

When the Church Is Incompatible With God

In episode 9 of my new series, *Questions With God*, I ask the question, “Why would God use creative ways to speak to us when we already have the Bible?” I’ve been steeped in creativity for nearly my entire life. My father is an artist (a potter) and taught art and creativity at the college level for over 40 years; and obviously I’m a writer and filmmaker, and I taught creativity at Judson University for over 10 years myself. I even shot a seven-part special on creativity with my dad in London recently (*God & Creativity*). I say all that to point out two things: 1. I have a pretty decent understanding of creativity; and 2. God is the very essence of a creative Person.

“Created” is the fifth word in the Bible, and it’s the first thing that God decides to tell us about Himself. Think about that. Not that He is love. Not that He is faithful. Not that He is a God of covenant. The first thing He decides to tell us about His nature is that He is creative. As Christians, we would do well to pay attention to this because it implies that God has a high value for the creative. Unfortunately, the church itself often does not. This is not only short sighted but potentially dangerous.

It is easy to bash churches as not valuing creativity or the creatives in their midst, but I think that is often unfair criticism. Honestly, most pastors and leaders I have met don’t dislike or mistrust creatives; they simply don’t understand them. It’s like me trying to understand what makes my accountant tick. No amount of cajoling will ever get me to a place of thinking that numbers and math are fun. But some people actually enjoy that stuff! That being said, a church that denies the creative spirit of God in many ways is rendering itself incompatible with God, at least in one

aspect.

My dad once pointed out that if the church is not pursuing creativity, it is doomed to religion. It is therefore no surprise that the most religious, unbending Christians (and leaders) are typically the least creative. Creative people see the possibilities in things, value risk and are always trying to find new ways of doing things. Religion strives hard to limit things, hates risk and prefers to do things the way they've always been done.

I think the application of the creative to the church/worship experience is a much bigger discussion than we can possibly touch on here, but I do want to encourage everyone reading this to examine their own faith walk and, in whatever measure you feel comfortable, begin to step out and stretch your spiritual journey with creativity in mind. Do you always read the Bible a certain way? Do you feel like God only speaks to you in a specific way? Do you only listen to a certain style of worship music? Have you ever thought about approaching your spiritual disciplines in a more unique, novel way?

God is not only creative, He may very well be creativity itself. His spirit is a profoundly creative thing, and He longs to meet you in whatever way you approach Him. In fact, I'm becoming more convinced that He takes delight in delighting us, and when He meets us in creative ways, it is always a wondrous, joyous thing. One of the most profound moments of my spiritual life was caught on film and is included in one of the episodes of *Adventures With God*, and it all centered around God using two dogs in the most astounding, creative way. Neither story made any of my films (thankfully, that's what TV shows are for), but sometimes the biggest events in our spiritual lives aren't meant to be lived out on giant screens and in technicolor. Instead, they're best suited for quiet moments of realization, when the understanding of His sovereignty hits you like a slow train, and all you can do is smile, laugh and remind Him (and yourself) once again how

amazing He truly is.