

The Gift of Craftsmanship/Artistry (3)

A gifted story: Bill was asked to whip up some sort of container to hold nametags for members to wear on Sunday morning. It had to be designed so that everybody could find their tag easily-- perhaps a big box with a lot of compartments would do the trick. Not in Bill's mind! You see, Bill has the gift of craftsmanship. He immediately began to envision a piece of sculpted furniture that would be both beautiful and functional. When he produced the final product a few weeks later, everyone was stunned-- they had never imagined such a magnificent piece. Of course they hadn't, because they didn't have Bill's gift!

Biblical references:

Exodus 31:1-11— *The Lord said to Moses, “I have chosen Bezalel,...and I have filled him with my power. I have given him understanding, skill, and ability for every kind of artistic work—for planning skillful designs and working them in gold, silver, and bronze; for cutting jewels to be set; for carving wood; and for every other kind of artistic work....”*

Psalms 149:3a—*Praise his name with dancing...*

Definition and comment:

The gift of Craftsmanship and artistry: the special ability to forward God's kingdom through creative skills such as carpentry, drama, graphic arts, painting and sculpting. This gift provides the believer with the skill of creating artistic expressions that produce a spiritual response of strength and inspiration.

Although not specifically listed as a gift in the New Testament in the long list that Paul provides, clearly God has gifted individuals with remarkable craftsmanship and artistic skills from the earliest of recorded time. Old testament references give vivid accounts of God's distribution of giftedness in these areas—whether for the building of temples or for use to glorify God in praise.

There are really two aspects of this giftedness: inspiration and skill. A person with this gift will probably have a “creative bent” and enjoy innovating, designing, and making new things—this will seem quite natural. But also the gift may manifest itself in fine skilled craftsmanship that one might find in such areas as embroidery, furniture making, or cabinetry. When these abilities and skills are directed toward forwarding God's cause, they fulfill their purpose as a spiritual gift.

Affirm that you have this gift; questions to ask yourself:

Do you have significant artistic ability that you would like to put into service for the Lord?
Can you see how your artistic or craftsmanship skills could be used to benefit the body of Christ?

Are you aware that people have been blessed through your creative or artistic ability?

Are you characterized as a creative or artistic person?

Can you envision some specific projects that you could undertake to use this gift for the kingdom of God?

What specific artistic or craftsmanship abilities has God given you?

Areas for study and personal growth:

Artistic giftedness usually needs to be trained, tamed and channeled. Thus you will want to find appropriate means to do these things to bring the ability to full fruition. Classes of instruction to help bring out the artistry from within should be considered.

Creativity for God requires listening to him who gave you the gift. Inspiration from God is the best inspiration of all, especially when you are engaged in bringing him glory.

Deepen your spirituality through prayer, and count on God to set your imagination free.

Meditate on how God might use the gift through you to affect the lives of other people and to build up his church. Be as creative in looking for ways to serve as you will be in carrying out your artistry once you have set upon it. Pray unceasingly for God's loving guidance as you exercise your skill.

Read Exodus 31: 1 – 11 and 35: 30 – 36 to better understand the empowerment that God gives with his gifts in order to fulfill his purposes. Seek out the writings of other Christian artists to learn how they have developed channels of inspiration from their Maker. Keep a journal of all ideas that come to you in prayer.

General ways to use the gift of craftsmanship and artistry:

On an informal level: offer assistance where creativity is needed, and show others how natural it is to use a creative perspective in most matters.

Within the church: design liturgical banners, assist with altar arrangements, aid in the beautification of the church and grounds; help everyone understand the importance of beauty and art in the glorification of God (see more specific church service opportunities in the Booklet *Channels for Using the Gifts*).

Within the wider community: do artistic work as a volunteer; organize a religious art festival or religious craft fair for the community.

For reflection:

As the Alpha and the Omega, God is the great Creator. This is what he has done and continues to do in awesome ways throughout the ages. God obviously loves to create. We know that God made us in his own image, and thus we too like to create. For some, however, he has given such a large measure of creative ability that we recognize it as supernatural—a spiritual gift of craftsmanship or artistry. How wonderful to have this gift because it is such a clear reflection of God the Creator!

Creativity is an amazing phenomenon—often the creator does not know where he is going in the act of creation. There is a germ of an idea, then a thought to go here or there, and then a certain knowledge for a moment that a particular touch is needed, a little detail attended to,

and then perhaps a great flourish in the right place. It could be art, design, dance, most anything—the creative process is the same. Inspiration begins the project, and inspiration moves it along. Sometimes the creator loves the final product so much that it must be kept.

Performing creatively for God must be even more of an adventure. When a supernatural gift is employed, the inspiration may come from God. But in the end the artist dare not keep the final product because there is a certainty that the work really belongs to God. It is for his glory; it is for his purpose to further his kingdom, and so it must be released for the inspiration it will give to others. If this was true for great artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, and El Greco, it must still be true today for God's banner-makers, quilt-makers, and flower-arrangers in the Church as well as for those engaged in the creation of religious works of art.

Unlike some of the other spiritual gifts, this is a gift which produces fruit that can be readily and immediately seen. The results are tangible. It is also a gift that focuses largely on praise for the Lord, and the act of praising is always full of joy. You are blessed to have the gift of artistry or craftsmanship. Rejoice!