

## A THEOLOGY *of* CREATIVITY

IT FLOWS FROM THE VERY CHARACTER OF GOD

BY MARK CONNER



God is a creative God. In fact, He invented creativity. It was His idea. Creativity is part of the very nature and character of God. The fifth word in the Bible is created—“*In the beginning God created ...*” (Genesis 1:1). God kicked off the creative process and it’s been moving forward ever since.

Ponder creation for a moment. God created the entire universe out of nothing. He formed all original things (like an inventor or manufacturer). What an incredible designer God is! There is nothing dull, drab or boring about God’s world.

He created three primary colors with up to ten million different hues that a human eye can see. He created textures—rough, smooth and everything in between. He created infinite varieties of shape and form. He created movement and rhythm—wind and running water, animals and humans busy with all sorts of activities. He created sound and music—from the crashing thunder of a huge storm to the sweet chirping of a tiny bird. He created seasons—winter, spring, summer, and autumn. Then He created the human personality along with unique fingerprints for over 6 billion people. God is not into cloning.

Everything God creates is unique and teeming with the freshness of life and innovation. Looking at creation should drive us to worship God. His creativity is on display, not only in creation but also in redemption. God made salvation available to us apart from our ability to earn it. He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sin and now offers us forgiveness and salvation as a free gift for which we can do nothing to earn. What an amazing and creative plan!

God calls us to be like Him—creative! Let’s look at one of my favorite Bible passages.

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of*

*works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Paul declares the creativity of God here in both creation and redemption. We are God’s workmanship, literally “a work of art” (Greek *poiema* from which we get the word *poem*). We are then called to continue on God’s creative works for the benefit of others around about us.

### JESUS MODELED CREATIVITY

Jesus was an incredibly creative communicator. He used parables when He taught (Matthew 13:34). He drew in the sand, used a Roman coin, cursed a fig tree, and picked up a piece of bread ... in order to explain truth. He divided fish, turned over tables, and put a child on his knee ... all to illustrate important lessons. Jesus delivered His life-changing message in dynamic and creative ways. He understood that a point gets to the head while a picture gets to the heart.

An estimated 72 percent of Jesus’ words were focused on application, putting His teaching into practice in daily life. He understood about visual and multi-sensory learners 2,000 years ago. He constantly used visuals and never used the same approach twice. Everything He did was unique. He was a master communicator and the master of creativity.

### THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS US TO BE CREATIVE

We are to be imitators of God. We are created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). We are to be like Him. This means we are designed to be creative too! You have a unique contribution to make. When we look at who God is and what He has done, we have a good reason to be creative—to sing, to write, to paint, or whatever—to express our love and adoration for Him. See what you’re doing as a work of art that’s purpose is to display God’s glory.

In his book *The Creative Leader*, Ed Young says, “The entertainment industry is filled with actors, musicians, and



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## CREATIVITY KILLERS

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF CREATIVITY KILLERS—PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT WILLING TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.

- “*Everything that can be invented has been invented.*” [Charles H. Duell, Director of the American Patent Office in 1899]
- “*Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote.*” [Grover Cleveland, 1905]
- “*Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?*” [Harry M. Warner, Warner Bros Pictures, 1927]
- “*There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.*” [Robert Miliham, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1923]
- “*Heavier than air flying machines are impossible.*” [Lord Kelvin, President, Royal Society, 1895]
- “*The horse is here today, but the automobile is only a novelty—a fad.*” [President of Michigan Savings Bank advising against investing in the Ford Motor Company]
- “*Video won’t be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night.*” [Daryl F. Zanuck, 20th Century Fox, commenting on television in 1946]
- “*What use could the company make of an electric toy?*” [Western Union, when it turned down rights to the telephone in 1878]

entertainers of all varieties who capture the imagination of all ages with their creative gifts. Hollywood, Nashville, and New York are meeting the deep-seated need that people have for creativity, adventure, and excitement in their lives—a need the church should be filling through the creative power of the Holy Spirit.” He goes on to say, “Some people don’t have much to say but they sure know how to say it while the church has everything to say but often doesn’t know how to say it. That’s why creativity should grace everything that touches our leadership and our ministry.”

