

# Church, Artists and Culture

## I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For

Ray Goudie January 2008

I vividly remember an elder of a church in Scotland striding down the centre aisle shouting at me "there'll be no rolling of drums in the sanctuary!" I was a teenager at the time and was drummer of a local band which had played in that building for several weeks prior to this event. The elder informed me that the building had been commissioned as a church during the week and that now it was a church there could be no more rolling of drums. The church and the arts have had quite a chequered history over the years. Personally I have had several incidences like the previous one where it is clear that there is a total lack of understanding with many Christians as to the role of the artisan.

I remember asking a well known international church leader to be on the board of reference of our organisation ngm. He told me that arts was a minefield and that he didn't understand artists and would therefore have to decline my offer. He did say he loved singing some of the songs I had written!

It is interesting that before the reformation artists were even commissioned by the church. There was an understanding and a celebration of the arts which in many quarters of the church today is now sadly missing. Since the reformation the protestant church no longer thought art was of fundamental importance. One of my pet hates I see around today is when a painting of a sunset or mountains are then spoiled by a text from the bible being stuck on to it as if to validate the art.

***'Until Christian music stresses art over agenda, it can never be anything but second rate'***

*Dick Staub Music Editor Chicago Tribune*

Apparently in the early Celtic communities the Bard was highly respected. When Caedmon (the first English poet whose name is known) was first discovered by the Celtic church, they tested his gifting and when they recognised it was authentic they then trained him and released him in his gifting. They understood the role of the bard and how important it was in helping to shape the church and the culture of the day. They honoured them as they would lawyers, teachers, doctors etc.

I think we have a lot of lessons we could learn from them. Imagine a day when the church paid for artists to be developed and helped them through the early stages of learning their craft?

***'Among the ancient cultures art was a form of communication used to convey a message that would help set the course of that culture'***

*Rick Joyner*

I want to make it clear that I am not having a go at the church, I love the church - I am the church! I just have a strong belief that God is speaking at this time about the need of the church and the arts to embrace each other in new ways if we are truly going to see some transformation of our culture. I believe it is a day of 'Josephs' – Joseph in the old testament was someone who was raised up from his prison to become prime minister. It is a day where people like Joseph will be raised up and become people of influence in the marketplace. Along with the influence that Business, Education, Media and Politics can have I also believe that the Arts have a huge role to play in seeing change happen in our society. People carrying values like loyalty, humility, drug free lifestyles, justice, truth, love and compassion. Art that is of the highest quality, raw, passionate and authentic. I am so excited at the potential of seeing a whole new generation of creatives being trained, loved and released in their calling to be 'Josephs' through who they are and what they create.

In ngm we have individual mentors for all our artists and we try and create a place where people can be themselves, deepen their faith, and be honest and accountable in their art and walk with God. It is going to need 'Josephs' not only in gifting but also in character if we are going to see a greater impact in our culture.

***'The world is more malleable than you think and it's waiting for us to hammer it into shape'***

Bono

I am presently about to start working on a new musical inspired by Rembrandt's painting of the prodigal son. I was asking God recently, one Sunday morning, to confirm that he wanted me to take it into the marketplace. The message of unconditional love is so prophetic, particularly to our fatherless generation. I asked him if he could get someone to pick me out and tell me 'Ray you need to take your musicals into the marketplace!' It's a huge commercial risk taking a new musical on tour through the theatre world of our land. I just needed a definite confirmation from God that this was what he wanted me to do. You can imagine my shock when an hour later the speaker at my local church stopped during his talk and asked if anyone was there from the musical Luv Esther (a musical I've written and produced based on the life of Esther). When I responded he said 'Ray, I believe God has a word for you, he wants you to take your musicals into the marketplace!' He went on to say that he believed that God would raise me up like Joseph and give me greater influence not only in the nation but also with those I work with within the industry. What a joy, along with thousands of others, to serve God's purposes at this time.

***'Music is the supreme gift of God'***

Martin Luther

A recent article by Rick Joyner noted that the first time someone was said to be filled with the Spirit was an artist called Bezalel (Exodus 31; 1 – 5). He was crucial to the building of the Tabernacle which can be seen as a prophetic model of the church. I believe that artists are also crucial to seeing the church fulfil its mandate to truly glorify God. I am not specifically thinking about worship leaders and worship

bands, as important as these are, but artists that will be salt and light, show the goodness and love of God and be like Jesus in hanging out in the marketplace. Being a successful artist, however, is not necessarily about being famous and becoming a superstar! Someone said that success for a Christian is being obedient to God. Whether we are publishers, music coaches, actors, tv presenters, promoters, start new record labels or indeed become well known artists, there are just so many different areas in the arts where we can play a successful part in helping to shape our culture.

***'Truly, we are in a strategic new season now'***

*Todd Bentley*

I am a child of the sixties and I think back now to the many opportunities we had to stay 'in the world' and help shape what was happening in those heady and exciting times. I ended up like so many others being sucked into a Christian sub culture as the church seemed to step out of engagement in our society. I feel we are at another of those seasons where things are changing and shifting ( eg. our love for the internet and all the technological advances that are happening daily) and that we have as the church such a golden opportunity to think clearly, prepare ourselves and commission and release God's creatives for active engagement in our society. Power bases like record companies are losing the stronghold they once had and I also believe there are changes taking place where it seems like a new generation of church leaders are emerging and new partnerships forming.

Over the last 27 years in ngm we have sought to train up and release a new generation who will serve the church and make a difference in our society. DJ and producer Andy Hunter who came through ngm and is still connected with us, has played in clubs all over the world. You can hear his music on major Hollywood films and computer games, like The Matrix, Tom Braider, The Italian Job. He has also just finished writing a score for a new film due to be released in April. He is signed to a mainstream label and meets with many top DJ's across the world. Andy sees himself as a worship leader!

We also have other DJ's who have been developed through ngm, who are playing in clubs both in the UK and also around the world. Their music is being played on Radio one and their records are available through mainstream shops. One of the bands we have been working with for the last five or six years have just been signed to Gut records and their debut single and album is being released later this year. We have also released studio engineers, sound and lighting engineers, dancers, musicians, Graphic designers, agents, managers, TV presenters etc., all working in the marketplace. My dream is to see a multiplication of centres of excellence like ngm, working in partnership with the church and releasing thousands of God's artisans.

I see ngm as only a small piece of the jigsaw. There are lots of other people doing a great job in this arena like Artisan, Nexus, artists like David and Carrie Grant, Athlete, the Beddingfields, dancers, actors, producers, directors, just to mention a few! I do believe that we are a part of the bigger picture and that there is a great

need to get together with others to pray and debate and see how we can partner and collaborate in seeing a new generation of artists released in our days.

***'Church and creatives need to unite once again to transform culture'***

*DickStaub*

So.. I'm on a quest..... in the words of one of our greatest Christian leaders and spokesmen of our generation –

***'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For'***

*Bono*

For further information on ngm and its training programmes for artists contact [zoewickham@ngm.org.uk](mailto:zoewickham@ngm.org.uk) or call 01454 414880.