

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Developing a Discipleship Program for
Artists in Naples, Florida**

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
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“I am convinced *and* confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect *and* complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]” (Phil.1:6 (AMP)).

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has loved me with an everlasting, unconditional love; the One who has called and equipped me for service; the One who is faithful, strong, and true. I dedicate this work to the glory of God that it may transform and equip others to advance Christ’s Great Commission for generations to come. To God, be the glory!

Thirty years of my life and ministry are woven into the pages of this thesis. I celebrate and praise God for bringing me to the completion of a milestone that I could only see in the far distance. The good work that the Apostle Paul speaks of began with an inner stirring to create. At the age of 11, while attending a youth retreat, the facilitator handed all of us small pieces of paper and challenged us to write down what we wanted to be in the next five years. Without hesitation, I wrote that I wanted to serve in full-time ministry for the rest of my life.

As early as I can remember, art was my passion. I served in the church for many years in various leadership roles; the arts were integral to every ministry facet. Coming from a broken home, one of six children, abandoned by my father at eight years old, the arts were comfort and healing for me. It was through the arts that I came to know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior. Worship, liturgy, and other creative elements have always been an inspiration for me and an avenue to draw closer to God. God graciously made it possible for me to study at public schools and universities specializing in the arts. These were some of the most fulfilling years of my life and also the most painful. I experienced first-hand peer pressure, high-stress levels, and sadly, my artist peers’ pains and struggles.

The formative years of my involvement in church ministry are priceless. In 1992, God called me to pursue formal ministry training, later opening many other ministry opportunities. The arts were still my passion, and I often wondered how I could minister in both areas. I empathetically related to the struggles of my artist peers. I innately knew that God had a particular purpose and plan for artists.

God poured Ephesians 2:10 into my spirit in the most impactful way, and it was through that verse that a ministry was born. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10 [ESV]). God used my struggles and brokenness to develop a ministry to artists who likewise have similar stories.

A generation of artists, writers, musicians, singers, and performers is emerging, and a resurgence of the arts is happening throughout the world. God is raising, calling, equipping, and sending artists to saturate the world with the Gospel, infused with the arts. It is my prayer that I will continue to encourage and equip artists to bring the Light of hope into a darkening world.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my loving mother, Lillie Mae Barnett, committed servant of God, fearless prayer warrior, perpetual overcomer, and friend, who has remained steadfast and unmovable despite hardships and challenges. My resolve to persevere mirrors her impeccable life of unwavering faith. My mother is my greatest support and encouraged me through some of the most challenging times in my life. Her love for music, worship, and the arts planted a powerful seed within me that has yielded unimaginable fruit for the Kingdom of God. I will always love you.

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“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, March 19, 2021

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Naples, Florida, is home to many talented artists. Many hold to various worldviews that are different from a biblical one. Both secular and Christian artists are on a mission to transform the culture. This divide creates challenges for Storytellers Creative Arts' mission to do evangelism through the arts. Artists, over centuries, have functioned in various roles within the church, marketplace, government, communications, entertainment, and education. The arts have always been one of the most powerful forces in transforming the world. God has instituted the church as His most redeeming force to transform culture. Rather than allowing the arts to be taken over by the forces of darkness, the church should disciple, and unleash artists to transform culture with their God-given talents. Artists need to be affirmed and celebrated as partners in the mission of the church. When artists are not nurtured by the church, they often disconnect and question their faith. Storytellers Creative Arts aspires to work in tandem with churches and ministries to evangelize, develop and deploy artists as disciples who transform their families, communities, and world. This research thesis will provide methods to disciple artists and impactfully engage the secular culture with the Gospel.

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Abbreviations

AFCS	<i>Artists in the Faith Community Survey</i>
AFR	<i>Arts for Recovery</i>
AOG	<i>Artist Outreach Groups</i>
APD	<i>Artist's Path to Discipleship</i>
AR	<i>Artist</i>
ARP	<i>Artist/Pastor</i>
BRG	<i>Barna Research Group</i>
CC	<i>Creatives Connect</i>
CCM	<i>Contemporary Christian Music</i>
CCG	<i>Collage Community Groups</i>
CSCLG	<i>Creative Soul Care Life Groups</i>
CTCAC	<i>Created to Create Arts Conference</i>
CWC	<i>Creative Week Collier</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
GOC	<i>Gathering of Creatives</i>
LAM	<i>Lausanne Arts Movement</i>
ML	<i>Ministry Leader</i>
PFA	<i>Pray for the Arts</i>
PMLS	<i>Pastor/Ministry Leader Arts Ministry Survey</i>
SCA	<i>Storytellers Creative Arts</i>
UACCC	<i>United Arts Council of Collier County</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Author and activist Albert Mohler, in his latest book *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church* warns that a storm is brewing. A tsunami is upon us. The moral landscape of American values is being swept away. The foundational values of Western culture are fading.¹ “A central fact of the storm now gathering strength is moral liberalism, which cannot be explained without the dechristianization of society”,² says Mohler. As a result, the children of the next generation will inevitably inherit a wasteland. A major catalyst of this destruction is the media in all of its expressions (visual, literary, aural, musical). Most alarmingly, the media is dismantling and reshaping the next generations.

Renowned philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer said that art reflects the worldview of the artist.³ The arts have more power to destroy or to give life than ever before. Christian artists equipped and strategically placed in visual arts, fashion, music, film, and other media can change the culture, one heart at a time.

Mohler goes on to say that “moral liberalism has basically become the dominant moral commitment of the most influential sectors of American society from the universities to the entertainment industry and the artistic centers and the mass media and the titans of Silicon Valley”.⁴ A biblical worldview acknowledges that God is the creator of the world and that all of

¹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2020), 15.

² Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, 15.

³ “Francis Schaeffer and the Arts: A Retrospective,” Mere Orthodoxy, 2017. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://mereorthodoxy.com/francis-schaeffer-arts-retrospective/>.

⁴ Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, 15.

life centers on His power and His will; that God loved the world and gave His only Son Jesus to save the world from sin (Gen. 1-2; Col 1:27; John 3:16). Sin has caused a great divide between humans and God. Jesus not only saves us from sin but reconciles us to God – restoring the broken relationship caused by our sin.

This DMin. thesis will identify and address the worldviews of both the secular and Christian arts communities of Naples, Florida, how each influences culture, and seek to develop a plan to disciple the artists.

Ministry Context

Storytellers Creative Arts

Storytellers Creative Arts (SCA), a Naples, Florida-based ministry, has two foci: ministry *to* artists and ministry *through* artists. It was born out of a vision that the arts can communicate the Gospel in compelling ways to a media-focused world. The ministry was founded in 2002 by William Barnett. SCA believes that God is raising a generation of artists, who will make a difference in the culture, submitting their lives to Him and freely offering their gifts in service to His kingdom.⁵

SCA is based in Naples, Florida. Its palatial homes, pristine landscapes, and prolific cultural activities cater to the wealthy. Naples is known for its beaches, real estate, and vibrant arts culture. According to the *World Population Review*, the city of Naples, Florida's estimated population is 22,039. Naples, Florida, is the 110th largest city in Florida based on official 2017 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. The overall median age is 66.2 years, 66.1 years for

⁵ "About Storytellers Creative Arts," Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.storytellerscreativearts.com/about>.

males, and 66.4 years for females. For every 100 females, there are 86.7 males.⁶ The population of the Greater Naples area, which includes surrounding communities, is 214,651.⁷ Naples is home to over 100 churches from all faiths and denominations: Protestant (Presbyterian, Baptist, Assemblies of God, Methodist), Catholic, Agnostic, New Age, Non-Denominational and others – all with varied liturgies, traditions and worship styles.⁸

Ministry to Artists

SCA hosts community groups for artists who reach out through SCA's arts programs and partnerships with local community organizations to teach, mentor, and heal their served communities. As artists seeking to impact the world, SCA inspires and equips artists to transform culture. SCA has four specific philosophies of ministry to disciple artists and build artist communities:

1. *Healing the Creative Soul.* Artists are often wounded. Healing is best experienced in community.

2. *Nurturing the Creative Soul.* Artists are often isolated. Artists can be best encouraged in a community of those who share similar struggles.

3. *Inspiring the Creative Soul.* Artists often lose a sense of transcendence. Artists can best be inspired in a community where they discover together their purpose and direction for their craft.

⁶ "Naples, Florida Population," World Population Review, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/naples-fl-population/>.

⁷ "Greater Naples Demographics," Point To Homes, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/FL/Southwest/Naples-CCD/Greater-Naples-Demographics.html>.

⁸ "Naples, Florida Churches," Churches-In, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <http://www.churches-in.com/florida/Naples/>.

4. *Unleashing the Creative Soul*. Artists are often blinded to their greater responsibility to reach the watching world. Artists can best be unleashed in a community that challenges them to create art that expresses Christian faith, transforming lives, and elevating culture.⁹

SCA's *Community Groups* for artists focus on worship, Bible study and creative expression. The *Gathering of Creatives* develops community and networking opportunities for artists, introducing SCA programs and volunteer opportunities. Conferences, retreats, and workshops focus on inspiring Christians in the arts to create art that glorifies God and deepen their relationship with Him.¹⁰

Ministry through Artists

After inspiring and discipling artists to advance the Great Commission, SCA then sends artists into their spheres of influence to creatively tell and express God's Story through various art forms. Artists are trained to be witnesses in the marketplace, education, workplace, and in the community. SCA and its 100-plus artists have touched the lives of more than 4,000 in the recovery and disadvantaged communities in Southwest Florida since 2018.¹¹

There is a pandemic of addiction and addiction-related deaths in Southwest Florida (including Naples). According to Florida Weekly, "In Southwest Florida, an already epidemic trend in opioid drug overdoses and deaths is getting worse as a toxic mix of heroin and fentanyl

⁹ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

¹⁰ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

¹¹ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

tears through the state and the U.S.”.¹² As a result, it has crippled families, shattered relationships, exacerbated homelessness, and increased at-risk youth and crime.

Arts for Recovery, an outreach to recovering adults, centers on worship and expressive arts. This program touches the lives of the mentally ill and addicted in Naples. *Get Creative Day* features art classes, worship, and activities with a biblical theme, touching impoverished children and families with the love and hope of Jesus through creative expression, mentoring, and meeting felt needs.¹³ Partnerships with the David Lawrence Centers (a mental health and substance abuse hospital); Youth Haven (a shelter for abused children and youth), and other Naples organizations expands the outreach of SCA to the greater Naples area. SCA is planting seeds of faith and hope into the hearts and lives of the least, the lost and the last in Naples, Florida.¹⁴

Naples Arts Culture

The United Arts Council of Collier County (UACCC)¹⁵ recently developed an arts and culture strategic plan to unite and support all arts entities, local artists, and other arts organizations. The Naples arts community was included in the strategic plan, which comprised interviews, community discussions, and forums. The research targeted organizational and resident surveys, asset inventory, cultural vitality index profiles, market demand analysis, and mapping.

¹² “The Drug Epidemic is Hitting SWFL Hard,” Florida Weekly, 2017. accessed March 24, 2020, <https://naples.floridaweekly.com/articles/opioid-death/>.

¹³ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

¹⁴ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

¹⁵ “About,” United Arts Council of Collier, 2019. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.uaccollier.com/about/>.

The participating organizations in the survey included: ten (10) multi-disciplinary arts; two (2) Music; six (6) Theater Arts; five (5) Visual Arts and five (5) other groups: art centers, community service, conservation/nature, museums, and arts/faith organizations. There are only 2-3 Christian-faith based organizations in Naples (apart from churches) that focus on the arts and the Christian faith as a ministry.¹⁶

Naples has unique geography and demography with varied communities of cultural distinction. Naples is a philanthropic and giving community with rich cultural organizations and activities. A seasonal community, Naples is flooded with part-time residents annually who drive and stimulate the economy through consumption of its cultural and artistic offerings like the Naples Philharmonic, the Sugden Theater, Naples Botanical Gardens, the Naples Art Association and other offerings including a plethora of galleries, museums, and other entertainment. The Naples arts culture (according to the UACCC) is more traditional than innovative, focusing on older generations. There are very few creative opportunities for young residents and young aspiring artists. Artmaking is the highest and most operative cultural activities in Naples (Collier County), where performing in plays or theater is the lowest. Naples residents frequent art galleries and studios more regularly than casinos or entertainment shows.¹⁷

The top creative career in Naples is photography, where the lowest is architecture and civil drafting. Software developers in Naples's earnings for 2017 were \$31,668,563, where the earnings of museums in Naples were \$2,719,542 in 2017. Artistic life in Naples is one of the reasons the community continues to grow. Naples attracts visitors with its unique cultural brand

¹⁶ “Arts and Culture Strategic Plan,” United Arts Council of Collier, 2019. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.uaccollier.com/programs/strategic-plan/>.

¹⁷ Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 2019.

– a fusion of arts, agriculture, sports, nature, culinary, and beaches. Local artists thrive in Naples, and creative hubs exist throughout the community. Public art is part of the daily lives of residents; schools provide artistic career pathways. The highest priority for art culture is on reflecting the county's diverse people and cultures. Naples prioritizes urban planning (building streetscapes and public places) over social services (homelessness and at-risk youth).¹⁸

A Ripe Harvest

The unprecedented global crisis of 2020 has hit the arts community substantially hard, affecting professionals in the arts whose livelihoods depend on income from commissions and performances.¹⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated a domino effect of a failed economy, mental and emotional stressors, and fear about the future. Suicide and mental illness have increased considerably over the past five months. US News contributor, Trevor Bach writes,

COVID-19 has been associated with other suicides that drew widespread media attention, including a German state finance minister who appears to have taken his own life while worried about economic disaster, a British teenager distressed by social distancing measures, and an Italian nurse who feared spreading the virus to other people.²⁰

Artists across the country are jobless and vulnerable, with no audience experiencing their art or patrons to support them. For many artists, their identities are deeply connected to what they make, produce, or perform. Bach says “These are unprecedented times. The pandemic will cause distress and leave many people vulnerable to mental health problems and suicidal behavior”.²¹

¹⁸ Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 2019.

¹⁹ “How COVID-19 Is Affecting the Cultural World,” Smithsonian Magazine, 2020. accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/how-covid-19-has-affected-worlds-cultural-institutions-180974383/>.

²⁰ “Will Suicides Rise Because of COVID-19?,” U.S. News, 2020. accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-05-22/experts-warn-of-a-surge-of-suicides-tied-to-the-coronavirus-pandemic>.

²¹ Suicides, 2020.

However, amid uncertainty and loss, God has opened a unique opportunity to reach the artist subculture with the love and hope of Jesus Christ. God has called His disciples to go, make, grow, and deploy other disciples, filling the earth, spreading his life-transforming Gospel. The prophet Isaiah highlights the call: “Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples” (Isaiah 62:10 [ESV]).²² Interestingly, he mentions, “clearing it of stones.” The stones quite possibly could refer to brokenness or worldviews that taint the good, true, and beautiful. The signal can symbolize what artists make or create to tell God's redemptive story. When artists (in particular) are mobilized and equipped to purvey the Truth, they are prepared to combat the dark arts and a humanistic culture.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that the conflicting worldviews of secular and Christian arts communities have the potential to diminish the impact of Storytellers Creative Arts’ ministry in Naples. A typical SCA gathering with artists often moves away from Christianity and devolves into spiritual conversations on the universe, essence, and faith. Navigating through these overlapping layers diminishes a Christ-centered community because of the time spent debating, dissecting, and dealing with a plethora of worldviews of artists.

Three critical issues intensify this problem: (1) Secular and Christian arts communities have a mission to transform the culture;²³ (2) The spiritual dimension is at the forefront of both

²² Isaiah 62:10 (ESV)

²³ “Christian and Secular Artist Collabos,” Radiant Culture, 2017. accessed June 14, 2020, <https://radiant-culture.com/christian-secular-artist-collabos/>.

communities²⁴ and (3) The secular *and* [Christian] arts communities are discipling the nations.²⁵ Each side has a mission to advance their “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20). Within these critical issues, the divide between worldviews has jaded the culture. The secular worldview rarely sees art as a God-given, God-inspired gift, and vehicle of connection with the true and Living God among some artists.

The mission of Storytellers Creative Arts affirms the arts as a medium to transform culture. In actuality, non-Christian artists are doing the same – pulling the culture away from Christianity into a universal, humanistic mindset.²⁶

SCA attempts to build a ministry within a community of Christian artists, equipping them to evangelize non-believers. The challenge is that many artists are disillusioned with the church. They walk away from faith to embrace other values that thwart their worldviews. Conflicting issues arise because the artist is drawn to dig deeper into the spiritual realm, not acknowledging that God, the Creator of all things, is the source of all things (Col. 1:16-20). A progressive New Age agenda flows throughout some of the theater productions, art shows and in some faith communities in Naples.²⁷

²⁴ “Spirituality and Art: A Priceless Living Bridge Between Mind and Spirit,” Psychology Today, 2017. accessed June 14, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201712/spirituality-and-art>.

²⁵ Darrow Miller. “The Power of Story: The Role of the Artist in Discipling the Nations”. Filmed [September 2014]. YouTube video, 17:54. Posted [September 2014]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhMA3zTDGTI>.

²⁶ Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020.

²⁷ Mark Anthony Lord. “Imagination”. Filmed [March 2020]. YouTube video, 53:41. Posted [March 2020]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSPRvxBqoU>.

Comingling Sacred and Secular Cultures

“Americans are deeply religious people—and atheists are no exception. Western Europeans are deeply secular people—and Christians are no exception”.²⁸ Atlantic Magazine’s *Atheists Are Sometimes More Religious Than Christians* brings a fresh new perspective on the sacred and secular divide. The article focuses on religion globally, with the arts at the center of comparison and research. According to a 2018 Pew Research, the results essentially revealed a disconnect between Christians and their understanding of the atheist, agnostic, or “none” beliefs. Only 23 percent of European Christians say they believe in God with absolute certainty, while 27 percent of American *nones* say the same.²⁹

The striking survey resulted in three eye-openers that should prompt the church to consider the complications of even having a dialogue with people who live in diverse levels of faith or none at all. There is most certainly a divide amongst the sacred and secular; however, it is alarming to discover that both sides take on some of the other’s traditions and throw out the rest – however they see “their” truth. The survey showed that: Americans are much more religious than Western Europeans; American “nones”—those who identify as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular—are more religious than European nones; and American nones are as religious as—or even more religious than—*Christians* in several European countries, including France, Germany, and the U.K.³⁰ Sigal Samuel, Atlantic Magazine editor observed:

America is a country so suffused with faith that religious attributes abound even among the secular. Consider the rise of “atheist churches,” which cater to Americans who have

²⁸ “Atheists Are Sometimes More Religious Than Christians,” The Atlantic, 2018. accessed September 18, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/american-atheists-religious-european-christians/560936/>.

²⁹ Atheists, 2018.

³⁰ Atheists, 2018.

lost faith in supernatural deities but still crave community, enjoy singing with others, and want to think deeply about morality. It's religion, minus all the God stuff.³¹

The Met's 2018 (Metropolitan Museum of Art's) annual fashion gala "Heavenly Bodies" was a Catholic-themed "religious comingling" with secular American culture. Celebrity elites walked the red carpet in religious garbs like tiaras, halos, angel wings, crucifixes, and other papal attire in cutting edge fashion. The community zealously embraced fashion and this *Catholic Imagination* with some pushback from some Christians in the community as they saw it to be sacrilegious³² (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. "Sarah Jessica Parker" (2018 Met Gala), removed to comply with copyright.



Figure 1. Hector Retamal, *Sarah Jessica Parker*, 2018, photograph, AFP - Getty Images, <https://www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/met-gala-2018-see-best-heavenly-looks-catholic-themed-red-n872051>.

³¹ Atheists, 2018.

³² Atheists, 2018.

