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Caring For Creatives

Creativity, by nature, does not like to accept the status quo



I begin this article with a bit of inner conflict. As a creative person myself, I really do not like to be categorized and labeled one way or another. This tension of my own reflects some of the unique challenges involved as we approach effectively pastoring and discipling those who we'll call *creatives* in our midst.

Gathered here are some helpful hints I have come across as I've had both the privilege and the challenge of working with many creative people over the years. I encourage you to consider these if you are a leader of creatives and/or a creative leader of creatives.

Understand The Nature Of Creativity

Creativity, by nature, does not like to accept the status quo - it looks at things as they are, and then imagines/seeks for a new perspective or way of doing something. This can appear to some to be a form of rebellious attitude, and left unchecked, it can become exactly that. Our challenge is to understand the nature of creativity, and to give room for our creatives to explore their new ideas without the fear of stifling micromanagement and control. We must also stay connected relationally with them so that we maintain the right to speak into things when they wander too far off the map.

Encourage Them To Embrace Community

As a result of their pioneering spirit, creatives can find sometimes themselves on the fringes of our church communities. This can happen for a number of reasons. There is a tendency toward isolation in creative personalities because of a sense of being misunderstood by the rest of the church body – whether that misunderstanding is real or imagined.

There can also be a frustration in creatives with those in the body who, in their mind "just don't get it," or seem stuck in the traditions of the past. We, as leaders, should be bridge-builders back to community for our creatives. For me, this means making place for relationships to be built among the creative community in our local churches - for people of like mind and calling to encourage one another in Christ. This also means encouraging creatives to be plugged into relationships with people who are outside of their particular bent or gifting. The church is built with unity in diversity. We need each other in all our similari-

ties and differences to properly grow into the people that God desires us to be.

Help Them Foster A Pastor's Heart For The Church

Connected to the previous thought, we must take one step more beyond just encouraging our creatives to embrace community. We should help them move past this more self-sustaining need, to fostering a genuine love for the church of Jesus Christ. As Matt Redman said in an address to songwriters earlier this year, our call is to be poets, prophets and pastors. Our creatives should be able to operate in all of these roles. As leaders, we should help our creatives to see beyond their gifting and vision to where God could be leading us as His people – the church. We must lead them all the way to a pastoral love for the church; loving and serving people through their gifts. Understanding *creatives'* weaknesses, we must love them anyway, and model true pastoral care.

Help Them See Beyond Their Gifts

Help your creatives find their identity as a child of God, rather than viewing themselves exclusively in light of their gifts. Their life in God must be the focal point, and their creative gifting must be seen as secondary to this relationship. This is a particularly tough distinction for creatives, as part of the creative process can be so wrapped up in worship expression that it can be confusing from an identity standpoint. This is our challenge as leaders - to get them to see past their gifting.

Also, encourage them to broaden their view of the Kingdom of God, and to become involved in other expressions of God's heart, such as mercy ministry, working with children, etc. Besides deepening their understanding of the Kingdom of God, these means can serve to further develop their artistic vision/expression as a side benefit.

Help Them Find Like-Minded Mentors

It is important for all of us to have examples to follow; to have people like us who have gone before us to encourage our own journey in the Lord. Sometimes, this may involve helping our creatives seek and find these "mentors." It may involve handing them a book, sending them to an event or personally connecting them with someone who can help them develop more specifically than you can.

Don't Squeeze Them Into Your "Ministry Boxes"

As we've been saying, creatives don't always fit neatly into our church programs and definitions of ministry. In fact, many times they seem to be trying to find ways to intentionally not fit in. This can prove to be a significant problem as our churches grow, and we struggle to find more effective means for pastoring a growing number of people. It is imperative that our churches have room for those with gifting outside of what may be considered more "useful" in the administration of our churches (such as someone who is equipped to lead a small group or prayer ministry).

Can we broaden our definition of ministry to move beyond just our current list of church programs? Find ways for your creatives to serve with their gifts *where they fit.* This will cause us as leaders to be highly creative about finding new expressions for creatives to effectively serve through. Resist the urge to force them into our pre-established boxes. The church is in the disciple-making business, not just in the business of running efficient programs. Can we pioneer new ways of embracing, resourcing and supporting our people's true "vocations" (or callings) without the tendency of trying to fit everything into our "ministry boxes?"

Allow Them To Be Themselves And Not A Copy of Someone Else

This may involve some grace and patience on your part and on the part of others in your congregation - especially if you are involving someone in an upfront ministry such as worship. It is a human tendency to resist change. Learn to appreciate the unique things each person brings to the table, and avoid measuring them up against someone else's gift mix.

Believe In Them

For *creatives*, encouragement goes a *long way.* Vocalize your appreciation and encouragement – often.

Encourage Them Toward Excellence

God accepts our worst, but is worthy of our best. Don't let your creatives compromise and settle for second-rate work.

Give Them Your Time

Allow for time to really hear the heartbeat of our creatives in the church. Let them hear your heart as a leader and/or fellow creative - then collectively seek to hear God's heart. We will all benefit from the creative expansion of God's kingdom. It is an expansion that can come from the creative heart of God expressed through us, His people.

Creatives don't always fit neatly into our church program

Casey Corum is the director of production for Vineyard Music USA. He has been featured on numerous Vineyard Music recordings through the years and has written songs such as "Better Than," "Your Love Is Amazing," and "Dwell" - from the upcoming Vineyard Music USA release of the same name. Casey, his wife Angie and their four daughters recently relocated to Sugar Land, Texas from Boise, Idaho where he had served as worship pastor of the Vineyard of Boise for eight years.

