

## The Artist's Role in the Local Church

By Dave Frincke

I used to live in an apartment off of Lake Ave., close to downtown. My roommate and I would frequently hold Bible studies with our friends in our small living room. One of our favorite things to do after the study was to engage in a rousing game of Bible Trivia. So in the spirit of random Biblical facts, I'd like to pose a question: Who was the first person mentioned in Scripture that was said to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It's an interesting question that has an even more interesting answer. The man's name is Bezalel.

Most of us have probably never heard a sermon preached about Bezalel; in fact most of us probably don't even recognize his name. He wasn't a great prophet or a mighty judge. He wasn't a grand king or one of David's Mighty Men. He wasn't a High Priest or one of the Patriarch of our faith. Bezalel was an artist.

Israel has crossed the Red Sea and they were camped at the base of Mount Sinai. The glory of the Lord was resting on the mountain and Moses had just finished the climb in order to hear what the Lord has to say. At some point in that 40-day period, the Lord told Moses that He had a building project for Israel; they were to construct the Tabernacle. The Lord explained in great detail what the Tabernacle was supposed to be like; its dimensions, its colors, its furnishings, building materials and so on. This was not going to be a one-week project!

Then, in Exodus 31, God said: ***"See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship."***

Bezalel was the foreman in charge of making sure all the details of the Tabernacle & its furnishings were done just how God told them. Everything from the stitching on the curtain separating the Holy Place & the Holiest of Holies, the mirrors on the inside of the Bronze Basin, the buds & petals on the Candlestick, the sculpting of the Cherubim that covered the Ark of the Covenant and everything in between.

Obviously God wanted the Tabernacle to accommodate the functionality of the Old Testament Law, but why did He want all the intricacies in the design? The Tabernacle itself was a prophecy. All the details of the different elements that were constructed pointed to the Messiah; His life, His character, His work, His death & His Resurrection. This shows us the highest calling & purpose that artists have: to create art that reveals the life, character, work, death & resurrection of Jesus.

God is an artist. He paints the most beautiful sunsets; He forms & shapes the highest mountains; He composes the melodies that His Creation sings. And for what purpose? To show us the attributes of Himself! ***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies***

***proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. – Psalm 19:1-4***

We are made to experience to art. We are wired so that when we hear music, look at a painting, watch a play or gaze at a sculpture, the deepest parts of our souls are touched. Art can communicate ideas to our hearts that would have never made it through by way of our minds. A picture really is worth a thousand words. It is God's will & plan to use art to communicate to His people about Himself.

There was a time when the Church was leading the way in producing creative, God-inspired art. The artists weren't copying ideas from the outside world; they were inventing fresh expressions of their faith; they were operating in the creative nature of their Creator. But it seems like times have changed. Generally speaking, we as the Church seem to be stagnant in our pursuit of sharing in the creative nature of our Creator. If anything, it seems that we're copying the creative styles of those outside the Church.

If we're supposed to be made in the image of God, who is so creative that He makes every snowflake different, then why is the Church so artistically stagnant?

This is a call to all artists; to all musicians, painters, sculptors, carpenters, graphic designers, movie makers, dancers, banner makers, play writers, authors, poets and the like. This is a call to all the Bezalel's! God is calling you to the highest calling an artist can have: revealing the life, the character, the work, the death & the Resurrection of Jesus through your art. Whatever measure of talent & gifting you have, use it for this one purpose. Let's flood our local churches with original, Spirit-filled songs, dances, movies, poems, hymns, furniture, plays and paintings. Let's flood our churches with art that reveals Jesus.

Let's go back to Mount Sinai. When God first told Moses to build the Tabernacle, He said: ***Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. – Exodus 25:9.***

God showed Moses a blueprint for the Tabernacle, but according to the book of Hebrews, the blueprint was not on earth. ***When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. – Hebrews 9:11.***

God had Moses build an earthly tabernacle that was only a shadow of the true Heavenly Tabernacle. Is it possible for us to experience glimpses of Heaven today just like Israel did with the Tabernacle? Could it be that God wants to send Heavenly art to earth through you and me today? Could the melodies of Heaven be brought to our churches through our own musicians? Could images of Heaven be brought to our sanctuaries through our own painters & carpenters?

The most creative, innovative and Christ-revealing art will be found in the Church again; and it will come through ordinary people like you and me. The good news is you don't have to be a Rembrandt or Michelangelo to have God use you. It's not your name or your sphere of influence that sets you apart for this task; it's the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that filled Bezalel is the same Spirit that God pours out on us. And it's this Spirit-inspired art that will be a testimony to the world that we have an all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing and all-creative God. This is the artist's role and purpose in the local Church. Let's make room for the Bezalel's.