“Beyoncé Mass” is a worship service that offers the elements of a symbolic religion with some traditional Christian cultural practices. Grace Cathedral, a progressive church in San Francisco, held its first Beyoncé Mass in April of 2018, where over 1,000 people of color and the LGBTQ community gathered to sing praises to the goddess herself, Beyoncé, in a sacred setting infused with secular music. Beyoncé (also known as Queen Bey) is the perfect passage to get the message out into the world.³³

Social Justice and a social gospel are the heart of the mission at Grace Cathedral. “Beyoncé is a better theologian than many of the pastors and priests in our church today...the church hasn’t been the best about lifting those voices”,³⁴ said Reverend Jude Harmon, pastor at Grace Cathedral. Linda Woodhead, professor at Lancaster University in the U.K, sees spirituality as a transition between being Christian and non-religious. “Spirituality provides an opportunity for people to maintain what they like about Christianity without the bits they don’t like”.³⁵

Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way* is a New Age book study and devotional that has indoctrinated thousands of artists in Hollywood and worldwide since its publishing in 1992, selling over 4 million copies to date. Screenwriter, author, recovering addict and New Age guru, Cameron, was raised Catholic and was once married to film director Martin Scorsese.³⁶ Recovery and creativity as a spiritual path are the basis for the book, influencing an insurmountable amount of artists – both Christian and non-Christian. New York Times columnist

³³ Atheists, 2018.

³⁴ “The Church Service That Worships Beyoncé”. Filmed [May 2018]. YouTube video, 5:56. Posted [May 2018]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXci-sRayAQ>.

³⁵ Atheists, 2018.

³⁶ “Julia Cameron Wants You to Do Your Morning Pages,” New York Times, 2019. accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/02/style/julia-cameron-the-artists-way.html>.

Penelope Green says that *The Artist's Way* “promises to free up that inner artist in 12 weeks. It’s a template that would seem to reflect the practices of 12-step programs, particularly its invocations to a higher power”.³⁷ Cameron’s belief system speaks the language of creatives, their desire to create with excellence and to delve into a space of autonomy and control of one’s destiny through internal powers. Julia’s *Artist’s Way* meet-up groups are populating in Naples, Florida, attracting local artists – many from Christian churches and the secular arts community.

The Artist’s Way Meetup groups span 98,366 members, 87 groups, in 64 cities and 16 countries. In Florida, Orlando alone boasts 2,189 members with Deland and Delray Beach hosting groups as well.³⁸

Julia Cameron is remaking creative souls and discipling the nations, leading artists into portals of creative beliefs and practices which are adverse to a biblical worldview. Many of her disciples frequent Bible studies to recruit new converts. SCA often has group attendees who follow the teachings of Cameron. She says:

The Universe responds to my dreams and needs. There is a unity flowing through all things. This unity is responsive to our needs. Unity responds and reacts to our positive spoken word. We are co-creative beings, working with and within a larger whole. We embrace and contain this Source, which embraces and contains us. Drawing upon this inner Source, we have an unlimited supply.³⁹

The humanistic mindset is that *the mind is God* and that the human (the artist) can create and re-create oneself. The agenda within this belief is the accessing and control of one’s thinking, entering a place of mystery and hidden knowledge. The acknowledgment and worship

³⁷ Morning Pages, 2019.

³⁸ “The Artist’s Way Meetup,” Meetup LLC, 2020. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.meetup.com/topics/artistsway/>.

³⁹ “Unlimited Supply,” Julia Cameron Live, 2012. accessed March 24, 2020, <https://juliacameronlive.com/2012/04/27/unlimited-supply/>.

of God are non-existent within Cameron’s books. Artists are groomed to be self-sufficient, powerfully independent, and mentally influential in creating, and living. Naples, Florida, needs a Bible-based curriculum designed for discipleship and the spiritual formation of artists. As *The Artist’s Way* is incorporated and utilized in the arts communities, it will exacerbate and diminish evangelism through the arts – God’s way.

Figure 2. “The Artist’s Way”

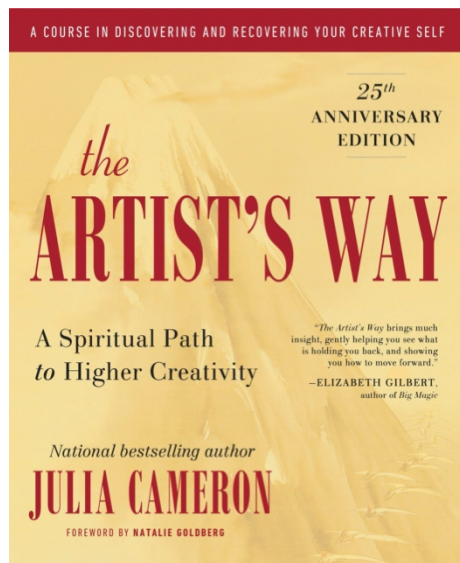


Figure 2. Julia Cameron, *Artist’s Way*, 2020, JPEG photograph, Penguin Publishers, <https://www.amazon.com/Artists-Way-25th-Anniversary/dp/0143129252>.

Mark Anthony Lord, the pastor of Unity Church in Naples, is a minister, artist, writer, and motivational speaker who preaches *New Thought* theology. With a congregation of mostly artists, his method to disciple artists promotes a new age humanistic worldview. Lord says,

The imagination is the creative machine inside of you that places the image in the mind and that image activates the feeling nature which kind of brings it to life. Without imagination, nothing would be created. Imagination is that machine in you that makes something from nothing.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lord, *Imagination*, 2020.

Lord denies God as the Creator who created something from nothing, and puts this power into the hands of human minds.⁴¹ The Bible teaches that “For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16 [ESV]).⁴²

Lord teaches that The 12 Powers [Unity Church doctrine] are like divine attributes, hard-wired inside of you. Imagination is like seeing with the eye of God – the third eye:

When the third eye is awakened inside you, you have access to God-inspired ideas. We become a portal for God's love, for God's brilliance, for God's healing power, then the beauty of that is that you become fully expanded yourself.⁴³

Lord cast doubt among the congregation that Jesus walked on water (Matthew 14:23-33), promoting an agenda that people are the captains of their own lives and imaginations. Lord preaches internal power to change and heal the world, infusing it with human feelings.⁴⁴

Emmy Award-winning director, producer, and writer Patrick W. Ziegler facilitates *The Artist's Way* classes across the United States and abroad. The 10-week classes awaken the creative giant within, cause greater happiness, peace, and power and, make the artist a magnet for greater prosperity.⁴⁵ Ziegler is married to Michael Anthony Lord, pastor of the Unity Church

⁴¹ Lord, *Imagination*, 2020.

⁴² Col. 1:16 (ESV)

⁴³ Lord, *Imagination*, 2020.

⁴⁴ Lord, *Imagination*, 2020.

⁴⁵ Patrick W. Ziegler. “The Artist’s Way Class”. Filmed [2017]. Vimeo video, 2:24. Posted [2017]. <https://vimeo.com/210875736>.

in Naples. Unity hosts the classes on its campus, attracting hundreds of artists in the Naples community.⁴⁶ Ziegler says of the class:

We are going to blast through your blocks, looking at where you are stuck. We are going to explore and engage with what creativity is looking to be expressed. [The Artist's Way] is about tapping into your creative energy. It is a spiritual pathway to higher creativity.⁴⁷

Some churches intermingle and intersperse biblical and liberal views into teaching and worship, adopting secular practices from the creative world to present its message and transform lives. Howard John Wesley, the pastor at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, said that:

Church attendance is strong because we understand our calling. The challenge for most churches is attracting young people while maintaining the core older membership. I was raised in the era of Hip Hop. I respect Hip Hop. I know 90s language. So within language, I can use analogies and metaphors that address all generations. In the words of my favorite poet Sean Carter...for those over 45, that's Jay Z. Sean Carter argues that a couple of dollars shut up our holler.⁴⁸

According to the Barna Research Group (BRG), other worldviews have crept into Christians' perspectives. BRG's 2017 survey revealed that only 17 percent of Christians who consider their faith important and attend church regularly actually have a biblical worldview.⁴⁹ Three years later, these numbers are insurmountably rising.

The 2017 survey highlighted four competing worldviews that are enticing Christians today. 1. *New Spirituality* holds a positive view of religion, emphasizing the supernatural,

⁴⁶ "The Artist's Way," Unity Church Naples, 2019. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.unitynaples.org/project/the-artists-way/>.

⁴⁷ Patrick W. Ziegler. "Taste of The Artist's Way". Filmed [2019]. Vimeo video, 2:02. Posted [2019]. <https://vimeo.com/user47140882>.

⁴⁸ "Pastor Uses the Bible and Beyoncé to Reach Across Generations". Filmed [April 2017]. YouTube video, 5:46. Posted [April 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSPRvxBqoU>.

⁴⁹ "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Culture," Barna Group, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>.

simultaneously feeding into a growing dissatisfaction with institutions. 2. *Secularism* prioritizes the scientific method as an explanatory framework for life and advances a rational and materialistic view of the world. 3. *Post-modernism* is the belief that everything can be explained objectively through the scientific method—advancing the idea that there is no such thing as objectivity; we are all limited by our experience, and at best we can know only what is true for ourselves. Finally, *Marxism* stands in opposition to the economics of capitalism and falls more in line with socialist or communist political ideologies.⁵⁰

One cannot help but consider the 83% who live according to secular worldviews. What will the future of the church be? Like the sons of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32, believers of Christ must understand the times, and have the discernment to know what to do to combat competing worldviews and advance the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)⁵¹ in culture.

The 2019 United Arts Council of Collier County report revealed some of the needs and priorities of artists. Naples artists want recognition and support of their role as an artist in the community. They want to engage in more critical dialogue about the arts. They want affordable live, work, exhibition and sales spaces, cooperative solutions, and more opportunities to display their art publicly. Naples artists also desire to build community with other artists through networking.⁵² Amid the Naples arts culture are varied worldviews that are influencing art, music and other creative mediums that communicate culture.

The arts are worthy of attention and engagement because they are one of many ways to powerfully communicate the Gospel. As images bearers of God, the church is mandated to create

⁵⁰ Competing Worldviews, 2020.

⁵² Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 2020.

(Ephesians 2:10). The church is the lead of creative artistic expression through worship, liturgy, and bringing hope to a fallen world. Creation itself is artistic as it reveals the handiwork and beauty of the Master Artist. Romans 1:20 attests to the truth that creation points to the Creator. “God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”⁵³ (Romans 1:20 [NIV]).

According to author Philip Ryken in *Art for God’s Sake*, “the church has abandoned the artistic community, losing a significant opportunity to communicate Christ to the culture”.⁵⁴ There is an abundance of creatives in every congregation – untapped and released to live into their creative callings to edify the church and bring glory to God. The neglect to affirm and nurture creatives in the congregation will drive them to disconnect from the church to find other ways of engaging their gifts and talent.

There are very few Christian arts communities in Naples where Christians can gather and support one another through prayer, collaboration and fellowship. Although many churches have thriving worship ministries, there are limited avenues of support apart from the production and performances connected to ministry.

Lisa DeBoer of Calvin Institute of Christian Worship⁵⁵ says:

Fruitfulness requires honest and careful evaluation of what the arts are bringing to the church and how the church is being blessed by them. Just having an arts program or arts ministry isn’t enough. All arts activities need to be subject to the same prayerful, evaluated attention to which every other area of church life is subject. This is very difficult if artists don’t enjoy the faithful support of the church. But, if the church is

⁵³ Romans 1:20 (NIV)

⁵⁴ Philip G. Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Philipsburg, NJ: R & R Publishing, 2006), 14.

⁵⁵ “Mission,” Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2020. accessed November 8, 2020, <https://worship.calvin.edu/about/mission.html>.

faithful to its artists, an ongoing conversation about what is working or not and why, is absolutely indispensable.⁵⁶

While evangelism and the advancement of Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) are charges to the church, a vision for the arts in this mission is often left waiting and wanting. Artists need affirmation, love, and connection to community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to address the divide between the sacred and secular arts cultural worldviews in Naples, Florida, and develop a program to disciple artists. The task of untangling and separating false views of God and faith within the arts community is a great one, seemingly unachievable, but this project will seek to find solutions.

The greatest artists in the history of the world are using the new media⁵⁷ to shape the culture. Artists have great opportunities to heal, nurture, shape, and unleash the creative souls of the world. Artists set the narrative. The arts have disproportionate power in shaping culture today. Urgency leads to vision. To accomplish the vision requires a mission that advances Christ's commission through the arts.

Storytellers Creative Arts ministers to artists, through artists, and with artists. The arts powerfully influence and change the culture. The only redeeming force that God has put on this earth is the church. Some churches are hesitant or ineffective in their methodology. On the other

⁵⁶ Lisa DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshiping Church*, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 18-19.

⁵⁷ "What Is New Media?" Southern New Hampshire University, 2020. accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/newsroom/2020/02/what-is-new-media>.

hand, some churches in Naples, Florida, have bought into the New Age culture, diluting their influence on culture.

For the ministry to be impacting, and to reach artists with the Gospel, SCA must find common ground with the secular community and also come alongside the church to do the same. The Apostle Paul's methods of ministry always allowed him to connect with people of worldviews other than a biblical one. He said, "To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means, I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22 [ESV]).⁵⁸ It is critical for the church to embrace and affirm its artists and to find ways to connect with non-Christians in the arts. Understanding the beliefs and practices of other groups will enable the church to minister effectively.

This thesis work seeks to explore and gain more understanding on the secular and Christian arts communities and their missions to transform the culture through the arts. SCA will seek to develop different methods and a different language to present the Gospel.

The spiritual dimension is at the forefront of both communities. The word *spiritual* has conflicting meanings among the secular and Christian arts communities. The humanistic worldview refuses to acknowledge God as the Creator:

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things (Romans 1:20-23 [ESV]).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 9:22 (ESV)

⁵⁹ Rom. 1:20-23 (ESV)

Nature, science, and the cosmos are all subjects that new agers challenge Christian beliefs. In the efforts to *find* common ground, Christians in the arts must also *stand* their ground. If they are not clear about what they believe and give testimony of these beliefs, truthfully and confidently, then another part of the problem would be biblical illiteracy and again, the lack of directional spiritual formation from their faith communities.

Erik Strandness debunks the atheist's claim that they do not believe in God or any god:

Spirituality is one of the most common human experiences. Studies consistently show that 90 percent of all people believe in a god of some sort or another, so the real question is not whether or not a god exists, but rather, who is the god in whom most people believe? While we tend to think that atheism has been the biggest threat to our Christian faith, a 2017 poll from the Barna Group and Summit Ministries revealed that postmodernism and the new spirituality have actually a greater impact.⁶⁰

The secular and Christian arts communities are discipling the nations. Billionaire, icon, artist, actor, and media mogul Oprah Winfrey is discipling nations with a New Age platform that is captivating millions. During her recent 2020 tour, she delivered what was seemingly a sermon that focused on the inner self and the universe:

I use the Bible as my guide. Whatever is holding you back from your peace, make the peace...because it is only through peace that you get freed to move on to the life that you were meant to live. Every time you thought you lost your way, or you thought you lost control, you were building strength. Strength times strength, times strength, times strength, equals *power*. So, look at how powerful you really are. Universal energy, the forces of life, and all that is God by all the names we call God throughout the universe, is ready to move you in a new direction and all you have to do is decide if you are going to go along with that new direction that is the flow in your life.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Erik Strandness, *God Spoke: Bridging the Sacred-Secular Divide with Divine Discourse* (Grand Rapids, MI: WestBow Press, 2018), 1.

⁶¹ "Oprah's 2020 Vision Tour: Oprah's Emotional Story about Finding Closure with Her Mother". Filmed [February 2020]. YouTube video, 13:38. Posted [February 2020]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLIAPZ6MF7k>.

These critical concerns enhance the stated problem and validate the need to seek solutions to the problem, opening options, and ideas to develop ways to transform culture strategically and to combat secularist worldviews.

Basic Assumptions

In this case study, there are a few assumptions to be noted. There will be interviews conducted with pastors, ministry leaders, secular and Christian artists in Naples, Florida. The surveys will be seeking to gain an understanding of the challenges of artists, local church connection, and spiritual formation—the philosophies of arts ministries in churches.

One assumption is that the interviewees will answer the questions truthfully and accurately and that the opinions and views of the interviewees are authentic. The research of this project will call for connections with both secular and Christian artists, faith communities, and organizations. All parties are assumed to be open and willing to share information about their worldview perspectives. The assumption is that church pastors, in particular, will be willing to share details about the ministry and nurture of artists in their respective congregations. Designing a curriculum or Bible study as a resource to build community among artists in a Christ-centered atmosphere will be considered as a part of a strategy for change; however, it is also assumed that the stated curriculum and studies will, in fact, be a tool to build community among artists. Having a strategic plan in place is a necessary task for this project. There is no guarantee that the stated strategic plan will work; however, the assumption is that it will.

Definitions

Art - a human activity, consisting in this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves'; to evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced,

and...then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling—this is the activity of art.⁶²

Church - ecclesia (Greek); a called out company or assembly; the body of Christ; a local assembly or group of believers; the body of individual living believers; the universal group of all people who have trusted Christ through the ages.⁶³

Community - a group of people who share something in common; the shared attributes of the people in it and/or by the strength of the connections among them.⁶⁴

Creativity (Creative) - the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing.⁶⁵

Curriculum - a plan of action that is aimed at achieving desired goals and objectives; a set of learning activities meant to make the learner attain goals as prescribed by the educational system.⁶⁶

Culture - the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts; shared patterns of

⁶² “What Is Art?” Wide Walls, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.widewalls.ch/what-is-art/>.

⁶³ “What is the Bible Definition of Church? What is the Biblical View of Church?” Patheos, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/08/28/what-is-the-bible-definition-of-church-what-is-the-biblical-view-of-church/>.

⁶⁴ “How Do You Define Community?” Art of Relevance, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <http://www.artofrelevance.org/2018/02/20/how-do-you-define-community/>.

⁶⁵ “What Is Creativity?” Creativity At Work, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.creativityatwork.com/2014/02/17/what-is-creativity/>.

⁶⁶ “Curriculum Definition and Definition of Curriculum,” Bartleby, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Curriculum-Definition-And-Definition-Of-Curriculum-FKXA3JLWKPTDX>.

behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization.⁶⁷

Disciple - a newcomer to the faith and follower of Christ; learner; multiplier; fruit-bearing disciple-maker.⁶⁸

Humanism - a nontheistic worldview that rejects all forms of supernaturalism and is in accord with the spirit and discoveries of science. No belief in, reliance upon, or subservience to supposedly supernatural powers or their effluvia, such as a god or gods, a soul separate from the body, immortality, sin, answered prayer, or divine revelation.⁶⁹

Marxism - stands in opposition to the economics of capitalism and falls more in line with socialist or communist political ideologies.⁷⁰

New Age - God is in everything (pantheism), all things are one (monism); man is God, the mind creates reality and one's own experience validates the truth. New Agers do not believe in evil. They do not accept man's problem as separation by sin from God. They believe that each of us has forgotten his or her own divinity.⁷¹

⁶⁷ "What Is Culture?" Live Science, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>.

⁶⁸ "Give Up Your Weak Definition of Disciple," The Gospel Coalition, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/give-up-your-weak-definition-of-disciple-2/>.

⁶⁹ "Humanism with a Capital H," American Humanist Association, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/humanism-capital-h/>.

⁷⁰ "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Culture," Barna Group, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>.

⁷¹ "What Is New Age Religion and Why Can't Christians Get On Board?" Crosswalk, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-new-age-religion-and-why-cant-christians-get-on-board-11573681.html>.

New Spirituality (New Thought) - holds a positive view of religion, emphasizing the supernatural, simultaneously feeding into a growing dissatisfaction with institutions.⁷²

Postmodernism - the belief that everything can be explained objectively through the scientific method—advancing the idea that there is no such thing as objectivity; we are all limited by our experience, and at best we can know only what is true for ourselves.⁷³

Sacred (Holy) - “hagios” (set apart), reverend, sacred, and worthy of veneration.” This word applies to God because God Himself is totally other, separate, sacred, transcendent, reverend, and set apart from every created thing.⁷⁴

Secularism - prioritizes the scientific method as an explanatory framework for life and advances a rational and materialistic view of the world.⁷⁵

Spiritual but Not Religious - holds very orthodox Christian views of God and maintains many of the Christian practices (albeit individual ones over corporate ones). The *spiritual but not religious* hold much looser ideas about God, spiritual practices, and religion.⁷⁶

Transformation - Transformation is not merely a noticeable change outwardly in behavior; rather, it is a metabolic transformation inwardly in essence.⁷⁷

⁷² Competing Worldviews, 2020.

⁷³ Competing Worldviews, 2020.

⁷⁴ “What Does the Word Holy Mean?” Patheos, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/05/24/what-does-the-word-holy-mean-bible-definition-of-holy/>.

