he must first have wood, nails, glass, and many other things. If he does not have something out of which to make it, he cannot build a house. But God made the world out of nothing at all." (*Leadership Mosaic*, p. 74)



Trinitarian Doctrine 2: Creation

God made everything. His creation work is a purposeful project of love. God imagines and plans. The Spirit patiently hovers and garnishes the world with life. The Son accomplishes the Father's plan and holds all things together by the word of his power. And it is good. God is at rest with all he has made.

God imagines and plans. The triune God was there, before the beginning, abiding in love and dreaming the future into existence. Before the foundations of the world, before the time came to fulfill his plans and dreams, God had pleasures and desires for us in Christ (Eph. 1:4-5).

We imagine and plan. Our creativity begins with hopeful prayer, meditation, and brainstorming. Imagination means looking ahead beyond present reality and mapping out what is possible.

God patiently hovers. Part of the Holy Spirit's role in creation is to do the quiet detail work. He garnishes and beautifies. He gives ongoing life—sustaining the world God has made and making it fresh and fruitful (Pss. 33:6; 104:30; Isa. 32:15).

We patiently hover. Creative leaders call this an incubation period. We leave a margin between the time of sensing a problem and initiating a solution. Patience leaves room for awe and understanding. It gives time for nuance and detail.

God acts. God spoke and his Word went out in the power of the Spirit. The Father creates through the Word (John 1:3). He accomplishes his creation work through the Son (Col. 1:15-16). That's how his dreams become a reality (Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3).

We act. Creative leaders take risks. For us to become creative leaders, imagination must be cultivated. We must lay down our safety nets and step out. Because we sense God's presence, we can step out by faith to join him in his work.

God holds it together. God made all things with purpose. "All things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). The Son gives the cosmos structure and coherence (Heb. 1:3). He gives shape and direction to the universe.

We reintegrate. We live in a time of great fragmentation. God invites us to entrust the materials we make, the time we invest, and the limited power and glory we hold to the larger whole of his purpose. He invites us to join ourselves to his creative project.

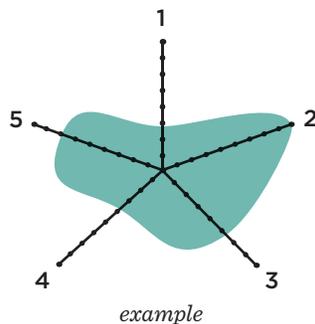


(*Leadership Mosaic*, pp. 75-76)

Creativity Diagnostic

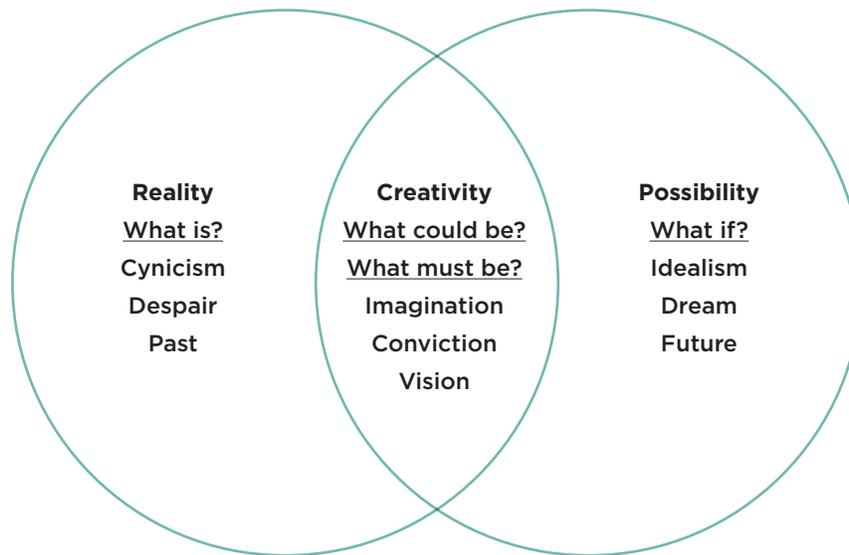
1. On a scale from one to ten, how frequently and accurately do you reflect God's imagining and planning?
2. On a scale from one to ten, how frequently and accurately do you reflect God's patient hovering?
3. On a scale from one to ten, how frequently and accurately do you reflect God's acting and risk-taking?
4. On a scale from one to ten, how frequently and accurately do you reflect God's integrating?
5. On a scale from one to ten, how frequently and accurately do you reflect God's resting?

Draw your "creativity wheel" with zero in the center and ten at the circumference.



Where are you strong and weak? Where do you want to grow? What is your next step?

Creativity Diagnostic



Reality is about “What is?” Think observation. Possibility is about “What if?” Think imagination. We need leaders who combine both reality and possibility, conviction and imagination. Convictional leaders define reality, what is, yet have a strong belief that something *must* be. Before any of those *musts* get accomplished, we need to dream, we must imagine, and we must offer hope. When we combine our conviction of what *must* be with a dream of what *could* be, we get vision.

- Which expression below best describes your leadership?
- What is . . . What if . . . What must be . . . What could be . . .

The Creative Leader imagines the way forward and this requires (1) *dreaming*, that is, making creative connections between where you are and what God wants; and (2) *persuading*, that is, helping your people dream and picture a better future.

- How do you experience living in the creative tension that’s produced from dreaming God-sized dreams?
- How do you handle resistance when you are called to persuade others of the dreams that have captured them as leaders?

Creative Lottery Inventory

Twyla Tharp says, “Reading, conversation, environment, culture, heroes, mentors, nature—all are lottery tickets for creativity.”²

- Of these ten “lotto” tickets below, which do you have ready as assets to tap?
- Which do you need to cash in on to make your convictions come alive with imagination?

List your lotto tickets (assets to utilize) in each category; star what needs to be “cashed in” soon.

Nature to wonder at

Heroes to study and aspire to

Mentors to connect with

Experiences to embody

Books to mine

Destinations to wander in

New questions to ask

New skills to learn

New people to engage

Conversation partners to establish

2. Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit: Use It and Learn It for Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 103.

For Further Study

Leadership Mosaic is about doing what you do differently. You already binge watch Netflix. Replace Netflix with something new. Following are additions to the *Leadership Mosaic* bibliography. Remember, we always aim for informed minds, warmed hearts, and engaged hands.

Documentaries

- *Inspire, a Documentary about Creativity*. Directed by Nick Trivundza. Naissance, 2012.
- *Beautiful Losers*. Directed by Aaron Rose and Joshua Leonard. Sidetrack Films, 2008.
- *Bill Cunningham New York*. Directed by Richard Press. First Thought Films, 2010.
- *Indie Game: The Movie*. Directed by Lisanne Pajot and James Swirsky. BlinkWorks Media, 2012.
- *Waste Land*. Directed by Lucy Walker. Almega Projects, 2010.

Books

- Harrity, Dave. *Making Manifest: On Faith, Creativity, and the Kingdom at Hand*. Wilmore, KY: Seedbed, 2013.
- MacKenzie, Gordon. *Orbiting the Giant Hairball: A Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace*. Harmondsworth: Viking, 1996.
- Pressfield, Steven. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. New York: Black Irish, 2002.

Articles

- Cospers, Mike. "Creativity Is Rooted in Creation." *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), October 29, 2010. Accessed August 1, 2016. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/creativity-is-rooted-in-creation>.