Let’s unleash our creative potential and use it to communicate the most compelling message ever given to humanity. Creativity is not an option for the church. It is a biblical mandate that flows from the very character of God.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION

Innovation is very important for any individual, group or organization, including the church. Peter Drucker, the father of modern management, once said, “In a period of rapid change the only ones who survive are those who innovate and create change.” Change is the only certainty in today’s fast-paced environment. Accept that it will always be with us. Change is constant. See change as an opportunity, not a threat. Talk about it in a positive way and help people to not be afraid of it.

Drucker believed that both management and entrepreneurship are essential in any organization. Both are always needed at the same time and both have to be coordinated and work together. The lack of innovation is the single largest reason for the decline of existing organizations. Not knowing how to manage is the single largest reason for the failure of new ventures. We must not just manage the existing but innovate the new and the different.

It’s so easy to become busy managing what currently exists (working IN the organization), that we fail to take time to improve what we’re doing, let alone consider doing things differently or doing new things (working ON the organization). As leaders, we must work on tomorrow, not just keep up with today. This is what innovation is all about.

Creativity expert, Edward de Bono, says, “There is no doubt that creativity is the most important resource of all. Without creativity, there will be no progress, and we will forever repeat the same patterns.” He also says, “Creative thinking is not a talent, it is a skill that can be learnt. It empowers people by adding strength to their natural abilities which improves teamwork, productivity and where appropriate profits.”

Experienced church leader Bill Hybels, in his book *Axion*, says, “Leaders traffic in idea creation. The best leaders I know are ferociously disciplined about seeking them out and incredibly committed to stewarding them well.” The author of the Book of Proverbs says, “*Intelligent people are always open to new ideas; in fact, they look for them*” (Proverbs 18:15).

We serve a creative God who, though He never changes in His character, has designed a world full of variety and freshness. We are created in His image. It is important that we seek to make our life and ministry fresh and alive.

### FOSTERING CREATIVITY

Here are a few thoughts on some ways we can foster greater creativity.

First, make time for thinking creatively. Set aside regular time for brainstorming by yourself and, better still, with other people—especially with any teams that you are a part of. Think creatively. Research should be

everybody's preoccupation and innovation is everybody's game. Leadership expert Warren Bennis once said, "The organizations of the future will increasingly depend on the creativity of their members to survive. Great groups offer a new model in which the leader is an equal among Titans. In a truly creative collaboration, work is pleasure, and the only rules and procedures are those that advance the common cause."

Second, ask good questions. Regularly ask yourself, "What's working well and why?" and "What's not working and why?" Good questions help us gain a new perspective on our current situation.

Third, generate lots of new ideas. The more ideas you have, the better. Thomas Edison once said, "To have a great idea, have a lot of ideas." He also said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration!"

Fourth, listen and learn. Be a strategic listener. Expose yourself to different viewpoints. Study people's needs and ideas, then look for future trends. We can learn something from everyone, if we will just listen attentively.

Fifth, think outside the box. Create an atmosphere within your team that says, "Let's find a better way." Always be looking for a new idea that will improve or expand your ministry. Admit where things are no longer working and make appropriate changes. Don't get stuck with a mentality that says, "That's the way we've always done it." When something seems impossible, find a way. (Read the story recorded in Mark 2:1-5 for a good example.) What annoys you? Frustration is a catalyst to innovation!

Sixth, don't be afraid of failure. Be willing to take a risk. Conduct an experiment. Just try something new and different. Learn to celebrate failure, not just tolerate it. Learn to fail forward. Thomas Watson said, "Success is on the far side of failure." Leadership thinker Margaret Wheatley said, "The things we fear the most in organizations—fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances—are the primary sources of creativity."

Finally, have fun! We need to take God more seriously and ourselves less seriously. Learn to laugh at yourself and enjoy the journey. Come on, let's step up our motivation for creativity! **K**

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### #2 Waterslide

**Darrell Jennings**  
Coosada Baptist Church, Coosada, AL

Find a nice hill and lay out a roll of black landscaping plastic. Squirt it with dish liquid, aim the sprinkler and spray hoses, and you've got a giant 30-foot water slide for hours of fun. A lot less than an expensive trip to the water park!