⁷⁵ Competing Worldviews, 2020.

⁷⁶ “Meet the Spiritual But Not Religious,” Barna Group, 2020. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-spiritual-not-religious/>.

⁷⁷ “God’s Salvation in Life: The Definition of Transformation,” Living Stream Ministry, 2014. accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www.ministrysamples.org/excerpts/THE-DEFINITION-OF-TRANSFORMATION.HTML>.

Worldview - an overall view of the world. It's not a physical view of the world, but rather a philosophical view, an all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matters to us.⁷⁸

Worship - True worship is a valuing or a treasuring of God above all things; it is based on a right understanding of God's nature, and it is a right valuing of God's worth. Right worship, good worship, pleasing worship depends on a right mental grasp of the way God really is.⁷⁹

Limitations

The limitations of this project will be the determining factor of the accomplished goal to address the problem of the conflicting worldviews in the sacred and secular arts communities. Some of the immediate limitations of the proposed research include the limited *availability* of interviewees. Some *Naples, Florida churches* overall do not have functioning arts ministries, which will limit the information gleaned concerning case studies. The *fluctuation of church leadership* and ministry program changes may limit the reception of up-to-date information from some of the proposed Naples ministries and churches; the *adverse stance toward Christianity* among some of the arts culture in Naples may limit how much feedback will be accessible, and some Naples artists work in Naples and live in other cities. As a result, the information gleaned from the surveys may not be substantial as some artists worship in other cities while residing in Naples or vice versa.

⁷⁸ "What is a Worldview?" Ligonier Ministries, 2017. accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-worldview/>.

⁷⁹ "What is Worship?" Desiring God, 2016. accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-worship>.

Delimitations

The *Artists in the Faith Community Survey* (AFCS) will be limited to 10 questions, and it will be qualitative, up to 200 Naples, Florida artists. The specific data to be gathered from the artists will be limited to: career or talent; church affiliation/membership; utilization of talent in church, professionally, or in the community; the artist's belief that art can be spiritually transformative; and an identified need of the artist. The artist's age will be at least 18 years of age. Gender will not be a factor in this project, as well as race and denominations.

The Pastor and Leader Questionnaire (PLQ), limited to 6 - 12 churches, will gain insight into a church's: worldview and doctrine; discipleship and ministry to artists; conflicts concerning the church and the arts, and the acknowledgment that the arts are integral to the mission of the church.

Naples artist (NAQ) interviews will be limited to no more than 12. Various artistic disciplines will be included: visual, music, performance, literary, aural, media, culinary arts, and others. These interviews will collect the following data: the artist's worldview, spiritual formation, needs, concerns of artists, and information on careers for artists or ministry in the congregation or community.

These organizations will be considered for reference in the project: Artists in Christian Faith International (ACFI), Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA), Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU), InterVarsity Arts (IVA), Lausanne Arts Movement (LAM), L'Abri Fellowship International (LFI), Mastermedia International (MMI), International Arts Movement (IAM), Redeemer Church (RC), and United Arts Council of Collier County (UACCC).

Thesis Statement

If an in-depth intervention of both secular and Christian arts communities is conducted, then there will be visible options to address the conflicting worldviews, assess core needs in the arts community and develop a program to foster spiritual formation. The research will determine the practices and philosophies of local churches as a viable tool of evangelism in Naples, Florida. A survey of Naples, Florida artists in both secular and Christian communities, pastors, worship and creative arts pastors, lay and community leaders will determine their beliefs and worldviews concerning the arts and faith. Literature reviews from notable authors like W. O. David Taylor, Philip Ryken, Michael Bauer, Francis Schaeffer and other scholars and experts in the field of the arts and arts ministry will be included. Media, worship and arts resources will also be utilized.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

The second chapter of this DMIN action research thesis provides an extensive literature review that supports the retrieval of relevant and informative data to address the sacred and secular divide in the arts culture and assess specific challenges to develop a strategy to disciple artists in Naples, Florida. The theological foundations will speak to the mission, vision, and core principles of Storytellers Creative Arts, with an overview of creation, the arts in theology with supporting Scripture references. The theoretical foundations will provide information on the philosophical aspects of aesthetics and the arts. Also, information on the social and psychological life of artists will support options gleaned in this project to minister to artists effectively.

Literature Review

This literature review will examine resources from authors Philip G. Ryken, Michael J. Bauer, Timothy Keller and W. O. David Taylor, Lisa DeBoer, Jared Wilson and others. The resources will offer insight to address the conflict between the sacred and secular worldviews of arts culture as well as taking a deeper look into arts ministry in the local church and community. The literature review will connect four themes: *The Artist's Worldview*, *Artists in the Faith Community*, *Artists and Worship in the Church*, and *Artists and the Mission of the Church to Transform Culture*.

The Artist's Worldview

Secular and Christian artists view the arts as a universal medium. For centuries, the arts have been an essential staple of culture. The nature of art is just that – natural in the sense that

God created all things from nothing (Gen. 1:1). Universalists and Humanists acknowledge nature as the channel to all of life but deny God as its creator, and if God is not the creator, who is?

“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25 [ESV]).⁸⁰ There is a fundamental divide that exists in the sacred and secular arts communities. The non-Christian artist sees everything from the viewpoint of creation, and the Christian artist sees everything from the viewpoint of the Creator. God is not part of the equation for the non-believer. His god is not the God of a Judeo-Christian worldview, but one of his imagination. All of life is about creation. Creation sustains and nourishes him. It is a walk down two separate paths, and there is an automatic division even before entering into dialogue about art.

“Christians must be aware of how non-Christians use the arts to accomplish their purposes, which often directly oppose ours”.⁸¹ Mark Harris, author of *The Church, The Arts, and Shaping the World for Christ* affirms the necessity of knowing and understanding the artistic praxis of other faiths and their utilization of the arts as a mode of environmental transformation. Harris affirms the need for Christians to know how to use the arts to impact the world for Christ, but he suggests that Christian artists first investigate the artistic praxis of people of other religions like Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Harris adds that secular humanists are competitors to Christianity in the marketplace of ideas.⁸²

⁸⁰ Rom. 1:25 (ESV)

⁸¹ Mark D. Harris, *The Church, The Arts, and Shaping the World for Christ: How and Why Christians Should Engage in the Arts at Church, at Home, and in All Areas of Life* (Daniels, WV: MD Harris Institute, 2017), Kindle.

⁸² Harris, *The Church, The Arts*, Kindle.

Romans 1:20 says, “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20 [ESV]).⁸³ God’s creation reflects His attributes and character. What an artist creates, reflects his worldview.

Art Reflects the Human Condition

Wheaton College president and author Philip Ryken’s position on art and worldview evolves from art’s need to express culture’s depravity with a redemptive message.

Author and arts advocate Francis Schaeffer echoes Ryken with his description of the Christian worldview’s core theme, grace. According to Schaeffer, the Christian worldview is “the grace of God that gives meaning and purpose to life”.⁸⁴ He reminds Christians in the arts that as they create art that is good, true, and beautiful, they tell the story of redemption to a dark world marred by sin.⁸⁵

Kenyon Adams of Redeemer Church in New York City asserts that the artist's work is a mirror, reflecting their views of life, and a longing for purpose. The search for eternal significance is reflected in what artists create. Adams says this is true “even in an era in which a sense of hopelessness and meaninglessness tends to pervade much artistic expression”.⁸⁶ Kenyon believes the Holy Spirit is working through artists to transform and redeem the culture.

⁸³ Romans 1:20 (ESV)

⁸⁴ Philip G. Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Philipsburg, NJ: R & R Publishing, 2006), 14.

⁸⁵ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 14.

⁸⁶ “Artists and Church: A Gospel Movement,” Redeemer Report, 2011. accessed February 13, 2020, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/artists_and_church_a_gospel_movement.

W.O. David Taylor, author of *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts* says, “Our response to art, the way we talk or do not talk about art, the way we make or avoid making art, is the truest diagnostic test of our underlying, perhaps implicit and unexplained beliefs about culture”.⁸⁷

Megan Mitchell in *Seeking God’s Splendor* comments on the need for Christians in the arts to be sensitive to the challenges of culture and how it influences what they create: “The urgent needs of the world force artists of faith to ask what truly matters in each note, paint stroke, or stanza. Art and beauty address the human need for hope”.⁸⁸ Mitchell’s belief is that hope and beauty cannot exist apart from each other. Divine goodness in an evil world shines brightly, Mitchell believes. While artists attempt to build God’s kingdom on earth with the arts, the restoration of present-day creation also needs beautification.

The world (culture) has become anesthetized to beauty. It is in the embracement of beauty (God’s beauty) in creation that hope, and healing come to a dark world. Mitchell’s challenge to artists to ask what matters should be a challenge for the church.

Mark Labberton, in *Culture Care*, talks about humanity’s call to love its neighbor. The call includes artists who embody the story of beauty, suffering, longing, anger, pain, and hope. Labberton says that “artists live and work at the edge, on the margins of the social mainstream”.⁸⁹ The contributions they make are invaluable – helping people to see what they

⁸⁷ W. David O. Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 36.

⁸⁸ Megan Mitchell, “Seeking God’s Splendor: Thoughts on Art and Faith-What the World Needs Now,” *Reflections* (2015), accessed February 13, 2020, <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/divine-radiance-keeping-faith-beauty/seeking-gods-splendor-thoughts-art-and-faith>.

⁸⁹ Makoto Fujimura, and Mark Labberton, *Culture Care: Reconnecting with Beauty for Our Common Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 10-11.

overlooked, giving wake-up calls to turmoil and crises, and reflecting the human condition.

“Their work establishes the urgency of the arts as honest and courageous testimonies of suffering and hope”.⁹⁰

Christians in the Arts Evolving

The traditional evangelical church is evolving at an accelerated speed into what culture calls the contemporary church. The contemporary church and Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) have come to a place of common ground; however, recent news in the Christian music communities has revealed a shift in the worldviews of some Christian music artists. Some Christian artists are exacerbating the problem of the sacred and secular divide by adopting new cultural norms. Author and speaker, Steve Turley is on a mission to bring these and other new cultural norms to the fore to open dialogue and awareness.

Turley shares about a new cultural norm among Christian music artists. Recently, a growing number of contemporary Christian recording artists have publicly endorsed gay marriage and LGBT equality. *Everyday Sunday's* lead singer Trey Pearson (married with two children), told the world that he was gay. Amid the affirmation and support from his fans, Pearson and his wife divorced. Turley expresses his bewilderment, recounting that Ray Boltz, Jars of Clay, and Jennifer Knapp all have come out. The endorsement of secularized values and lifestyles among Christians in the music industry is crippling the witness and heightening the conflict.⁹¹ Rather than being holy (separate, distinct) the divide is becoming less visible.

⁹⁰ Fujimura, and Labberton, *Culture Care*, 10-11.

⁹¹ Steve Turley. “CCM and LGBT: Why Christian Artists Are Endorsing Secular Sexuality”. Filmed [September 2016]. YouTube video, 6:26. Posted [September 2016]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Q_FEb36IIs.

Turley attributes the adaptation of rock and roll music into church culture as far back as the '60s. During this era, new agendas gradually crept into the church. He asserts that because of the subtle infusion, the church should not be shocked:

The secularized rock and roll from its very beginning entailed trans-gender-like qualities, and with the advent of the '60s era became a full-blown call to cultural and sexual revolution in favor of a secularized vision of the sovereign self.⁹²

“It seems that many “fringe” Christian artists feel disconnected from the church, or at least uncomfortable inside of it. This is actually a common experience, far more common than most people know”, says Manuel Minkoff of *Renew the Arts*.⁹³

Innately, contemporary Christian music and its worship, have evolved to a state of ambiguity. Turley affirms that Christian music powerfully expresses redemption and worship. He also cites the adverse effects of contemporary Christian music that it breeds a secularist climate, subjecting the church to music that does not exalt and magnify God, but conditions an in-ward focused church. Turley says that as this problem has continued, secular sensibilities such as identifying with LGBT values seep into the ministry by way of the music.⁹⁴

Jared Wilson, the author of *The Prodigal Church*, offers his thoughts on the secularization of worship from authentic to a self-focused experience. Wilson's thoughts are in line with Steve Turley's assessment of worship and music evolving into a *sovereign-self* (self-focused) culture:

⁹² Turley, *CCM and LGBT*, 2016.

⁹³ “Why Are So Many Christians At Odds With the Church?” *Renew the Arts*, 2014. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://renewthearts.org/why-are-so-many-christian-artists-at-odds-with-the-church/>.

⁹⁴ Turley, *CCM and LGBT*, 2016.

Modern church worship is characterized by an exaltation of the self, but authentic worship is marked by an emptying of ourselves. The problem we have these days with worship is how self-involved, how humanistic it can be.⁹⁵

Wilson says that church worship services have become a show. Parishioners idolize the worship leaders, singers and musicians to the point that worship is no longer corporate in a communicable setting, but a mainstage performance with the worship team as the object of worship.

The crisis of Christian music has become a war between the church and the arts. The secular sensibilities that have invaded the church have caused some leadership to adapt. In response, some churches have removed the contemporary genre from worship. Steve Turley says that removing contemporary Christian music is not the answer. “We need to recognize that we’re called to transfigure the totality of secular life, the transformative life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and this means challenging the secularized privatization of our faith”.⁹⁶ Turley reminds the church that God is sovereign, and the members are not. When the church repents of the idolization of humans, Turley believes that secularism in the worship setting will disappear, and true worship restored.

Artists in the Faith Community

Philip Ryken's core argument for the recovery of the arts begins with the church. To establish the need for a biblical worldview of the arts, he argues that the church's abandonment of the arts will in fact be a barrier to evangelizing the culture:

⁹⁵ Jared Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 101.

⁹⁶ Turley, *CCM and LGBT*, 2016.

What is happening in the arts today is prophetic of what will happen in our culture tomorrow. It also means that when Christians abandon the artistic community, we lose a significant opportunity to communicate Christ to our culture.⁹⁷

Ryken's argument agrees with the potential to diminish evangelical impact through the arts. He addresses the church's hesitancy to affirm the arts: "There are many reasons why some churches have a negative view of the arts. Art trades in images, and images easily lend themselves to idolatry".⁹⁸ A lack of knowledge about the arts and its purpose is one of the detriments of the church. It is a significant reason for the church's lack of preparedness to understand what the Bible says about creativity. Ryken says:

Often the church's antipathy betrays an underlying ignorance about the arts, but sometimes the suspicion is justified. Art is always tempted to glory in itself, and nearly every form of art has been used to communicate values that are contrary to Scripture".⁹⁹

Michael Bauer offers possible reasons for the church's suspicion of the arts. He makes the argument and calls for recovery and revitalization of the arts as an integral tool of ministry and evangelism. Arts ministers face the challenges and issues of idolatry, stewardship, morality, and distraction amid serving the church. "Just as we are careful around the thorns on a rosebush, we should be careful how we handle these issues", says Bauer.¹⁰⁰

Kristin Jones, author of *Soul Food: Understanding and Implementing an Effective Creative Arts Ministry at the Collegiate Level*, speaks of the value and purpose of arts ministry, and its place of prominence in the church. There is a growing resurgence of the arts in the

⁹⁷ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 14.

⁹⁸ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 11.

⁹⁹ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Michael J. Bauer, *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 64.

church, and the intentional efforts of congregations to support artists, releasing them into their creativity. Jones says that the church once cultivated a climate of artistic expression and that the church placed a high value on beauty and creativity. The church once affirmed the working of the Holy Spirit through the arts to bring about transformation. Gradually, the arts became insignificant in the church. Jones says that it is imperative to recognize how the arts can powerfully communicate the Gospel.¹⁰¹

When artists struggle to exist in a faith community that is adverse to the arts, tension surfaces, disillusioning the artist, and they eventually disconnect from the church. Tim Keller, founder of Redeemer Church in New York City says that “the church needs artists to assist the Body in understanding truth”.¹⁰² He also says, “the church needs artists to equip the church to praise God. We cannot praise God without art”.¹⁰³ Tim Keller addresses multiple issues here (art and the church, theology, aesthetics, and truth), affirming the arts as a conduit to see and experience God through the arts – very much the same as Michael Bauer’s views.

Philip Ryken highlights the struggles Christian artists endure as they try to exist and be useful in church or faith communities. He says that “Some churches do not consider art a serious way to serve God. Others deny that Christians in the arts have a legitimate calling”.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Kristen Jones, “Soul Food: Understanding and Implementing an Effective Creative Arts Ministry at the Collegiate Level” (Honors Thesis, Southeastern University, 2016), 1-2.

¹⁰² “Why We Need Artists,” Faith and Work, 2011. accessed February 23, 2020, <https://faithandwork.com/blog/why-we-need-artists>.

¹⁰³ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake*, 9.

Developing a DNA of Arts Culture

Developing a DNA of arts culture is a process that involves a renewed understanding and passion for the arts. Michael Bauer's argument is synonymous with Ryken's argument. Bauer is intentional in this work to nurture the creative lives of Christians by laying a foundation for ministry through the arts. Bauer supports his argument through in-depth research and consultation with notable theologians like Francis Schaeffer. This foundation is encompassed in the rich history of Christianity and the arts. Bauer, a musician and professor, is a promoter of the arts as an integral, vital part of the life of the believer. *Arts Ministry* encourages the church to embrace the arts, to affirm its artists, and to nurture arts ministers, equipping them to develop arts ministries. He offers a concise definition of arts ministry and its function in the church:

Arts ministry happens when we integrate the arts, human creativity, and ministry in the context of our own individual and corporate lives, both within our own churches and in the various institutions and organizations that are dedicated to fostering the sacred arts.¹⁰⁵

Bauer's concern for the need to be theologically educated, speaks to arts ministers and their need to understand the interplay between faith and art, and how they impact each other. “In reality, the language employed in the debate about arts ministry is often theological, not artistic”.¹⁰⁶ Bauer says that advocates of the arts should eventually enroll in seminary while serving in arts ministry. He asserts that arts advocates with or without theological training must learn and absorb the understanding of how faith impacts the arts and how the arts impact faith. Bauer insists that arts ministers must develop a vision for how arts ministry can potentially function in the church, the culture, and in the individual lives of people.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 16.

Bauer also notes that the laity has a lack of knowledge concerning theology and the leadership is uninformed in the area of arts and aestheticism, which ignites the debate about the arts and theology.¹⁰⁸

In judgmental environments, artists become people-pleasers, frenziedly trying to justify their existence, which taints their view of themselves. Some churches breed and enhance a climate of suspicion, breaking the heart of the artist. Kenyon Adams of Redeemer Church says in using the Gospel, lay leaders, pastors, attendees, and church members can give artists a new reason to create. The church can help artists to discover their God-given identity and purpose in the transformation of culture.¹⁰⁹

Redeemer's strategy to build arts communities is an integral key to addressing the conflicting worldviews of the sacred and secular arts communities. Redeemer's Center for Faith & Work teaches that what artists make, not just their bodies and souls, has a place of purpose and function in Heaven. The eternal implications of the earthly work and the physical life open the doorway to dialogue between the artist and congregation about the call to create.¹¹⁰

The *Gospel Coalition* met with Tom Terry, Ryan Lister and Brett McCracken to get practical advice for discipling artists in and through the local church. The identity of artists is deeply connected to their performance. Tom Terry stresses the importance for pastors to shepherd artists by nurturing them to embrace a Christ-identity. Colossians 3:1-4 affirms that artists are to focus on Christ, that their lives are hidden in Christ. According to Terry, "Artists in

¹⁰⁸ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Artists and Church, 2011.

¹¹⁰ Artists and Church, 2011.

the church have a difficult time concerning identity. Their identity is deeply woven into what they create, what they produce, how they perform”.¹¹¹ Terry shared that pastors have the responsibility to shepherd artists and assure them that God accepts them, that they are accepted not because of their performance. He stressed the importance of pastors to assist the artists in detaching their worth in what they create and embrace a new identity in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Once an artist embraces a Christ identity, they will want to use their gifts in the marketplace. They will not want to do that independent of their church.¹¹² Terry says, “Pastors have to cultivate affection for the local church and the community. Artists will find satisfaction in the pursuit of using and displaying their gifts.”¹¹³

Lisa DeBoer of the Calvin Institute shares about the need for discernment concerning the arts in the church – what subscribes to its faith traditions and the relationship between the artist and congregation. “Faithfulness involves discerning what functions for art are compatible with your churches ecclesiology and current patterns of worship”.¹¹⁴ Faithfulness involves buy-in to the church’s vision for ministry and helping it to flourish. In turn, the church faithfully and enthusiastically affirms and supports its artists, valuing them as integral partners in the ministry.

