

Creativity

INTRODUCTION

We are made in the image of our Creator God, and therefore we, in some analogous ways, are called to create. This means we are tasked to bring forth from God's creation productions which are both useful and beautiful. Even the simple act of engaging in this process helps us know our Creator God more intimately and fully -- therefore, in itself, it is an act of worship. And in our post-fall context this work will also include a restorative aspect as we seek to battle sin and infuse the world with truth, beauty, and goodness. So we are co-creators and re-creators with God in our image-bearing life in this world.

PRINCIPLES

1. Problem Solving is Creativity

Divergent thought is a crucial element of creativity. Creativity is not *art*. Art is an *outcome* of creativity. *Creativity* is allowing room to make mistakes. *Art* is knowing which ones to keep. Creativity is about process, not an event.

2. Certainty as a Goal Kills Creativity as a Process

Creativity asks, "How can this (fill in the blank) be better?" Therefore, repeated outcomes are antithetical to creativity. Creativity is risky, unpredictable business. Originality -- which is essential to creativity -- is thwarted by any desires for certainty or control. Begin the process without necessarily knowing exactly where it will lead.

3. Stress is Inimical to Creativity

High levels of dopamine are found in the pre-frontal cortex during intense creativity. Stress dramatically reduces these levels and closes off the mind to possibilities and solutions. Nimbleness and dexterity take a hit. Stress is like fine sand drizzled into the brain.

PRACTICALS

- Prepare your mind. Be present, at-ease, safe.
- Understand the effect of posture on creativity. Consider "power-poses" before brainstorming or schedule walks for work meetings.
- Use new tools to solve the same problem. By incorporating new methods, you create a larger surface area for a inspiration to hit.
- Employ listening techniques. Gather feedback from yourself and your surroundings early and often. Seek out people who are willing to level with you and keep them close.
- Write. Try "image streaming" -- a simple activity where you just sit back and transcribe the images that come to your mind in great, vivid detail. You might use a tape recorder or ask a friend to listen to you.
- Rest. Like all cognitive functions, creative thinking is significantly impaired by sleep deprivation.
- Cultivate "rhythmic vitality." Practice deliberately. The pre-frontal cortex can teach itself to "get in gear" the more you engage in creative exercises. Athletes train this way. Most practices -- among high-performing teams -- are often more rigorous than the games themselves.
- Get outside. Research shows that spending time in nature and increasing your exposure to sunlight can lead to higher levels of creativity.

Creativity is a process, not an event -- one in which the Holy Spirit active with you. Relish the opportunity to partner with God in His project to make all things new through Christ. Reflect His goodness to a fallen world by being creative and enjoy incorporating these habits into all areas of your life.

There may be ways in which you have not tapped into your personal creativity. It could be a hobby you've left in the dust or a talent that's gotten rusty. You may find creativity in working in the garden or writing, painting, organizing, inventing, parenting, playing golf or at work. In our pilgrimage practices, we want to develop the discipline of exercising this creativity for the sake of our own flourishing and the flourishing of our world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Am I exercising my creative muscles?
- Is there something I long to do which would be life-giving that has either been neglected or never developed? Why?
- What are the enemies of my creativity? How can I rearrange things to remove those enemies?
- Am I being disciplined to create space & time for creativity?