The vexed relationship between the church and the arts is one barrier to evangelism that calls for a deconstruction. Mark Harris expounds on the relationship between the church and the arts. He says that many of the arts have been neglected or despised for centuries. The cross was

¹¹¹ Tom Terry. “How Pastors Can Support Artists in Their Church”. Filmed [October 2019]. YouTube video, 7:41. Posted [October 2019]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpWhuZxQo1s>.

¹¹² Terry, *Pastors Can Support Artists*, 2019.

¹¹³ Terry, *Pastors Can Support Artists*, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Lisa DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshiping Church*, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 18-19.

an idol. All forms of artistic expression (theater, art displays, and concerts) were prohibited. Only the music of Bach and Handel were revered and welcomed by the church. According to Harris, musicians were rarely encouraged to glorify God with their art. Sadly, some artists have been shunned by the church, which suggested they find work in the marketplace.¹¹⁵

Arts and Culture editor and author Brett McCracken is passionate about healthier, more robust, generative relationships between church and culture, guarding against contentious relationships. However, he also asserts that there are times when contention is necessary because of the culture's destructive path, especially in the secular arts community. Redemptive messages can be found in secular art; however, the church must have discernment.¹¹⁶ As McCracken stated, "Secular artists are making a lot of good, true, and beautiful things in the culture. It is good for Christians to recognize that and praise those things and critique what needs to be critiqued, so it balances".¹¹⁷

Brett further comments on the relationship between the church and the culture. McCracken says that it is healthy for Christians to be engaged in culture, praising what is praiseworthy, but also cautious and sober-minded, fully informed about the detriments in our culture.¹¹⁸ As he stated,

I am passionate about the relationship between church and culture. So much is at stake in that relationship. Our witness in the world largely depends on how we are either shaping

¹¹⁵ Harris, *The Church, The Arts*.

¹¹⁶ Jeff Bruce. "The Wisdom Pyramid with Brett McCracken". Filmed [June 2020]. YouTube video, 58:11. Posted [June 2020]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-oS7La0DiI>.

¹¹⁷ Bruce, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 2020.

¹¹⁸ Bruce, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 2020.

the culture or the culture-shaping us. I see the culture-shaping Christians more than they are shaping the culture, which is discouraging.¹¹⁹

Francis Schaeffer's essay *Some Perspectives on Art* notes that art has great value, regardless of how truthful or false the world characterizes it. Art powerfully impacts worldview and should be judged by the standards of technical excellence, validity, intellectual content, and integration of content and vehicle.¹²⁰

Schaeffer's essays on the arts and culture are hallmarks of God's imprint and purposes for the arts in our world and how God uses the arts to transform culture. He not only speaks of the theological, biblical implications of the arts, but also technique and excellence. Churches would do well to read his essays and even develop preaching and teaching series on the subject. By doing so, an openness to dialogue and engaging in the arts would eventually transpire. Michael Bauer and Philip Ryken, both offer similar thoughts, strategies, and ideas to develop a culture of the arts in the church.

Chuck Neighbors, author of *Does Anyone Care about Art in the Church*, emphasizes the value of the arts in the church. He challenges the church to consider not only the value of the arts but God's plan for the arts in the big Story. Neighbors helps the church to understand how to navigate the culture in its effort to connect and impact the culture for Christ. Neighbors says that the arts are an indication of giving the best to the Creator; and that it is evident that the culture cares about art. He also says that by caring about art, the church is given a voice worthy of

¹¹⁹ Bruce, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 2020.

¹²⁰ Harris, *The Church, The Arts*.

paying attention to.¹²¹ Neighbors' point relates to Philip Ryken's concern about the church abandoning the arts community and how its evangelical impact is lost.¹²²

Artists and Consumerism in the Church

The arts are one of the expressions people seek to give them pleasure. Consumerism is prevalent within the church. Too often, the arts become a useful tool for the church insofar as the artist gives parishioners what they want; a good sermon, inspiring worship, state-of-the-art on-screen graphics, and attractive facilities. The artist becomes an ingredient of an excellent “finished product” on Sunday morning.

There is a danger in fixating on the applause of people and even God. In *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Little said, “God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure”.¹²³ If artists believe that that is the only time when God’s pleasure is felt, what happens when they get older, and cannot run anymore? Where then is God’s pleasure in the artist? Artists must see God’s delight in them apart from their art. Artists have to know that God takes pleasure in them simply because He created them, loves them, and gave His Son to die for them. All that matters is that the artist will live in the image of Christ. Artists must see their identity in something other than their art or affirmation from patrons and consumers.

¹²¹ “Does Anyone Care about Art in the Church?” The Masters Image Productions, 2011. accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.mastersimage.com/does-anyone-care-about-art-in-the-church%e2%80%94part-2/>.

¹²² Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake*, 14.

¹²³ “Eric Little Quotes,” Goodreads, 2020. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/209349-god-made-me-fast-and-when-i-run-i-feel>.

Feeding the Monster

“Anxiety is the equivalent of having a monster living on the inside. A monster that does not sleep is always hungry and never gives up”.¹²⁴ Many artists have a monster within them, and the church must be careful not to feed it. The church must feed the soul instead. The monster is one’s identity and worth. It is the thing that fills the black hole. Blaise Pascal said, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ”.¹²⁵ Instead of turning to God to fill the vacuum, creatives (creatures) turn to creation. The black hole is as big as an infinite God, and whatever we feed it, that immeasurable sized vacuum becomes a black hole in outer space that swallows whole planetary systems never to be satisfied.

Artists can create art or music, receive financial gain, affirmation, applause, and awards, and will still hunger for recognition, resentful of new artists in the spotlight, narcissistically angry because the monster continues to growl. The soul, the real soul, has been created for God by God for Himself, and as theologian, philosopher and bishop, St. Augustine said in his confessions, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee”.¹²⁶ Justin Taylor of the Gospel Coalition further expounds on God’s infinite, love, and ultimate destiny for His creation:

¹²⁴ “The Monster Within: How We Feed The Appetite of Anxiety,” Psychology Today, 2017. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/stress-fracture/202002/the-monster-within-how-we-feed-the-appetite-anxiety>.

¹²⁵ “Blaise Pascal Quotes,” Goodreads, 2017. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/801132-there-is-a-god-shaped-vacuum-in-the-heart-of-each>.

¹²⁶ “An Analysis of One of the Greatest Sentences Ever Written,” The Gospel Coalition, 2020. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/an-analysis-of-one-of-the-greatest-sentences-ever-written/>.

We are not static objects, but dynamic, moving subjects. We are not God's property so much as God's lovers. He is not only our origin and our owner, but He is also our end, our purpose, our destiny, our identity, our meaning, our peace, our joy, our home.¹²⁷

The artist has to see his art skills and abilities as a gift from God, which he can use to bless others.

Canceling Christians in the Arts

"Cancel culture" came into the collective consciousness around 2017, after the idea of "canceling" celebrities for problematic actions or statements became popular".¹²⁸ Christians in the arts, film, and entertainment are not spared from being canceled in America. Now more than ever, the Body of Christ needs to shepherd and support believers who are actively using their craft in the secular and Christian arenas of the arts. "Many Christian artists live between two strange worlds. We need a general rediscovery of the arts in the context of the church. This is badly needed because the arts are the leading edge of culture",¹²⁹ said Dr. Philip Ryken, president of Wheaton College.

Actor Jim Caviezel played the role of Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, the 2004 blockbuster that reached over 600 million dollars in revenues. Hollywood ostracized Caviezel after taking the role. After Mel Gibson tried unsuccessfully to convince him not to take the job due to possible rejection by the industry, the actor said, "We all have to embrace our

¹²⁷ One of the Greatest Sentences Ever Written, 2020.

¹²⁸ "How 'Cancel Culture' Quickly Became One of the Buzziest and Most Controversial Ideas on the Internet," Insider, 2020. accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.insider.com/cancel-culture-meaning-history-origin-phrase-used-negatively-2020-7>.

¹²⁹ "How to Discourage Artists in the Church," The Gospel Coalition, 2013. accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-discourage-artists-in-the-church/>.

crosses”.¹³⁰ He added: “Jesus is as controversial now as He has ever been. Not much has changed in 2,000 years”.¹³¹ In an interview at a church in Florida, Caviezel shared that he fully understood and accepted that taking on the role would be the end of his career. “We have to give up our names, our reputations, our lives to speak the truth,”¹³² he said.

Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski are artists based in Phoenix, Arizona. Brush & Nib Studio specializes in custom artwork using painting, calligraphy, and hand lettering. In 2018, Duka and Koski refused to make custom-art for same-sex weddings, standing on their religious beliefs.¹³³ Their company operating agreement states:

It will not create custom artwork that communicates ideas or messages . . . that contradict biblical truth, demean others, endorse racism, incite violence, or promote any marriage besides marriage between one man and one woman, such as same-sex marriage.¹³⁴

The artists potentially faced jail time, being threatened to serve up to six months with a daily fine of \$2,500 for each day they refuse to create the art. They lost their appeal to overturn the ordinance. The Alliance Defense Fund took on the case and in 2019, won the case for the Phoenix artists.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ “Jim Caviezel Claims The Passion of the Christ Made Him a Hollywood outcast,” The Guardian, 2011. accessed June 14, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/may/03/jim-caviezel-passion-of-the-christ>.

¹³¹ Jim Caviezel, Hollywood Outcast, 2011.

¹³² Jim Caviezel, Hollywood Outcast, 2011.

¹³³ “Two Christian Women Could Face Jail Time For Refusing To Create For Same-Sex Weddings,” Daily Headlines, 2018. accessed September 22, 2020. <https://dailyheadlines.net/two-christian-women-could-face-jail-time-for-refusing-to-create-for-same-sex-weddings/>.

¹³⁴ “The Arizona Supreme Court Strikes a Powerful Blow for Free Speech and Religious Freedom,” National Review, 2019. accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/arizona-supreme-court-upholds-free-speech-religious-freedom/>.

¹³⁵ Free Speech and Religious Freedom, 2019.

“We no longer live in a society generally supportive of Christians”¹³⁶ said Baylor University professor George Yancey in *How to Live in a Post-Christian World*. Yancey tackles the subject of discrimination and persecution of Christians in a society that is non-supportive of Christians. He suggests developing Christian communities, teaching, and socializing children and passing down the faith into their lives amid a post-Christian culture. Yancey reminds Christians to stay in the arena of strife and difficulties, to remain connected, working and having a presence on the mainstage of an anti-Christian society.¹³⁷ He says:

We can’t neglect working to influence the larger society. While those with anti-Christian perspectives have more power in cultural creation, we can still make our presence known. Our Christian colleges, media, and arts are going to be important, but we must also encourage talented Christians to work in mainstream academia, secular media, and the larger art community.¹³⁸

Artists in Worship in the Church

In the setting of worship, the arts are instrumental in igniting the senses, touching the heart and healing the soul. The arts usher the congregation into an atmosphere of worship, transcendence, and wonder.

The arts point to the One who is to be glorified, praised, and magnified. Jared Wilson says that authentic worship begins with God, who is the object of worship.¹³⁹

“God’s aesthetic standards include goodness, truth, and beauty. And these standards are not relative; they are absolute. A Christian view of art thus stands in opposition to the

¹³⁶ “Is There Really Anti-Christian Discrimination in America?” The Gospel Coalition, 2019. accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/anti-christian-discrimination-america/>.

¹³⁷ Anti-Christian Discrimination in America, 2019.

¹³⁸ Anti-Christian Discrimination in America, 2019.

¹³⁹ Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 98.

postmodern assumption that there are no absolutes”.¹⁴⁰ Kristin Jones connects beauty and aesthetics, and how they impact culture. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory (beauty) of God (Psalm 19:1 [ESV])”.¹⁴¹ Understanding that beauty is one of God's creative gifts and qualities is the right way of helping culture to focus on creation aesthetically and the Creator. Jones continues to offer thought on analyzing the impact of the arts in society. “The arts can implicitly and explicitly penetrate the human heart and promote a healthy culture”.¹⁴²

The beautiful and transcendent aspect of worship takes place when people are abandoned to Jesus, in spirit and truth. Jesus said in John 4:23-24 (ESV):

The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.¹⁴³

According to Philip Ryken, “When we settle for trivial expressions of the truth in worship and art, we ourselves are diminished, as we suffer a loss of transcendence”.¹⁴⁴

“Within the Christian art community, there is frustration for visual artists who observe the important place of the musical arts in worship”.¹⁴⁵ Tim Keller brings to light the tension concerning the expression of other forms of art in worship. The debate will continue as long as the church exists.¹⁴⁶ Further research and a congregational survey on the arts in worship will

¹⁴⁰ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 37.

¹⁴¹ Psalm 19:1 (ESV)

¹⁴² Jones, *Soul Food*, 2.

¹⁴³ John 4:23-24 (ESV)

¹⁴⁴ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

¹⁴⁶ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

reveal more information to use in the quest to bridge these intercultural gaps in the church concerning the arts. Keller says that music is prominent in worship, the visual arts, an afterthought. He insists that the church must find ways to engage all the arts in worship. Keller affirms that visual and musical art are different in the setting of worship. Music is an assumed, and normative component in corporate worship.¹⁴⁷

W.O. David Taylor and Taylor Worley authors of *Contemporary Art and the Church* address the need for other forms of art to be included in worship with a thought-provoking question:

If worship is one thing that every Christian does in all times and places of the church's history and if there is a visual shape to this experience of worship, might there be something distinctive that contemporary art may contribute to our thinking about corporate worship?¹⁴⁸

Lisa DeBoer's thoughts on using all forms of the arts in worship connect closely with Tim Keller's views. She says that in the setting of worship, the celebration of God's love and provision, the gift of redemption and relationship with Christ take place. Worship can be attributed to music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching. All artistic disciplines (expressed in order) are worthy of being included in the worship setting.¹⁴⁹ DeBoer says that “worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian church”.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ W. David O. Taylor, and Taylor Worley, *Contemporary Art and the Church: A Conversation between Two Worlds* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 5.

¹⁴⁹ DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*, 269.

¹⁵⁰ DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*, 269.

Artists and the Mission of the Church to Transform Culture

Jesus commands the church to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20 [ESV]).¹⁵¹ As an integral part of the church, artists are called and predestined to create to glorify God and transform culture. “Artists are the most influential people in the community and in society. They are not the thermometer; they are the thermostat. They are the ones who change culture”,¹⁵² says Charles D. Kelley, president of Bridge Builders International. Christians in the arts can use their God-given creativity to tell the Gospel story in the most impactful ways. The arts may be the only medium of transformation for some, and the message of hope must be not only creative but effectively presented. Philip Ryken says that “art is an interpretation of reality, and the Christian should interpret reality in its total aspect, including the hope that has come into the world through the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ”.¹⁵³

Con Campbell in *Outreach and the Artist* places significant value upon artists and their unique role in the mission of the church. There is a wealth of resources and skills to evangelize in the Christian arts community. Campbell shares that churches often utilize artists in congregational life but fail to see the potential artists have to evangelize the community. Artists can share the Gospel to music lovers, art aficionados, and the general public. These are those

¹⁵¹ Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁵² Charles David Kelley. “How Can You Embrace the Artists in Your Church?”, Filmed [September 2017]. YouTube video, 2:31. Posted [September 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqQgWjDpn78>.

¹⁵³ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 41.

who might consider attending a church-sponsored arts and culture event.¹⁵⁴ “Artists have access to otherwise closed artistic subcultures. They can become missionaries to their own people in a way that non-artists cannot”.¹⁵⁵

The artist is called to present the depravity and redemption of culture, in the truest sense, without compromise. Art that communicates truth is a theme to consider for inclusion in a curriculum for Christian artist community groups. A curriculum like this design has the potential to open dialogue and the expression of challenges and struggles. Honest art must be truth-telling art. Bruce Benson, author of *Liturgy as a Way of Life*, expounds on the issue. “One of the many temptations facing artists is that of providing a pretty view of the world. Sadly, some Christian artists fall prey to this temptation”.¹⁵⁶

Art serves the church as a vehicle to help people see things differently. Brian Brown, director of the *Anselm Society*,¹⁵⁷ discusses the lack of artistic presence in the faith community and the need for a redeemed imagination - a call to bring the arts back into the church. Brown offers four principles that he calls building blocks to restore the arts in the faith community. *Goodness, truth, and beauty live together or die apart*.¹⁵⁸ Brown says, “The Great Commission wasn’t a call to get people to pray a sinner’s prayer; it was to *make disciples*, that is,

¹⁵⁴ Constantine R. Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist: Sharing the Gospel with the Arts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 12.

¹⁵⁵ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 12.

¹⁵⁶ Bruce E. Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life (The Church and Postmodern Culture): Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), Kindle.

¹⁵⁷ “Our Story,” Anselm Society, 2020. accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/our-story>.

¹⁵⁸ “What is the Place of Art in the Church?” Anselm Society, 2018. accessed March 4, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/blog/2018/8/23/what-is-the-place-of-art-in-the-church>.

to form people from one thing into something else”.¹⁵⁹ The church, according to Brown, has set aside goodness, truth and beauty. “So many churches today have either gone heretical or are leaving their entire discipleship program to formal instruction. You can always identify at least one thing—goodness, truth, or beauty”.¹⁶⁰ Brown says these landmarks have been set aside in favor of practicality, or misguided theological priorities.¹⁶¹

For the church to be in the position to shape and reshape redeemed imaginations, the church must stand firm on the truth. *Pastors need artists*. “Without artists working alongside the clergy, there can be no reproduction, because there is no culture, no cultivating, no sub-creation”.¹⁶² Brown says that the flow of conversions in Catholic and Protestant churches continue, but that “church traditions and aesthetic structures have almost completely died out”.¹⁶³ He asserts that pastors alone cannot shoulder the responsibility and that artists have a significant role in the revitalization of the aestheticism of the church.¹⁶⁴ “We need teaching, we need the sacraments...but we need something else pastors are not called to provide”.¹⁶⁵ Brown says that artists are co-laborers in a complex project, the shaping of God’s people”.¹⁶⁶ Tim Keller in *Faith and Work*, says “The church needs artists because without art we cannot reach the world. The

¹⁵⁹ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶⁰ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶¹ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶² The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶³ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶⁴ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶⁵ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶⁶ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

simple fact is that the imagination ‘gets you,’ even when your reason is completely against the idea of God”.¹⁶⁷

Brian Brown’s next building block is one that will make for interesting discussion among pastors and artists regarding sacred and secular art. Brown says that *the church needs both sacred and common art*. He clarifies the distinction this way: “Sacred art is for corporate worship; common art, when it has a spiritual dimension however subtle, is for discipleship”.¹⁶⁸ Sacred art must be intricately woven into the life of the church.

Brown says that common art is more diverse, meeting people at various aspects of life, both serious and for entertainment. “Common art doesn't implicitly come with the endorsement of the church, and needs to be able to ask tough questions, so it is important for common art to be able to breathe”.¹⁶⁹ The final building block to bring back a redeemed imagination involves four types of people: *artists* (in community with each other); the *communities* (in which they operate); *patrons* (who fund the art or artists) and *scholars and theologians* who advise the artists as the situation demands.¹⁷⁰ Brown says “The entire church community needs to re-learn its role in the creation and impact of art. The place of art in the church is everywhere”.¹⁷¹

David Santistevan says that art is essential to the mission of the church.¹⁷² Santistevan examines two views concerning the importance of art to the mission of the church. The first view

¹⁶⁷ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

¹⁶⁸ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁷¹ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

¹⁷² “How Important Is Art to the Mission of the Church?” Beyond Sunday Worship, 2012. accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.davidsantistevan.com/art-and-the-church/>.

is that *art is beautiful, but not essential*. The Bible does not explicitly mention creative gifts as one of the gifts of the church. Why is there no category for artists in the scriptures?¹⁷³ David explains: “The New Testament is about people and discipleship. Art, by itself, does not equip people to do ministry. So, while art is beautiful, it simply can’t be an end in itself”.¹⁷⁴

The second view that David presents is that *art is an essential part of God’s purpose and plan*. He says that art is entirely human and that it reveals the mystery of the Gospel in unique ways.¹⁷⁵ Interestingly, David Santistevan sees artists as partners in the mission of the church doing the work of an apostle or minister. “While artists may not have been included as one of the fivefold ministry gifts, artists can function as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. It could be argued that this generation can only be reached through the arts”.¹⁷⁶

The Bible affirms the function and purpose of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-16, Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-31, 1 Peter 4:10-11). God has gifted people with the ability to use artistic skills for the glory of God. The Bible teaches that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” ([Romans 11:29]).¹⁷⁷ As image-bearers of God, artists are called to “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” ([Eph. 4:12-13]).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ How Important is Art?, 2012.

¹⁷⁴ How Important is Art?, 2012.

¹⁷⁵ How Important is Art?, 2012.

¹⁷⁶ How Important is Art?, 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Rom. 11:29 (ESV)

¹⁷⁸ Eph. 4:12-13 (ESV)

Theological Foundations

“Art is always an interpretation of reality, and the Christian should interpret reality in its total aspect, including the hope that has come into the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ”.¹⁷⁹

Gospel transformation through the arts is the mission of Storytellers Creative Arts. The theological foundations of this action research thesis are based upon which Storytellers Creative Arts functions. Artists have always held a prominent place in bringing the message of the Gospel to life and making it personally present to people.¹⁸⁰ By the inspiration of God, the Gospel is communicated through the arts and those gifted to create art. SCA believes that God is raising a generation of artists who will advance the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) by utilizing their God-given talent and creativity to be change agents in culture.

Core Theological Principles

The six core theological principles of Storytellers Creative Arts establish a foundation for its ministry to and with artists: (1) Artists are made in the image of the Creator to create art that is good, true, and beautiful (Gen. 1:27, Eph. 2:10); (2) Artists are redeemed by Jesus Christ to bring redemption to a fallen creation through art (John 3:16, 1 Cor. 1:30, Eph. 1:7, Gal. 1:4; 2:20); (3) Artists are gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission through art (Matt. 28:19-20; 19:20, Eph. 3:20; 6:10, Acts 1:8; 6:8); (4) Artists are nurtured and equipped for service in a Christ-centered community (2 Tim. 3:17, Eph. 2:10, 1 Thess. 5:24, Heb. 13:21, Luke 4:18-19, Eph. 4:11-13); (5) Artists are guided and sustained by the inspired

¹⁷⁹ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 45.

¹⁸⁰ “The Pastor: How Artists Shape Personal Identity,” *Transpositions: Theology, Imagination and the Arts*, 2010. accessed April 5, 2020, <http://www.transpositions.co.uk/artists-and-pastors/>.

and inerrant Word of God (Psalm 119:11, 105, Matt. 4:4; 7:24, Luke 11:28, John 15:3, 7) and (6) Artists are commissioned to glorify God by doing all things with integrity and excellence (Matt. 5:13-16, Col. 3:17; 23-24, Rom. 12:2, Phil. 2:13).¹⁸¹

God's Creative Work

The very first words of the Bible spoken are “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1[ESV]).¹⁸² God created man in His image: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27 [ESV]).¹⁸³ John 1:1-3 (ESV) affirms the creative work of God and His sovereignty over all of creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.¹⁸⁴

The Apostles' Creed begins with the affirmation of God as Creator: “I believe in God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth”.¹⁸⁵ Kim Riddlebarger of Ligonier Ministries says:

The creed sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity. It sets forth the basic economy of redemption — the Father is the creator of all things, Jesus is the only Savior, and the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us faith and then unites us to Christ. The creed also affirms the basic historical facts of the gospel — our Lord's virgin birth, His suffering, death, and bodily resurrection.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ “Core Values,” Storytellers Creative Arts, 2020. accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.storytellerscreativearts.com/about>.

¹⁸² Gen. 1:1 (ESV)

¹⁸³ Gen. 1:27 (ESV)

¹⁸⁴ John 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹⁸⁵ “The Apostles' Creed,” The Westminster Standard, 2020. accessed April 5, 2020, <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/the-apostles-creed/>.

¹⁸⁶ “Why Do We Recite The Apostles' Creed?” Ligonier Ministries, 2013. accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/why-do-we-recite-apostles-creed/>.

God is an Artist

God's aesthetic standards include goodness, truth, and beauty. And these standards are not relative; they are absolute. A Christian view of art thus stands in opposition to the postmodern assumption that there are no absolutes.¹⁸⁷

While God did not have to create, He did so for good and sufficient reasons. The creation fulfills that purpose and glorifies God by carrying out His will.¹⁸⁸ Psalm 19:1 (ESV) says, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1[ESV]).¹⁸⁹ Everything God made is good, true, and beautiful. "God created all things without the use of pre-existing materials. The plan of God may be thought of as being like the architect's plans and drawings for a building that is to be constructed".¹⁹⁰ One of the issues of the secular and sacred conflict in the arts community is the disbelief of people who have other religions, which not only doubt the existence of God but deny that every aspect of creation is a mark and evidence of the Creator God. Romans 1:20-21(ESV) is an apologetic for Christians in the arts that refutes the claims of a secularist mindset:

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 37.

¹⁸⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 137.

¹⁸⁹ Psalm 19:1 (ESV)

¹⁹⁰ Erickson, *Christian Doctrine*, 134.

¹⁹¹ Rom. 1:20-21 (ESV)

When God created the world, He said “It is very good” (Gen. 1:31 [ESV]).¹⁹² All of God's creation and the attributes given to creation were made for His glory. The artist and his artwork are a reflection of God's creativity. “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom, have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 104:24 [ESV]).¹⁹³ The arts are a significant part of God's creation, expressed throughout the Bible. The arts are to be valued, enjoyed, honored and recognized as the work of God, to be used for the good of humanity to the glory of God.

Todd Smith, professor and chair of the Department of Studio & Digital Arts at Liberty University, brings attention to the arts' divine connection. He refers to art as an industry. The arts originated with the Creator God before the foundation of the world. It is a world art industry designed to function and flow throughout all of history and humankind.¹⁹⁴ “If we go back to Genesis 1:1, we have the presentation of God as a designer and as an artist,”¹⁹⁵ he said. Smith continues:

The industry actually is Christ's idea — it generated with Him. And so, the arts are part of what He would do. We have very early mentions and references in the Scriptures to various art forms such as music and foundry-type of work. God put those types of skills in this book because we're created in God's image.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Gen. 1:31 (ESV)

¹⁹³ Psalm 104:24 (ESV)

¹⁹⁴ “In But Not Of: How Christians Can Engage a Secular Culture With the Gospel,” Liberty Online-The Christian Post, 2018. accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.christianpost.com/sponsored/in-but-not-of-how-christians-can-engage-a-secular-culture-with-the-gospel.html>.

¹⁹⁵ In But Not Of, 2018.

¹⁹⁶ In But Not Of, 2018.

The Origin of Sin and Its Effect on the Arts

Sin contaminated the aesthetics and beauty of the arts. Left in the hands of a culture against God, the arts can be used for evil – even the beauty of God’s creation. No matter how dark the arts have become in culture, they still exist as an integral and substantial part of God’s creation and plan for the redemption of the world. Con Campbell comments on the darkness of the arts:

There is a dark side to the arts because we live in a fallen world. In the hands of a rebellious people, whose hearts are set against God, even his good and wonderful gifts can become powerful instruments for evil. This is sadly true of the arts in many ways, but we must not therefore condemn the arts themselves. They remain a good, ordered part of creation; if they are abused and distorted for imperfect purposes, this is due to maltreatment that is not intrinsic to their nature.¹⁹⁷

The origin of universal sin began with the pride and rebellion of Lucifer. Lucifer (Satan) tempted Adam and Eve to disobey the commands of God, and sin entered the world (Genesis 3). “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12 [ESV]).¹⁹⁸ He was a perfect being – an Archangel created by God. Lucifer dwelled in the very presence of God in heaven. The Book of Isaiah (along with other references Ez. 28:12-18, Rev. 12:1-13) brings clarity to Lucifer’s pride and the catastrophic beginning of sin:

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’ (Isaiah 14:12-15).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 15.

¹⁹⁸ Rom. 5:12 (ESV)

¹⁹⁹ Isaiah 14:12-15 (ESV)

Based on how the Bible describes him, one could surmise that he was either a musician or the leader of worship. He was adorned with remarkable beauty and endowed with extraordinary talent:

You *were* the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone *was* your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created they were prepared (Ezekiel 28:12-13 [ESV]).²⁰⁰

Self-absorption, and the obsession with his beauty and talents, triggered Lucifer's rebellion. It is an idolatrous spirit that has tainted the church's view of the arts. “He began to think, “I want to rise to the next level of management. I want to be the CEO of the universe. I think I'll overthrow God”, said author Richard T. Ritenbaugh.²⁰¹ Author John W. Ritenbaugh delves deeper to explain this rebellion. Ritenbaugh suggests that God’s plan to create man, giving him the potential to enter into the “God-family,” might have prompted that rebellion.²⁰² He expounds:

Knowing how he was, with thoughts beginning to arise about how beautiful, intelligent, and powerful he was, and what an important position he had - and he would have to serve these clay things made in God's image, and prepare them to become greater than he? Maybe his pride motivated him to thwart that plan. His pride began plowing the way, to move him in another direction, one against God. He felt that he had a better way, which began with knocking God from his throne.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Ez. 28:12-13 (ESV)

²⁰¹ “What the Bible Says About Lucifer's Rebellion,” Bible Tools, 2020. accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/486/Lucifers-Rebellion.htm>.

²⁰² Lucifer's Rebellion, 2020.

²⁰³ Lucifer's Rebellion, 2020.

A Media-Saturated, De-Christianized World

Unhealthy media consumption in all artistic expressions – social, electronic, visual, technical, and auditory is killing society at an incredible, accelerated speed, infecting all humanity. The insatiable craving for knowledge that consumed Adam and Eve, has brought about generational spiritual and physical death. George Orwell’s dark 1984 vision recalled in Neil Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, warned that an externally imposed oppression would overcome the world. Aldous Huxley’s vision, author of *Brave New World*, was that no Big Brother was needed to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity, and history. From his viewpoint, Huxley saw that people would come to love their oppression, adoring the technologies that undo their capacities to think.²⁰⁴

Brett McCracken, the Editor-in-Chief of the Gospel Coalition, asserts that the devil’s delight is to watch a world of angry tribalism, addictive triviality, and amusement that is killing society. “As chaos reigns, sin thrives,”²⁰⁵ said McCracken. Humankind is stressed, disorientated, and paralyzed by an “impenetrable glut of information,”²⁰⁶ which cements the cancer of chaos in our culture.

Satan’s chosen strategy of the lure of temptation for knowledge was fruit from the tree of good and evil knowledge (Genesis 3). According to Brett McCracken, in our present age, the lure of infinite, godlike knowledge is wreaking havoc. He likens the temptation object to the iPhone

²⁰⁴ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2005), xix.

²⁰⁵ Brett McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World* (Carol Stream, IL: Crossway, 2021), 36-37.

²⁰⁶ McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 36-37.

logo – an apple with a bite mark, an addictive device that approximates godlike knowledge.²⁰⁷

According to History Knowledge writer Matthew Jones, the iPhone has made almost the entirety of the world's knowledge available at a moment's notice. As he stated,

It [the iPhone] has reduced the time it takes to discover news and current events from days or even weeks to mere seconds, facilitated the ever-growing, central role of social media in our everyday lives, and spawned an industry worth \$58.7 billion per year that employs 19 million people around the world.²⁰⁸

Using the metaphor of the Food Pyramid, a guide on what to eat and what not to eat, and portion control for healthy minds and bodies, McCracken is sounding the alarm of crisis in an unhealthy world of fading spiritual wisdom. In *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-truth World*, Brett says the world desperately needs wisdom, unshakable, solid truth, and foundations.²⁰⁹

In Prov. 1: 20-22; 23; 32-33 (ESV), God calls us to embrace wisdom:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice. How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.²¹⁰

Our ailing culture needs Christianity, which is the only remedy for wisdom deficiency that plagues the world. As McCracken stated, “In order to bring the light of Christian wisdom to the darkness of our unwise age, Christians must recover habits of wisdom in their own lives”.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 36-37.

²⁰⁸ “iPhone History: Every Generation in Timeline Order 2007 – 2021,” History Cooperative, 2014. accessed January 13, 2021, <https://historycooperative.org/the-history-of-the-iphone/>.

²⁰⁹ McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 36-37.

²¹⁰ Prov. 1: 20-22; 23; 32-33 (ESV)

²¹¹ McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 23.

The Wisdom Pyramid diet nourishes us through the intake of knowledge that cultivates wisdom. Society has almost completely lost wisdom because it no longer fears God. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10 [NIV]).²¹² According to McCracken, a daily diet of godly wisdom will stabilize a sick society by making Christians wiser: God-fearing, trustworthy truth-tellers and truth-livers. Salt and light.

The world desperately needs transformation and a reprogramming of the mind that only Christ can perform. Our minds must be renewed. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2 [ESV]).²¹³

There are three significant dynamics of the information age which war against a wisdom-filled mind: an overload of information, overstimulation at an accelerated speed, and a self-focused culture. It is a dilemma that is polarizing the world and exacerbating division. The TMI – too much information overload is overtaxing our brains. Science reveals that overstimulation of the brain in a hyper-distracted age leaves humans in a constant triage state. An information overload is vehemently rewiring the brain, reducing space for thinking necessary for wisdom. We are a “breaking news now” culture moving faster, chipping away healthy brain function. There is a constant addiction to novelty, what is next, and the new, and everything is moving at warp speed. Trends and headlines are continuously changing, with inevitable speed traps along the way. We are prone to error when caught. Of the three, a “me” centered culture is the root cause of a chaotic tsunami of unimaginable detriment. A plethora of realities and truths are

²¹² Prov. 9:10 (NIV)

²¹³ Rom. 12:2 (ESV)

infiltrating society. Technology is designed and oriented for human beings. The iPhone conditions a me-centered mindset, customizing a unique feed of media with apps empowering us to delete, censor, unfollow, unlike, or unfriend others on any platform.

From the time of Constantine to the Enlightenment, Christian ideas dominated art for the simple reason that the church had a powerful grasp over every aspect of life.²¹⁴ Overtime the arts were seen as idolatry in the church. At various times in church history, such as during the iconoclastic movement of the eighth century or the Protestant Reformation movement in Europe, church leaders have tried to desecrate this form of idolatry by taking statues and other works of art out of the church and destroying them. Generally speaking, they were not into art, only its abuse.²¹⁵

The lack of creatives in the church is the result of a larger issue. The Christian community at large has turned its back on the arts. For hundreds of years the church was one of the largest producers of art in the world. From sculptures to paintings to illuminated manuscripts, the church often set the trends of the art community.²¹⁶

Created to Create

The foundational verse for Storytellers Creative Arts is “We are His masterpiece (workmanship), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10 [ESV]).²¹⁷ “We are His masterpiece” (Eph. 2:10)²¹⁸ affirms that

²¹⁴ Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 23.

²¹⁵ Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake*, 11.

²¹⁶ Joshua Dugan, “An Examination of Art in the American Evangelical Church for the Purpose of Discipleship and Evangelism” (DMin. diss., Liberty University, 2017), 6.

²¹⁷ Eph. 2:10 (ESV)

²¹⁸ Eph. 2:10 (ESV)

God is an artist. "...created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Eph. 2:10).²¹⁹ The Matthew Henry Commentary interprets the verse (Ephesians 2:10):

He [God] means in respect of the new creation; not only as men, but as saints. The new man is a new creature; and God is its Creator. *In Christ Jesus...* what he has done and suffered. *Unto good works.* God, in his new creation, has designed and prepared us for good works with a design that we should be fruitful in them.²²⁰

When God created Adam, He charged Adam with the task of caring for the garden, naming the animals, and to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28; 2:15, 20). As image-bearers of God, humankind has been called and commissioned to create art that glorifies God and tells the story of redemption.

The first person in Scripture to be filled with the spirit of God was an artist – Bezalel from the tribe of Judah:

The Lord said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft" (Exodus 31:1-5 [ESV]).²²¹

God's Theology of Art

The Exodus passage has within it four principles of God's theology of art: 1. The artist's call and gift come from God; 2. God loves all kinds of art; 3. God maintains high standards for goodness, truth, and beauty; and 4. Art is for the glory of God.²²² Bezalel and his assistant

²¹⁹ Eph. 2:10 (ESV)

²²⁰ "Ephesians 2: Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible," Bible Study Tools, 2020. accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/ephesians/2.html>.

²²¹ Ex. 31:1-5 (ESV)

²²² Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 17-18.

Oholiab were called by God to build the Tabernacle according to God's divine and detailed plan for the children of Israel to worship Him (Ex. 31:6-11 [ESV]):

And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.²²³

Philip Ryken says, “The calling of these artists reflects a deep truth about the character of God mainly that he himself is the supreme artist. God does this creative work in an artistic and imaginative way”.²²⁴

Art and Evangelism

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20 [ESV]).²²⁵ Christians in the arts are included in this mission. The Lausanne Arts Movement (LAM) has developed initiatives for arts evangelism that are equipping the world to creatively tell God’s story:

The Great Commission, as it is known, has been at the core of Christian mission since its inception. By integrating the use of story (teaching), symbol and ritual (baptism), and cross-cultural communication (all nations), it draws our attention to the strategic role that the visual and the symbolic must play in our work of carrying out this commission. Understanding the nature and purpose of the arts is vital for evangelism and missions, because of the strategic role they play in every culture.²²⁶

²²³ Ex. 31:6-11 (ESV)

²²⁴ Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake*, 22.

²²⁵ Matt. 28:19-20 (ESV)

²²⁶ “Mission, Evangelism, Contextualization, and the Arts,” Lausanne World Pulse Archives, 2009. accessed April 1, 2020, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/1221>.

This goal is not just for artists, but also for everyone else made in God's image and in need of redemption.²²⁷ "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4 [ESV]).²²⁸ Art can be a vehicle for evangelism and an opportunity for reflection on a relationship with God.²²⁹ LAM affirms that "every people group reinforces and passes on its story through the arts" and that "art has its own unique way of *speaking and meaning*".²³⁰

Reaching an Unreached Subculture

Con Campbell says, "Many artistic communities are often regarded as "unreached people groups".²³¹ Artists build relationships and have mutual synergy. Christians in the arts must connect with non-believing artists in their subcultures. Campbell says that without Christians in communities with non-believers in the arts, evangelism will not take place, and they will have no exposure to the gospel.²³² "Since the best evangelism occurs through relationships, this is all but impossible in a subculture without Christians in it".²³³ Secular arts communities are mission fields that are ripe for harvest (John 4:35).

²²⁷ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 15.

²²⁸ Psalm 145:4 (ESV)

²²⁹ "What Has Art to Do with Evangelism?" Christian Research Institute, 2017. accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.equip.org/article/what-has-art-to-do-with-evangelism/>.

²³⁰ Mission, Evangelism, 2009.

²³¹ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 76.

²³² Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 76.

²³³ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 76.

Ministry to the Arts

The plethora of subcultures, meet-ups, and other artist communities that exist in Naples are mostly of a secular nature.²³⁴ How will the secular unreached subculture be reached? Jesus connected and lived among unbelievers for most of his earthly ministry (Mark 2:13-17). Jesus came to save the lost, the least and the last. His manifesto is found in Luke 4, previously prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-2. It should be an adopted manifesto for every Christian artist:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19 [ESV]).²³⁵

Love is the guiding principle for Christians in the arts as they fan into unknown territories. Generosity is the chief way love manifests itself in the world of work, our communities, and society.²³⁶ The Great Commandment is centered on loving God and loving others. It echoes the essence of Luke 4:18-19:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:37-40 [ESV]).²³⁷

²³⁴ "Artist Groups in Naples," Meetup, 2020. accessed June 14, 2020, <https://www.meetup.com/cities/us/fl/naples/arts-culture/>.

²³⁵ Luke 4:18-19 (ESV)

²³⁶ Matthew Perman, *What's Best Next?: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done* (Grand Rapids, TX: Zondervan, 2016), 86.

²³⁷ Matt. 22:37-40 (ESV)

Healing the Creative Soul

Erwin Rafael McManus, the author of *The Artisan Soul*, addresses some of the challenges that artists and those seeking to find a creative identity experience. McManus identifies artistic subcultures that exist in subcultures. McManus says:

I have come to realize, after over 30 years of studying human creativity, that the great divide is not between those who are artists and those who are not, but between those who understand that they are creative and those who have become convinced that they are not. The great divide is between those who understand that their very nature is that of an artist, and those who remain unaware or in denial of their artists and soul. The tragedy, of course, is that most of us have never thought of ourselves as artists. Most of us live our lives, convinced that we are uncreative. Most of us have spent our lives admiring those who have the gift of creativity while seeing our role as simply celebrating their uniqueness.²³⁸

McManus continues to delve deep into the core of indifference and pain of artists trapped in a box of insecurity. It is important to note that both Christians and non-Christians in the arts deal with the same challenges. SCA's ministerial focus overlaps into serving and supporting artists in the church and faith community:

When we describe someone as creative, imaginative, or artistic, we often like clarity because we consider ourselves none of the above. When we think of artists, we tend to think of them as a rare and elite category of people. Well, great art inspires us all; it also has a subtle way of diminishing us. We create an unconscious category that separates them from the rest of us. Their creativity is proof that we are not creative; their artistry proves that we are not artistic. Yet what humanity needs most is for us to set creativity free from the singular category of the extraordinary and release it into the hands of the ordinary. Creativity should be an everyday experience. Creativity should be as common as breathing. We breathe, therefore we create.²³⁹

²³⁸ Erwin Rafael McManus, *The Artisan Soul: Creating Your Life into a Work of Art* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2014), 3-5.

²³⁹ McManus, *Artisan Soul*, 4-5.

Discipling Artists

“The transformation of a culture starts with the transformation of the individual artists”²⁴⁰ said Allan Wiltshire, founder of *Mission Minded Artist*. Artists are on the forefront and frontlines of culture. What artists create – visual, media, performance, literary, have a great influence on building up or tearing down society. Jesus' command to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19) is a universal call that includes reaching the subculture of artists.

As Storytellers Creative Arts works to evangelize, develop, and deploy artists as disciples who transform their families, communities, and world, the development of a program to disciple artists is critical to advance the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). By coming alongside churches and ministries to establish arts ministries and discipleship programs to reach artists, a new generation of artists to advance the mission of Christ will emerge.

How Does One Disciple Artists, and Those Engaged in the Arts?

For centuries, artists have contributed to the church, expressing a unique aestheticism that enhanced congregational life. Artists helped the church to see things differently. They were valued and seen as conduits to mediate beauty, goodness, and truth, flowing through the fabric of the church. Over time, a disconnect between the church and its artists formed. The church began to view artists as insignificant, different, strange, or suspect. In addition to being seen as a threat, and counterproductive, it became clear that artists were not welcome in the church. Unquestionably, artists possess temperaments that are complicated and uncomfortable for people

²⁴⁰ “Discipling Artists to be Mission Minded,” *The Mission Minded Artist*, 2012. accessed May 24, 2020, <https://stoneworks-arts.org/the-mission-minded-artist-2/>.

who do not exercise such gifts. In the same vein, artists became suspicious of the church, expressing deep aversion, eventually disengaging.²⁴¹

Lancia Smith of the Anselm Society says that an artistic renaissance is emerging in the church today. A stirring of Christian imagination is bringing new hope to the church:

Like beacon fires being kindled, faith and art communities are forming and thriving. Many churches are seeking ways to engage and nurture artists within their congregations, and artists are beginning to find their way back into welcoming faith communities.²⁴²

As a new wave of creativity moves into the church, pastors and ministry leaders must develop programs to nurture the spiritual formation of artists through a sustainable discipleship program that is viable for reaching artists, a “sometimes complicated” people group. Author Ashlee Cowles said, “The more the artist grows in faith, in relationship with God, and in community with other believers, the more he or she will be able to speak the language of art”.²⁴³ The language of art communicates the truth, beauty, and goodness of God. Discipleship is defined as leading, training, teaching, and developing. Disciples are called to both learn and to imitate Christ, and also to multiply and reproduce other disciples.²⁴⁴ Authentic discipleship involves an intentional relationship between the teacher and the student. Artists need the support of their community of faith and spiritual guidance in their creativity to live a life surrendered to Jesus while exercising their craft:

²⁴¹ “How to Disciple Artists: Seven Elements to Answering a Great Pastoral Challenge,” The Anselm Society, 2018. accessed May 24, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/blog/2018/11/11/how-to-disciple-writers-amp-artists-seven-elements-to-answering-a-great-pastoral-challenge>.

²⁴² How to Disciple Artists, 2018.

²⁴³ “Should My Church Bother with Art That Does Not Present the Gospel?” The Anselm Society, 2018. accessed March 5, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/blog/2018/11/11/should-my-church-bother-with-art-that-doesnt-present-the-gospel-how-art-helps-us-to-grapple-with-the-realities-of-the-story-in-which-we-live>.

²⁴⁴ Give Up Your Weak Definition of Disciple, 2020.

The disciple's calling, as described in early Jewish writings about basic ethics, was to "cover himself in the dust of [the rabbi's] feet," drinking in his every word. He followed his rabbi so closely that he would "walk in his dust." In doing so, he became like the rabbi, his master.²⁴⁵

An effective discipleship program for artists will help creatives to embrace the love and grace of God. Allan Wiltshire comments further about the importance of discipling artists:

From the place of feeling and knowing that one is loved by God, the artist begins to behave as one so loved. Then, as the eyes and voice of a culture, artists are in a unique position to bring about change in culture through the motivation and use of art.²⁴⁶

Pastoring, Discipling and Championing Creatives

"The cost of discipleship is not cheap. It means spending time. It means listening. It means loving. It means guiding and correcting. It means inspiring and waiting".²⁴⁷ Lancia Smith of the *Anselm Society* offers counsel to pastors for shepherding and discipling artists to become spiritually mature believers. The identity crises that artists battle calls for pastors and ministry leaders to reinforce the artists' identity, which is crucial for discipling artists. "Giving and re-enforcing identity is essential for discipling artists. Artists are among the most vulnerable people, strangely gifted and most easily disenfranchised from common society",²⁴⁸ says Smith.

By their office and spiritual calling, pastors carry much gravitas, and as one with authority, their validation of the artist is most important and impactful for them. Validation restores meaning, purpose, and affirmation gives artists a "right to be" and a sense of validity to

²⁴⁵ "Walking In His Dust," Our Daily Bread, 2020. accessed September 9, 2020, <https://odb.org/2005/09/13/walking-in-his-dust/>.

²⁴⁶ Mission Minded Artist, 2012.

²⁴⁷ "What's the Best Way to Disciple Writers and Artists?" Anselm Society, 2018. accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/blog/2018/11/11/how-to-disciple-writers-amp-artists-seven-elements-to-answering-a-great-pastoral-challenge>.

²⁴⁸ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

what they create and envision. Within the effort to validate the artist, pastors must also teach and remind them of their calling as artists and that their identities and creative abilities are conduits to reflect God's image.²⁴⁹ Smith says,

Our calling as artists is to reflect visibly or audibly the image and voice of God as He is known in Himself or through creation, making our own identity especially difficult to form. Since our native focus as artists is on something either outside or beyond us, we lose our own identity quickly by being the bearers of the image for others.²⁵⁰

Some artists have trust issues which blocks authentic communication and understanding between them and the pastor. Building trust with artists evolves out of commitment and learning. Change cannot occur without it. Smith continues:

Artists are often skittish when it comes to trusting others, and it may take a long time for a discipler to communicate a love that sees our flaws and beauties alike. The building of trust is a slow, relationally expensive process, and yet out of it stems the capacity to change and be made new – to be disciplined.²⁵¹

Lancia emphasizes that “artists need to see mature faith modeled for them, to know what it looks like, to see how to live it out, to understand how to teach it to others”²⁵² (Phil. 4:9). She also stressed the importance that artists be taught life skills and practices; that artists need to be “*whole* people – mind, body and soul – not just fragments of giving”.²⁵³ Accountability is a critical component that pastors must initiate with the artists in the congregation. Artists are not exempt from accountability. Smith explains the responsibilities of pastors to shepherd artists, feeding and guiding them, forming them into mature believers:

²⁴⁹ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵⁰ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵¹ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵² Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵³ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

All human beings need to be accountable for our choices and behavior. Artists are not exempt from this. Pastors are uniquely fitted to help an artist see the sacred and holy value of their gifting and to teach the artist the importance of spiritual and character accountability. Pastors can provide a framework for developing spiritual strength, which will help the artist bear the wonders and burdens of the artistic life, survive our gifting, and ultimately thrive in it.²⁵⁴

Artists carry in their nature vulnerability, insecurity, fears, and uncertainty that they find difficult to move beyond. The pastor is also the disciple maker, suited to champion creatives – both in prayer and in practice. Some ways that pastors can champion artists are defending the artist, helping find a place for artists within the church or connecting the artist to potential employers or patrons. This is a work in progress and at times it might seem as though pastors are not making headway in their relationships and communication with artists.²⁵⁵ Discipling artists is in every sense a work of art in progress – a slow process:

Discipleship is slow and sometimes has setbacks. It requires prayer. It requires belief in God's work in the invisible and in the individual who may not yet show evidence of any spiritual fruit. Yet it is this long, costly, holy labor of shepherding that shapes and equips a gifted people to become light in a darkening hour.²⁵⁶

Nurturing Spiritual Formation

J. Scott McElroy, the author of the *Creative Church Handbook: Releasing the Power of the Arts in Your Congregation*, offers foundational methods to discipling artists in the church and community. His methods inspire and empower artists to step into the life that God has called them to – a joyful journey of creative collaboration. Five out of the seven directly support discipling artists: (1) *Help artists understand who they are in Christ*. Artists need to experience

²⁵⁴ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵⁵ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

²⁵⁶ Disciple Artists and Writers, 2018.

and embrace the love of Jesus, and to live into their identity in Christ; (2) *Help artists intentionally listen to the voice of God*. In building a relationship with Christ, artists need to be sensitive to God speaking through His word, other people, art, nature, circumstances, or events; (3) *Help artists understand their calling*. Artists, like every other human being, were created for a purpose, to advance the mission of Christ through their art (Eph. 2:10); (4) *Help artists to pursue spiritual formation*. Christian formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Christian formation is grounded in Scripture and within a faith community, and (5) *Help artists to identify lies and wounds in their lives and to overcome them*. Adding a special care ministry for artists will provide a safe community of healing.²⁵⁷

Theoretical Foundations

The author notes the following components to establish theoretical foundations as they pertain to this research project. Areas of consideration are art theory, worldview as it pertains to the arts and faith, the arts community, the creative mind, arts ministry, and examples of arts ministries involved in the discipleship and nurture of artists.

“Art has tremendous power to shape culture and touch the human heart. Its artifacts embody the ideas and desires of the coming generation”²⁵⁸ Art expresses the human condition. Human stories speak through music, literature, visual arts, poetry, and other arts genres. The prophetic voices of creatives have been heard throughout history, exposing its evils, stirring the

²⁵⁷ J. Scott McElroy, *Creative Church Handbook: Releasing the Power of the Arts in Your Congregation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 64-70.

²⁵⁸ “The Arts at Wheaton,” Wheaton College, 2020. accessed October 10, 2020, <https://www.wheaton.edu/life-at-wheaton/arts/>.

soul, and inspiring the heart. “What is happening in the arts today is prophetic of what will happen in our culture tomorrow”²⁵⁹

The Theories of Art

Art is defined as a human activity, consisting in this: that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves; to evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced, and then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling—this is the activity of art.²⁶⁰

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy concerned with identifying the clues within artworks that can be used to understand, judge, and defend judgments about those works. There are many different aesthetic theories, but no single theory takes into account all the aesthetic qualities found in artworks. Three of these theories are *imitationalism*, which stresses the importance of literal qualities; *formalism*, stressing the importance of the effective use of the principles of art to arrange the elements of art, and *emotionalism* which places the greatest importance on the expressive qualities, or the feeling, moods, and ideas communicated to the viewer by a work of art.²⁶¹

Worldview

The Handbook of Spirituality and Worldview in Clinical Practice defines worldview as “a view of the world, an intellectual construction that solves all the problems of our existence

²⁵⁹ The Arts at Wheaton, 2020.

²⁶⁰ What Is Art?, 2020.

²⁶¹ “Art, Criticism and Aesthetics,” Art in Focus, 2006. accessed April 7, 2020, http://www.glencoe.com/sec/art/ose/art_in_focus/2005/docs/Chap04.pdf.

uniformly based on one overriding hypothesis and a philosophy of life that answers all of the most fundamental questions of human existence”.²⁶² The artist’s worldview plays an innate role in creating, shaping values, decision-making, career choices, relationships, and life facets. “Our culture desperately needs a new generation to engage the imagination and the arts from a distinctively biblical worldview perspective”.²⁶³ Christians in the arts are called to create from a biblical perspective, through visual, literary, technical, and performing arts. In his book *Art and the Bible*, author and theologian Francis Schaeffer notes that, although great art communicates a worldview, it does not necessarily present truth:

As Christians, we must see that just because an artist - even a great artist - portrays a worldview in writing or on canvas, it does not mean that we should automatically accept that worldview. Good art heightens the impact of that worldview, but it does not make it true.²⁶⁴

Dr. Brian Morley in his analysis of aesthetics and biblical worldview, said “The subject of beauty is greatly neglected in studies of philosophy from a Christian perspective”.²⁶⁵ Morley believes that the arts have been taken captive by a secular society. He said, “Biblical worldview affirms that there is a perfect correlation between the Word of God and human experience. Therefore, we should expect that our human yearning for beauty would be addressed in the Bible”.²⁶⁶ From the perspective of Christians in the arts, Morley discusses points of interest

²⁶² Allan M. Josephson, and John R. Peteet, *The Handbook of Spirituality and Worldview in Clinical Practice* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2004), 3.

²⁶³ “How Does Worldview Influence the Arts?” Impact 360, 2018. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.impact360institute.org/articles/how-does-worldview-influence-the-arts/>.

²⁶⁴ “Art and the Bible Quotes,” Goodreads, 2020. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/963387-art-and-the-bible>.

²⁶⁵ “Art and Biblical Worldview,” Gospel For Life, 2012. accessed September 13, 2020, <http://gospelforlife.org/articles/2012/4/23/art-and-biblical-worldview.html>.

²⁶⁶ Art and Biblical Worldview, 2012.

concerning a biblical worldview of art. As creators made by the Creator, artists were designed to think God's thoughts, bask in, and thrive in the order in creation.²⁶⁷ The aesthetics of creatives flow from God's expression of truth and beauty. God's creative DNA influences the art: "When a painter or sculptor begins his creative work, he is forced to consider angles, radii, textures, colors, patterns, shapes, and forms".²⁶⁸ Humanity yearns for beauty, and seeks to surround itself with that beauty. The human impulse to create reflects our being created in the image of a Creator God.²⁶⁹

Navigating the Arts Community

Artists are a unique subculture that possesses individual and extraordinary skills to devise and create art that communicates who they are, their environment, and worldviews. Con Campbell comments on life as a creative, existing in an artistic subculture:

To the uninitiated, it may seem strange to claim that artists live normally within their own artistic subcultures. Such a claim may sound odd because on the surface, artists often appear to be normal, well-adjusted members of the community. And often they are! (And often they are not!). Whether or not they appear this way, serious artists nevertheless are generally best regarded as a different breed.²⁷⁰

Within an artistic subculture, artists speak an exclusive language, and there is an unspoken protocol for behavior in that community. Artists speak jargon and technical vocabulary that they share within their artistic discipline (music, visual arts, dance, or poetry). Artists share

²⁶⁷ Art and Biblical Worldview, 2012.

²⁶⁸ Art and Biblical Worldview, 2012.

²⁶⁹ Art and Biblical Worldview, 2012.

²⁷⁰ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 73-74.

homes, and some of these residents create studios for making art and collaboration.²⁷¹ Campbell comments on the lifestyles and behaviors observed among some artists:

Artists live differently in other ways too. This is a gross generalization, but on the whole, artists tend to adopt looser systems of morality. Their attitude to sex, drugs, and alcohol is frequently stereotyped by the mainstream - and for good reason. It is generally true! They often resist routine, structure, and organization. An organized artist is a rare breed indeed and will invite suspicion from more genuine artistic types. Artists just live in a different world with different rules or no rules.²⁷²

Along with the mainstream, churches stereotype artists based on their lifestyles and unabandoned creative impulses. These tensions could be a potential obstacle to discipling artists.

The Creative Mind

Creatives can be introverted or extroverted. Their unique gifts and needs categorize them as Sanguine-Melancholy, the most creative of temperaments. John Cocoris, author of *Born with a Creative Temperament* explains the personality traits of a Sanguine-Melancholy:

The Sanguine-Melancholy has a combination of two opposite and opposing temperaments. One is outgoing and active, while the other is private and reflective. Having both the extrovert and introvert traits is often confusing, so to them and those around them, they are outgoing most of the time, and yet they will withdraw from people to spend time alone some of the time. They can be friendly one moment, even the life of the party, and the next moment, sadly withdraw to be alone. They can be very optimistic and very pessimistic. They can have positive thoughts and negative thoughts. They can be slow to warm up when meeting a new person or overwhelm the new person with friendliness.²⁷³

The greatest need for a creative is to be with people most of the time. Artists have deep, intense emotions and vivid imaginations. Whether designing, painting, writing, composing songs, dancing, or taking photos, artists fully express themselves from the inside out. Cocoris

²⁷¹ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 76-77.

²⁷² Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 76-77.

²⁷³ John T. Cocoris, *Born with a Creative Temperament: The Sanguine-Melancholy (I-C)* (McKinney, TX: Self-Published, 2014), 39-40.

says “They are at their best when they are involved in a creative project that represents their interests. When they are motivated they will do as good as, if not better than, anyone else in their chosen field”.²⁷⁴

Artists see the world differently than most people. Central to the concept of creativity is the idea that some people see more possibilities than others. Artists evoke awe and inspiration through what they create.²⁷⁵ According to authors Luke Smillie and Anna Antinori, the term openness to experience, or openness, is the personality trait that energizes creativity.²⁷⁶ As they stated,

The aspect of our personality that appears to drive our creativity is called openness to experience, or openness. Among the five major personality traits, it is openness that best predicts performance on divergent thinking tasks. Openness also predicts real-world creative achievements, as well as engagement in everyday pursuits.²⁷⁷

It is primarily celebrated in our culture to be left-brained, geared toward a systematic intellectualism because that approach produces results that are more tangible than fluid, a less defined approach, in terms of a right-brained culture. Kendra Cherry says,

The left-brain, right-brain dominance theory states that the brain’s right side is best at expressive and creative tasks like expressing emotions, appreciating color, and using imagination. The brain's left-side is adept at tasks that involve logic, numbers, language, and analytical thinking.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ Cocoris, *Creative Temperament*, 40.

²⁷⁵ “People With Creative Personalities Really Do See the World Differently,” Pocket Worthy, 2020. accessed December 17, 2020, https://getpocket.com/explore/item/people-with-creative-personalities-really-do-see-the-world-differently?utm_source=pocket-newtab.

²⁷⁶ People With Creative Personalities, 2020.

²⁷⁷ People With Creative Personalities, 2020.

²⁷⁸ “Left Brain vs. Right Brain Dominance,” Very Well Mind, 2020. accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/left-brain-vs-right-brain-2795005>.

The creative temperament requires introspection. The temperament concept was first popularized in the Christian community by Dr. Tim LaHaye. He was the first to write in detail about the dynamics of the temperament blends of Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic and Melancholy.²⁷⁹

Arts Organizations and Ministries with Similar Missions

The author analyzed three arts ministries: *The Anselm Society*, *Lausanne Movement*, and *Stoneworks*, whose missions and visions are similar to that of Storytellers Creative Arts. The author gave close attention to worldview, discipling artists, and arts ministry in the church.

The *Anselm Society's* focus on Christ's character and attributes connects to its central culture of Christian imagination, which began to fade over time. The Anselm Society is an ecumenical, intergenerational group that believes in the great possibility of a realized renaissance of this faith-centered imagination.²⁸⁰

Against the press of a secular age, we believed it was time for an era of the church marked by such a profound vision of the Kingdom of God that believers could not only withstand, but transform the world around them.²⁸¹

When the Anselm Society began operating, it was well aware that if the Christians' biblical principles thwarted by secular imaginations, formed by their age's rhythms and priorities, a renaissance such as this could never happen. Anselm's core values and beliefs reveal the intent to disciple artists to infuse a biblical worldview of the arts in the church and world.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Cocoris, *Creative Temperament*, 18.

²⁸⁰ "Our Story," The Anselm Society, 2020. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.anselmsociety.org/our-story>.

²⁸¹ Anselm Society, 2020.

²⁸² Anselm Society, 2020.

“The church needs to re-learn how to disciple and work alongside artists. Artists need to re-learn how to be a part of the church, integrating excellence of both craft and faith (whether for sacred or common art)”.²⁸³

The *Lausanne Arts Movement* (LAM) mission and purpose are “to catalyze and connect artistic Christians and evangelical influencers concerning the role of artists and the arts for global mission—through gatherings focused on biblical prayer, reflection, training, and ministry action”.²⁸⁴ The organization has two directives that fuel its programs and outreach. LAM’s first directive shepherds artists globally with two main objectives: Catalyze and call artists back to the service of the church in global mission through their specialized, God-designed creative imagination, intelligence, and artistic abilities and gifts; equip artists biblically on the role of the artist and artistic expression in life, worship, and ministry.²⁸⁵

The second directive speaks to the church, mission and global academic leadership. This directive aims to call the church to re-engage with artists to empower culturally relevant worship, evangelism, and compassion worldwide; and to come alongside existing ministries and churches to help them understand and partner with the need to welcome artists as skilled professionals of the church. God’s design and purpose for artists, in collaboration with the church, will be fulfilled in this process.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Anselm Society, 2020.

²⁸⁴ “Arts,” Lausanne Movement, 2020. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.lausanne.org/networks/issues/arts>.

²⁸⁵ Lausanne Movement, 2020.

²⁸⁶ Lausanne Movement, 2020.

Stoneworks is a global arts initiative whose vision centers on healing and restoration. “The vision to restore, renew, and rebuild the brokenness of the arts world is a vision to see the arts restored to God’s original intention, for beauty, and for his glory”.²⁸⁷ Christians are mandated to make disciples.

Stoneworks recognizes that the secular arts and entertainment industry (film, television, and music) monopolize the contemporary art world. The organization also affirms that at one time, the arts were essential in the church, which celebrated and elevated the arts, glorifying God. It also recognizes the abandonment of the church.²⁸⁸

The church has neglected imagination in life (according to *Stoneworks*), and as a result, the church is more impoverished for it. Amid the malnourishment of the imagination and wonder in the church's life, *Stoneworks* highlights a renewed interest in the arts and imagination in the church.²⁸⁹ “There has probably never been a time in which a biblical understanding of the arts is more needed by the church than in our present visual and image-oriented postmodern culture”.²⁹⁰

Stoneworks’s mission has four (4) components: *Educate* the church to embrace a biblically-based understanding and practice of the arts; *Encourage* spiritual, artistic, and culturally transformational worldview excellence; *Establish* witnessing communities of art students and faculty on university campuses and *train* mission organizations to understand the role of the imagination in discipling nations.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ “Removing the Stones: The Need,” *Stoneworks*, 2020. accessed September 13, 2020, <https://stoneworks-arts.org/need-opportunity/>.

²⁸⁸ *Stoneworks*, 2020.

²⁸⁹ *Stoneworks*, 2020.

²⁹⁰ *Stoneworks*, 2020.

²⁹¹ *Stoneworks*, 2020.

All three ministries/organizations have programs that speak to the purpose of this thesis project. Based on the analysis, a strategic plan is essential to develop and build partnerships with local Naples congregations to support and minister to artists in the community of faith and in the marketplace, in addition to an in depth curriculum for small groups and community building.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the methods followed for the study. The expectation is that the findings will enable the author to build a case for addressing the problem and provide solutions to develop programs and strategies to reach artists. The research process will take place over a six week to 3-month period.

A directional hypothesis will explain the direction of the expected findings.²⁹² The assumption that there is an existing conflict in Naples, Florida, will be tested through various investigations, interviews, and other sources. Wufoo (Survey Monkey) will be the primary resource utilized for qualitative research, enabling the project to impact the arts culture and enhance the development of Christ-centered communities for discipleship.

Intervention Design

The intervention plan to address the problem will be an immersion into the culture of Christian artists. The author has no biases regarding the intervention. The entire action research thesis is a prototype for an expanded ministry that will potentially spread to other cities and states. The author is recreating and restructuring Storytellers Creative Arts, and this thesis is the beginning of that project. This intervention needs to understand what challenges are faced by artists in their subcultures and communities. It is vital to analyze the ways Christian artists view and interpret the problem. The intervention will gain as much information about personal and corporate challenges and any concerns existing in a New Age saturated artist community – as a

²⁹² “Null Hypothesis and Alternative Hypothesis,” Statistical Solutions, 2020. accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/null-hypothesis-and-alternative-hypothesis/>.

believer in Christ. It is also vital to understand the secular arts culture's hostile stance toward Christianity and their subcultures' struggles if any.

A Subcultural Investigation

Gospel transformation through the arts is the pointed direction of this project. The researcher's intent is the discipleship and nurture of artists in Naples, Florida. C.S. Lewis observed, "A man whose life has been transformed by Christ cannot help but have his worldview show through".²⁹³ The secular and Christian arts communities of Naples, Florida, are two unique subcultures within the subculture of the arts. Each comes with its behaviors that flow in and out of creating and expressing their art. Both the secular and Christian arts communities will be intently examined and researched. "In their day-to-day lives in work and community settings people act and behave according to well-established routines and recipes that have emerged from their socialization or professional development".²⁹⁴ Establishing an atmosphere of free dialogue is essential. The investigative process will be more robust and resourceful with intentional research and a closer look at seemingly problematic issues to make them subject to investigation and analysis.²⁹⁵

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The intervention design implementation will be the assembling of a core focus group of artists and one for ministry and community leaders. The groups will serve as advisors to the project, contributing knowledge and experience in their respective ministries and professions.

²⁹³ "C.S. Lewis Quotes About Art," A-Z Quotes, 2020. accessed April 21, 2020, https://www.azquotes.com/author/8805-C_S_Lewis/tag/art.

²⁹⁴ Ernest Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), eBook, n.p.

²⁹⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 2014.

The researcher will serve as the chairman and moderator of the focus groups and be responsible for arranging locations and time schedules. Each group will be a maximum of twelve (12) participants. Of the participants, there will be at least two (2) Naples pastors (of large and small congregations) that are supporters of the arts and artists in the church (serving opportunities, and discipleship). There will be at least two (2) Naples Worship/Creative Arts pastors (of large and small congregations) who involve artists in various aspects of the congregation, with a program to build community), and at least four Naples artists (visual, music, literary, and performing arts) who serve in the marketplace and community.

Personal contact will take place before the first group meeting. The meeting date and location will be scheduled in advance, following the initial contact with the proposed participants. If the entire group cannot attend, there will be smaller group meetings. Bearing in mind that all schedules will not align with the meeting's time and date, individual connecting is the other option. One other potential obstacle that could slow down the process is that Naples is a seasonal city and availability during the set times of interviews and focus groups might not be feasible for some participants.

Gathering Data and Composition of Questions

The researcher will gather data to develop questions and references for interviews. The questions, surveys, and interview findings will be edited where necessary. During this time, meetings will be scheduled with senior pastors and worship/creative arts pastors. The targeted goal is a maximum of 12 churches across denominations and sizes. Surveys will be included in the initial email. After retrieving survey results, an analysis, dates, and times to meet with the church leadership will be arranged.

Gathering Data from Ministry Leaders

Six to twelve church leaders will be interviewed. Of that group, 4 – 6 church leaders will be involved in the intervention concerning data collected from the interviews. Intervention meetings will be scheduled with select pastors and ministry leaders, Christians in the arts, and non-Christians in the arts. The interventions will be no more than two hours per group. The interventions will happen within three to five days, at various times.

Inviting Participants

The researcher has served in the Naples arts communities for over 16 years and has built relationships with Christians and non-Christians in the arts. Initially, a personal phone call or text will be the first step. The author will initially focus on people known personally within ministry or professional areas, followed by a lunch meeting or Zoom meeting to explain the problem and the intent to gain information. Interviewees will be scheduled one month prior to meeting. A letter of introduction and invitation to be a part of the project will be sent out with a follow-up phone call, three days later.

Approval from the administrative assistants for the pastors, ministry leaders, and professionals will be needed. Approval will also be needed from churches, film studios, art galleries, and other venues to do interviews and intervention meetings. The researcher will do all interviews and groups via Zoom or other available resources.

Additional Resources and Preparation

To save time and have some prior knowledge about the person or organization, the researcher will navigate websites and other media connections through the internet to know how to formulate the questions. The information to be sought consists of biographies, history of church or business, staff information, and accomplishments.

Potential Changes to the Problem Following the Intervention

Like the one identified above, a specific intervention could show that the problem resides within the church and not between the secular and Christian arts communities. As a matter of explanation, the root of the problem begins with the church. If artists are not disciplined, they will not have a stable relationship with Christ, and depending on the level of disillusionment, their spiritual formation will suffer. The intervention may reveal a lack of discipleship that exacerbates the obstacle to diminish fruitful evangelism through the arts. This realization does highlight the secular and Christian divide because, within the circles of the church and its suspicion of the arts, artists can potentially be driven into the secular culture.

An intervention will provide a clear picture of the problem, enabling the researcher to develop a strategic plan to come alongside the church to disciple and unleash artists into their God-given callings and develop arts ministry programs for SCA to minister to artists on a parachurch level.

Current Facts Concerning the Problem

It has been increasingly challenging to build and sustain thriving artist communities for Christians in the arts.

- Research is necessary to determine if there are other arts parachurch organizations in Naples, Florida.
- A developed curriculum to disciple artists is not available or developed in Naples, Florida.

Criteria for Evaluation to Produce a Successful Outcome

A successful outcome for the intervention design plan will clarify issues within the subcultures of the Christian and secular arts communities to enable the author to brainstorm a sustainable strategy. This realization would only come after a full evaluation of artists' lives and practices in the Naples community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the author to rethink a few of the cultural research actions. Most of the arts communities in Naples are in survival mode. The arts will be one of the areas that will be reduced significantly in budgets, the job market, and gigs. A shift in the arts culture has already begun. However, because all artists have been affected by the domino effect of a shrinking arts culture in Naples – or the new normal of the arts, perhaps common ground might be able to be obtained in this case. Churches and ministries will need to make decisions concerning staff and funding for arts and worship (i.e., what is of great necessity). These and other observations may alter the research and interventions.

A successful outcome would be honest and open interaction in the focus groups and interviews. Without this data, the project will not be efficient. A successful outcome would afford the researcher to have a plethora of information and accurate, first-hand data to incorporate in a strategic plan. The researcher's goal is to come away with a deep understanding of artists' beliefs, needs, and challenges. Since artists usually create from within and emotion, today's culture will be an integral factor. Overall, a successful outcome will give the researcher a deeper understanding of the artist personally, professionally, and spiritually. The researcher will also come away with more empathy for both sides. Another success is obtaining the information needed to do an intense evaluation.

The crossovers in both cultures will be a part of the success. The researcher believes that the conflict lies in the center, within overlaps, namely: 1. Both Christian and secular artists deal with similar challenges; 2. Some Christians and secular artists were, at one point, affiliated with the church and became disillusioned; 3. A humanistic view of life may reside in some Christians. Ultimately, the goal is the discipleship of artists – both Christian and non-Christian. A successful intervention will open more dialogue and opportunities for prayer and the design of programs that minister to the heart of the artist.

The New Approach Compared to the Old Approach

Upon completing the interviews and interventions, a new approach will undoubtedly be necessary, depending on the results. From personal observations over 16 years, the researcher has observed a divide in the arts community between Christian artists prohibited from displaying faith-based art in public art spaces or some organizations forbidding the mention of Jesus or faith when interacting in secular environments. The interventions may reveal that this is incorrect or worse than realized and that the overlaps will undoubtedly call for a “back to the drawing board” approach. Questions may need to be revised, or new ones added. A new approach might be trying other analytical methods or narrowing the focus. Perhaps a curriculum is not a defining factor, and perhaps the researcher will need to find another method of addressing the situation.

The questions and answers hinge on the researcher’s discoveries. The old approach might not be as inclusive or adventurous as a new approach would be. Artists are interesting people with individual behaviors and styles.

Tools and Methods to Gather Data

The researcher will be using Wufoo (Survey Monkey) for qualitative research. To test validity through the assimilation of information from three different sources, the author will

utilize the triangular method for qualitative research, which will consist of these three methods: surveys & questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Within the triangular method, the following three people groups are included: Christian Artists, non-Christian Artists, and Naples church and ministry leaders.

Reflective Journal to Bracket out Biases

The researcher will utilize a journal that will be both reflective and chronological to alleviate any biases. The information recorded in the reflective journal will be invaluable to this project and guide the future of the ministry of Storytellers Creative Arts. Therefore, any information and critical observations gleaned will be included in multiple aspects of the project. The journal will also be comparisons of conversations, interventions, and reactions to questions in the interviews. The researcher will note any critical issues that would either block or enhance the project, based on the feedback and climate in the interviews and focus groups. Every aspect of this project will serve as a reference to develop other projects to support addressing the problem.

The researcher hopes to gather and accomplish the following through the reflective journal:

- Restructure the mission for Storytellers Creative Arts.
- Build new relationships and partnerships with artists and local churches.
- Convert the Focus groups into a task force to advance the Gospel in Naples and beyond.
- Construct a strategic plan to develop a discipleship program for artists.
- Design a curriculum/bible study for artists.
- Develop an arts outreach program to incite artists to advance the Great Commission with their art.
- Seek common ground through collaboration and event-based ministry.

- Develop a strategy to partner with local churches and ministry leaders to develop arts ministries and a care plan to serve and minister to artists in the faith community.

Chapter 4

Results

The qualitative research objective was to address the stated problem of a divide between the secular and sacred communities of the arts in Naples, Florida, which diminishes effective evangelism of the Storytellers Creative Arts ministry, to gain a vivid perspective, understanding, and clarity on the existence of a said divide. Accordingly, the researcher immersed himself into the arts culture of Naples, seeking out artists, both Christian and non-Christian. The results revealed, at a minimum, a divide among these communities. Affirmatively, through conversations, interviews, and focus groups, the researcher discovered that the root cause of a divide or dysfunction resides with the faith community's neglect to embrace the arts and disciple its artists. Interviews revealed faith crises, and in many cases, unhealthy embracement of the arts.

The researcher drew from the wisdom of the cited authors and scholars who expounded on the value of the arts as God's handiwork and tool to evangelize the world and the responsibility of the church to nurture and disciple artists to advance the mission. They have contributed to the development of this thesis in order to connect the results of interviews and focus groups, leading to a path to address the stated problem and offer possible solutions.

Sacred and Secular Encounters in the Arts Community

To address a sacred and secular divide among artists, the researcher obtained feedback from Christian artists and their interactions with non-Christian artists (and vice versa). The researcher's discoveries confirm that (1) conflict and tension is exacerbating a divide, (2) some Christians in the arts are ill-equipped to exist in the secular arts community, and that (3) a ministry to disciple artists is critical before they can be released to transform the world with the Gospel and the arts.

Table 1.1 represents examples of feedback and responses from interviewees on their interactions with other artists, workplace and the faith community.

Table 1.1

Christian and Non-Christian Artist Interactions

Christian Artists (CA)	<p>AR1 refutes a divide, calls it a façade, believes all artists have faith, regardless of lifestyle.</p> <p>AR2 is taunted by cast members for her faith and coerced to do ungodly performances.</p> <p>AR3 refuses to interact with non-Christian artists and is intolerant of debating on faith issues.</p> <p>ARP1 says the divide begins with Christian artists who are judgmental of the music that secular artists produce.</p> <p>AR5 was pressured to do a nude photoshoot by a secular magazine that knew he was a Christian.</p> <p>AR10 prefers to do music with non-Christian artists because he finds acceptance with them and judged by his church.</p>
Non-Christian Artists (NCA)	<p>AR8 does not subscribe to religion and distrusts Christian artists; he was ostracized from the church because of his same-sex marriage.</p> <p>AR16 is open to any and all religions and welcomes dialogue with Christians wanting to learn about faith.</p> <p>AR13 is a gnostic, who does not believe in the tenets of the church, yet comingles Catholic, New Age and heretical themes in the songs she performs in church.</p> <p>AR14 is adverse to Christianity and considers himself spiritual; New Age ideologies shown in his art has garnered a massive following.</p>

Author Michael Bauer brought us to the critical fact that the tensions and theological misunderstandings of the arts between the church and artists thwarts arts ministry and negatively impacts evangelism. As he stated, “In reality, the language employed in the debate about arts ministry is often theological, not artistic”.²⁹⁶ Bauer encourages the church to embrace the arts, to

²⁹⁶ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 16.

affirm its artists, and to nurture arts ministers, equipping them to develop arts ministries. If the church is to be at the forefront of a fallen world's redemption, the purveyors of truth (in this case, artists) must be equipped and disciplined. The pastoral and ministry leader interview research will reveal dialogue on these topics and an open door for collaboration with Storytellers Creative Arts.

AR1, a worship leader and secular band director, refutes a divide between the secular and sacred arts communities; however, his beliefs about faith and life transformation are theologically incorrect. AR1 interacts with nonbeliever artists daily who frequent his music supply business. According to AR1, secular artists innately have faith but are unable emotionally to talk about faith, and the idea of a secular and sacred divide is a facade. As AR1 stated “Rappers cuss, they talk about women in the crassest and disgusting ways. They talk about guns, and they talk about shooting people, but it is all talk. They still go to church on Sunday. Most of them have faith”.²⁹⁷ According to AR1, every human being is naturally born with faith, no matter their lifestyle. The artist is firmly reluctant to share his faith with secular artists because from his perspective, they are not emotionally able to understand or relate. AR1 affirms that there is power in the name of Jesus, and power in talking about it, but unless the person is emotionally ready to receive it, there will be no real power. A revealing factor of this reluctance is that AR1 fears losing clientele.

The thesis introduction highlighted Al Mohler’s warning that the moral landscape of American values and values of Western culture were dissipating.²⁹⁸ As Mohler stated, “A central

²⁹⁷ AR1. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 16, 2020.

²⁹⁸ Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, 15.

fact of the storm now gathering strength is moral liberalism, which cannot be explained without the dechristianization of society”.²⁹⁹ To follow suit on this dechristianization, the theater arts community is no longer subtle in these efforts. Actress AR2 recently played the leading role in a play.³⁰⁰ In her role, AR2 falls in love with a young man from school. The directors decided to cast the young man as a female, and AR2 was ordered to change all the pronouns in the script to “she” and “her.” She was distressed. As she stated, “I went home, and I wept. I told them I would not do the show because of my faith and beliefs. I prayed and asked the Lord to intervene and He did”.³⁰¹ After numerous attempts to coerce AR2 to do the scene, they agreed to change it back to a male co-star. Even amid these tensions, AR2 is positioned to reach secular artists and with the support of the church, she will be equipped. Artist and author Con Campbell reminded us that artists have the unique opportunity to share the Gospel with both the Christian and secular artists in what he called closed artistic subcultures.³⁰² These opportunities are met with opposition and, today, more than ever, aggression and strife.

AR3 was in a Storytellers group, whose bylaws stated that religious or spiritual persuasions and discussions on politics are prohibited.³⁰³ An influx of New Ager artists took over the group and the conflict began. AR3 knew that she would be shut down immediately if she brought up Christianity among the other artists. As AR3 stated, “I did not have the fight in me to

²⁹⁹ Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, 15.

³⁰⁰ AR2. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 16, 2020.

³⁰¹ AR2, 2020.

³⁰² Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 12.

³⁰³ AR3. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 18, 2020.

take them on, so I just quietly left the group. I left the group because I felt like I was being indoctrinated, and my spirit did not like it”.³⁰⁴ AR3’s decision to leave the group reveals her need to have spiritual guidance in these conflicting situations and interactions with the secularist community.

A Cancel-Culture for Christian artists made way for the kind of tough decision AR3 faced and also AR4 who has left her church to seek other opportunities to serve with her art. AR4’s decision is a detriment for the church and reveals the failure to disciple and welcome all artists. Not only is she not attending a church, but she has fallen prey to a beckoning secular music community. Artist J.D. Payne asserted that the church marginalizes its artists. As he stated, “Artists that are not being disciplined by the church will be disciplined by the world”.³⁰⁵

Like AR1, ARP1’s (Worship pastor and recording artist) interaction with secular artists leads him to refute any tension or divide adamantly. He asserts that the problem is among Christian artists not secular artists. As ARP1 has stated, “I do not think the culture is feeling tension with us. I think the church feels tense about artists creating outside of the sacred”.³⁰⁶ ARP1 compared Christian and non-Christian artists when he insisted that secular recording artists J-Lo and Beyoncé do not stay awake at night concerned about what Christian artist Chris Tomlin is writing.³⁰⁷ ARP1 argued that the church gives a lot more “brain space, anxiety and time” worrying about what secular artists are doing rather than what the secular space thinks

³⁰⁴ AR3, 2020.

³⁰⁵ Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

³⁰⁶ ARP1. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 13, 2020.

³⁰⁷ ARP1, 2020.

about the church.³⁰⁸ Whereas ARP1's assessments are well justified in terms of tension on the part of the church with secular artists, the researcher surmises that it could also be seen as ratification if not careful. Author and Podcaster Steve Turley reminded us that the endorsement of secularized values and lifestyles among Christians in the music industry is crippling the witness and heightening the conflict.³⁰⁹

AR5 is a model and an aspiring author. A committed Christian, AR5 has gradually drifted away from attending church.³¹⁰ As his modeling career began soaring, AR5 lost interest in church and in nurturing a relationship with Christ. He faced the pressures that most models endure when they sign on to be fashion icons of the culture. AR5 admitted his naivety and self-assurance that he could be strong enough to withstand the pressures and ultimately the coercion to compromise his faith by doing photoshoots that were dishonoring to God. He was infatuated with fame, success, money and an endearing fan base, only to find himself in what he called a storm. Recalling the compromising photoshoot, AR5 stated, "Those photos would be out there forever, and it would have been shameful".³¹¹ A supportive arts community would provide accountability and a safe place to be open about these kinds of struggles. AR5's situation speaks to J.D. Payne's alert to the church concerning Christians in the arts who fall prey to the secular community. As he stated:

A majority of artists that will go into the marketplace will be going into venues that are incredibly dark places, and they are often going alone. Yes, they are believers. Yes,

³⁰⁸ ARP1, 2020.

³⁰⁹ Turley, Why Christian Artists Are Endorsing Secular Sexuality, 2016.

³¹⁰ AR5. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, August 24, 2020.

³¹¹ AR5, 2020.

they're filled with God's spirit, but they don't have any church encouragement, guidance, instruction, and prayer support.³¹²

The researcher cites J.D. Payne's advice as a guiding principle for pastors and ministry leaders who strive to find ways to minister to and equip artists as they fan into a dark world.

Art and Faith Conversations with Secular Artists

The researcher met with non-Christian artists to know more about their art and faith views and their interaction with Christians in the arts.

Renowned Southwest Florida artist AR14 is known as the world-acclaimed Urban Expressionist painter in Naples. The basis of AR14's paintings is power structures. He responds to power structures within the psychological, military, or economic power structures with authority like the media. AR14's service to the military and a PTSD diagnosis fuel the themes and subject matters of his work. According to AR14, there is a spiritual realm that he enters when he paints. As he stated,

My faith is spiritual. I am always searching, and I think the paintings and being a painter are part of that. My greatest need is to paint. I feel uncomfortable if I cannot paint. It is the one moment where I enter this realm when I feel the essence in me, a creative essence. And while I am creative, I see, feel or hear nothing. Everything else is shut out and off. I am in a spiritual world where there is nothing to hold onto.³¹³

AR14's worldview has always been critical for him, dating back to his war experiences and personal losses. His family has always been politically verbal and active.³¹⁴ AR14's artworks focus on human concerns and are not based on storytelling or beliefs.³¹⁵

³¹² Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

³¹³ AR14. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 11, 2020.

³¹⁴ AR14, 2020.

³¹⁵ AR14, 2020.

The researcher notes that artists in the secular community are open to dialogue about faith issues, even if there is disagreement. Like Christian artists, non-believer artists search for identity, community, and purpose that the all-loving Savior, Jesus Christ, provides. AR14 was appreciative of the interview, as he stated that no other media outlet or arts organization had ever shown deep concern for him as an individual apart from his art. In many ways, the researcher's interaction with AR14 is like the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). Before revealing who He was, Jesus spent quality time with her, showing genuine, authentic concern and empathy for her while presenting the Gospel. From that point, there was seemingly a difference in AR14 at the end of the interview, as he began asking more profound questions about God, faith, and life after death.

AR13 is an author, Folk singer and songwriter; she does not share her faith. "I don't think I believe in too many of the tenets of any church. I don't have any need to convert anyone to faith".³¹⁶ She considers herself to be a "cultural Catholic".³¹⁷ AR13 has tried various denominations but finds her spiritual connection with the Roman Catholic Church's culture and traditions. Her church is not a Bible-believing church. The congregation as a whole does not give any length of time to the study of Scripture.³¹⁸

AR13 is compassionate toward all people, and she tries to understand others' various viewpoints. To AR13, all people are beautiful and wonderful. AR13 writes faith-based songs, although she is averse to bringing Jesus to the fore of her music. She also believes in a "good"

³¹⁶ AR13. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 10, 2020.

³¹⁷ AR13, 2020.

³¹⁸ AR13, 2020.

God who would never condemn anyone to hell.³¹⁹ As AR13 stated, “The Jesus thing” bothers me. I do not believe that a beautiful young Muslim girl will not go to heaven because she does not know Jesus. I think God is bigger than that. I think there is a really good God up there”.³²⁰

AR8 opposes Christianity, yet he was very open to discussions about faith and God. Specifically, he shared his struggles and a deep longing to experience the traditional customs of the church once again. In terms of any organized faith, that journey has not been as successful for AR8.³²¹ He has both an admiration and a frustration with religion. He has met and interacted with people of faith who have been generous and kind to him.³²² As AR8 stated,

I have met artists who exemplify what the enactment of faith is meant to do for humanity, and I have also met some who use faith as a weapon or as a means to enrich themselves or separate themselves from others in order to aggrandize who they are.³²³

Nevertheless, AR8 always comes to the conclusion that the message of faith is incredible, but he does not necessarily trust any particular human being to know the answers in a way that makes him safe. Continuing the conversation on faith, AR8 shared about interactions among Christian and non-Christian artists, explaining the cultural trends and norms of life among performers of all faiths and lifestyles. In AR8’s artistic environment, artists and actors tend to be a lot more liberal, and depending on the faith, they tend to lean more conservative.³²⁴

³¹⁹ AR13, 2020.

³²⁰ AR13, 2020.

³²¹ AR8. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 7, 2020.

³²² AR8, 2020.

³²³ AR8, 2020.

³²⁴ AR8, 2020.

According to AR8, there are many people who come from very conservative places and environments, and their views on homosexuality are rooted in their faith communities.³²⁵ As AR8 stated, “In 2003, the first *Will and Grace* show was still playing. Gay marriage was not legal yet. There is a large gay community in musical theatre. Many people have never met an openly gay person”.³²⁶

AR8 was reluctant to do the interview initially, but after realizing that he was allowed to be “heard” and that the researcher was authentic, he began to open up and express deep feelings about faith. Non-believers in the arts community are apprehensive about sharing their struggles, especially with Christian artists. Like AR14, AR8, is searching. Previously in the discussion on purpose and significance, the researcher discussed AR8’s restlessness and drive to create and be relevant repeatedly. Deep inside, AR8 questions if God loves and accepts him because of his chosen lifestyle.³²⁷

AR16 is always trying to find an identity and who he is as a person. Portraying that identity on canvas is challenging for AR16.³²⁸ AR16 brings a youthful, urban city style of art to the conservative, affluent city of Naples. For the past six years, AR16 has assimilated to Naples culture, painting massive murals spread across the county, leaving the unique fingerprints that distinguish him as one of the most sought-after painters in Collier county. As with many secular artists (and even some Christian artists) in Naples, energy, vibes, and mindful force surround

³²⁵ AR8, 2020.

³²⁶ AR8, 2020.

³²⁷ AR8, 2020.

³²⁸ AR16. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 7, 2020.

their artistic lives.³²⁹ As AR16 stated, “Putting energies out into this world is something I believe. I believe in everything. If you are putting positive energy out to the world, most likely you are going to get something positive back”.³³⁰ AR18 subscribes to all religions and faiths, even tapping into other realms and life forms. He believes that any possibility is a fantastic possibility. AR16 believes there are many paths to God. He is eager to discuss these issues with people of various faiths, always seeking to know why people believe the way they do. AR16 believes in aliens and extraterrestrial beings; any different civilization is intriguing for him.³³¹

Again, here is another non-Christian artist who is at least open to dialogue about faith. All of the artists interviewed from the secular arts community have questions and are searching. There are great possibilities for developing platforms to evangelize, and it begins with trust, authenticity, and relationship, and that follows the example of Jesus (James 1:19).

Artists Battling Struggles and Challenges

The information obtained from Naples artist interviews about struggles that artists face revealed a need for a more profound, healing ministry to creatives who battle addiction. In addition to a working discipleship program, the local church must also consider artists’ personal and spiritual problems and find ways to minister to those needs.

From biblical history to the present day, artists have battled additions of every kind. King David, “the man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14), was an anointed king, musician, songwriter, and Psalmist who became addicted to power. Sexual addiction drove him to rape

³²⁹ AR16, 2020.

³³⁰ AR16, 2020.

³³¹ AR16, 2020.

Bathsheba and murder her husband Uriah.³³² The short-lived, tragic life of Dutch post-expressionist painter Vincent van Gogh was ravaged by manic-depression and schizophrenia, ending in suicide. “One strong piece of the evidence for the diagnosis of manic-depressive illness is van Gogh’s striking family history of psychiatric disease, especially mood disorders and suicide”.³³³ Acclaimed novelist and a rising star in the literary world, Ernest Hemingway’s addiction to alcohol gained him the reputation of a barroom brawler. Rage and alcoholism would torment him to the end.³³⁴

The acceleration of alcohol abuse is a growing problem in Naples, Florida, with 15 percent of adults who binge drink. As a result, the area experiences numerous alcohol-related motor vehicle deaths, according to the 2010 Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Florida continues to make national news as one of many states exacerbating the opioid crisis.³³⁵ “In 2017, 3,245 Floridians died from overdoses that included opioids”.³³⁶

AR8 struggles with being able to continue creating and at the same time, feeling relevant. His marriage to a man and raising an adopted son left him excommunicated from the church.³³⁷ AR8 has a desire to go back to the church, and this situation could open up an opportunity for

³³² 2 Samuel 11 (ESV)

³³³ Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched By Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 233.

³³⁴ Robert Petterson, *The Book of Amazing Stories: 365 Days of Seeing God’s Hand in Unlikely Places* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2018), 413.

³³⁵ “Naples Substance Abuse Statistics,” Lakeview Health, 2020. accessed September 27, 2020, <https://www.lakeviewhealth.com/lakeview-health-addiction-resources-florida/substance-abuse-statistics-by-state/florida-substance-abuse-statistics/naples-substance-abuse-statistics/>.

³³⁶ Naples Substance Abuse Statistics, 2020.

³³⁷ AR8, 2020.

Storytellers Creative Arts to reach artists in the secular community with the life-transforming Gospel of Jesus. As AR8 stated,

I cannot bring my son into a church where I know ultimately, I'm not welcome. Naples is a very conservative community, and so I'm enough with who I am and what I believe in, allowing it to be what it is. If I want a personal connection with Christ, it is going to be on my terms. I have long since stopped looking for other people to find that for me. I found it enough on my own. My husband was raised Catholic, so it is not in the cards to attend church, knowing we are not welcome.³³⁸

According to AR2, artists are extremely vulnerable, emotional people, and they see things differently.³³⁹ After AR2 ends a season of performances, she goes into a withdrawal and deep depression.³⁴⁰ As she stated, "I like all of my characters for different reasons because they all become a part of me. After a show, I experience what I refer to as PSD (Post Show Depression)".³⁴¹ For about a week after the show, AR2 feels as if she has lost a friend. The process of tech week and then going into the show gives AR2 an adrenaline rush, then she experiences a letdown and is left physically and emotionally drained.

AR10 is a professional drummer who plays on the worship team at his church and plays with other bands at bars, restaurants, and other venues. He expresses his faith when playing the drums, and the rhythm of music lifts him. AR10 has been sober for 12 years but considers himself a recovering addict.³⁴² As he stated, "God saved me from the edge of despair and death and led me to an A.A. program at church just before joining the worship team".³⁴³ AR10 is a

³³⁸ AR8, 2020.

³³⁹ AR2, 2020.

³⁴⁰ AR2, 2020.

³⁴¹ AR2, 2020.

³⁴² AR10. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, August 23, 2020.

³⁴³ AR10, 2020.

believer who struggles with an addiction to drugs and alcohol. He shared some of his experiences as an artist and how he has been affected by them. Lost in addiction, AR10 would show up at church drunk and high (unbeknownst to the team) and play percussion. AR10 was not allowed to go back there after they realized his condition. AR10 was not in the right place at that point, spiritually or emotionally. That was just before he tried to commit suicide.³⁴⁴

According to American Addiction Centers, “Individuals in the arts and entertainment industry have higher than expected rates of substance use disorders, self-reported previous heavy alcohol use, and self-reported use of illicit drugs”.³⁴⁵ A 2015 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration report shows that substance use and abuse rates include the arts and entertainment industry. Alcohol abuse is the #1 addiction in the arts before drug addiction.³⁴⁶ “It is difficult to say exactly what percentage of artists suffer from addiction, as there is a lack of substance abuse prevalence data specific to artists”,³⁴⁷ says Dr. Michael Kalisewski author of *Addiction Among Artists*.³⁴⁸

Addiction is heavily prevalent among Christian artists and performers who deal with the same challenges as non-believer artists. Storytellers Creative Arts has been ministering to adults and youth in addiction for over six years, and a great many of the people served are artists who are Christians. No matter the person, addiction is a stronghold that only the power of Jesus can

³⁴⁴ AR10, 2020.

³⁴⁵ “Addiction Among Artists,” American Addiction Centers, 2020. accessed September 27, 2020, <https://sunrisehouse.com/addiction-demographics/artists/>.

³⁴⁶ “How Prevalent is Addiction Among Artists?” American Addiction Centers, 2020. accessed September 27, 2020, <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/entertainers/addiction-among-artists>.

³⁴⁷ *Addiction Among Artists*, 2020.

³⁴⁸ *Addiction Among Artists*, 2020.

conquer. It is a lifelong battle. And even more, a deeper issue with the problem of addiction for Christian artists and performers is that (1) Christian artists in addiction embrace their faith but do not feel worthy or welcome to attend their churches, (2) Christian artists in addiction need to be disciplined and shepherded in a more structured faith community of artists with accountability, and (3) Christian artists who overcome addiction can reach other believer and non-believer artists with their stories. With the Lord's Prayer as a primary component to the recovery path in the secular world,³⁴⁹ the Bible is already incorporated, and when the Gospel story is connected artistically, life transformation happens. Recovery is a challenge for artists and must be of significant consideration for inclusion in a plan to disciple artists.

Discoveries Supporting the Development of a Discipleship Program

These discoveries support a ministry development to reach artists in the Naples (Southwest Florida) community. The areas of focus in the interviews were:

1. division and conflict between the sacred and secular arts communities;
2. the church's affirmation and ministry to artists;
3. the challenges and struggles of artists; and
4. faith, worldview, and an inquisition on the artist's spiritual, emotional, and social needs.

The interviews uncovered that artists desire to be understood, accepted, valued, and shepherded. The non-Christian artist interviews revealed a disdain for organized religion and an embracement of New Age ideologies. An essential discovery among both communities is that the arts unite them, whether they are believers or non-believers, and it is through this common

³⁴⁹ "Alcoholics Anonymous: AA Prayers," Toledo AA Meetings, 2020. accessed November 25, 2020, <https://toledoameetings.com/alcoholics-anonymous-aa-prayers/>.

ground, opportunities for evangelism can potentially happen. However, based on this knowledge, almost all artists are not currently engaged in a discipleship program. Their congregations currently do not have communities for the spiritual formation and discipleship of artists, which presents an obstacle to evangelism effectiveness because, through artists, the Gospel is advanced to transform the world through creative, artistic methods.

Overall, three recurring themes materialized in the interviews with Christian and non-Christian artists: *Identity, Community, and Purpose*. These are foundational to the development of resources to evangelize and develop fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ among the arts community and in the local church.

Before addressing these themes, the researcher refers back to the question of a divide, as brought forth in the problem statement and purpose statement. Previously in the thesis, author, artist, and pastor Erwin McManus offered a powerful statement on the existence of a divide. McManus brought to light the struggles and crises faced and that the divide is found within each community – secular and sacred. As he stated:

The great divide is not between those who are artists and those who are not, but between those who understand that they are creative and those who have become convinced that they are not. The great divide is between those who understand that their very nature is that of an artist, and those who remain unaware or in denial of their artisan soul.³⁵⁰

Artist Focus Group Results

The Artist Focus Group (AFG) met to discuss the formation of community groups for artists. The initial discussion focused on artists' needs, with a later discussion on what the artist would bring to a community group. The researcher views the development of community groups

³⁵⁰ McManus, *The Artisan Soul*, 3-5.

as the nucleus of building a discipleship program for artists. The overall consensus of needs expressed among the group was:

1. the need for support and affirmation;
2. critique of art, performance, or other creative expressions;
3. worship, prayer, guidance, and mentoring to hone their craft; and
4. a safe community to express deep feelings and struggles.
5. help in combatting the moral dilemmas they face in the secular community and growth in faith.

The overall consensus of what artists would bring to a group was: experience; ideas for serving the community; a heart for ministry; collaboration; and a passion for the arts. The researcher notes that the needs far exceed what they envision bringing to a group, which indicates a great need for building faith communities for artists.

The group discussed what a typical community group would look like, including schedules, locations, and styles – whether some would be bible studies, fellowship and social gatherings, speaker-focused events, collaboration, and artmaking. All of these types were of interest. Above all, “real talk” on relevant issues concerning artists today was at the forefront of topic suggestions for the community groups. The researcher followed up with the team and individuals to gain more insight into developing a thriving program to minister to artists. Technology and social media are the primary tools to connect artists, especially in an evolving culture. The group saw that resource as an invaluable method to grow these communities. The group discussed mentoring and discipling young artists and how a community group designed for teens and young adults would be essential for the growth and expansion of the ministry.

The AFG results on the topic of identity were synonymous with the interviews, and it allowed the researcher to observe the dynamics of artists in a group discussion on identity. All the artists were concerned about being able to share personal struggles in a safe place. The researcher observed that artists were reluctant to share deeply about the unhealthy connections of their art and identity in a group setting. AR9, a 40-year active Naples artist, openly responded to the loss of her ability to create and her next steps on this journey. AR9's reliance and hope are in God's timing and plan. "My music is pretty ingrown with my identity",³⁵¹ she stated. AR9 understands that music can become an idol in her life and that she must let it go in order to fully embrace a Christ-identity. As she stated, "Sometimes we have to let the seed die now and then, kill the promise and allow God to resurrect it in a better way away from ego".³⁵²

The researcher's intervention among the AFG leads to the second recurring theme: *community*. It was evident among all of the artists in the AFG and individual interviews that artists want to be heard and understood. In light of a darkening culture and the realization that the arts are integral to its life or demise, artists are hungry for community and a platform to express themselves among other like-minded artists. However, community is to be first experienced in Christ with one's devoted love for Him and others. Luke 10:27 affirms that we are to love the Lord first with all our hearts, souls, and minds and then, in turn, to love our neighbors in the way we would love ourselves. Without question, the Christ-identity instigates and develops community because of this truth in Scripture.

³⁵¹ AR9. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 9, 2020.

³⁵² AR9, 2020.

Identity: Created for God

There is an unprecedented crisis of identity today, especially among artists. The Genesis Creation account best defines our core identity as those created in God's image. Recovering that identity is at the heart of the focus and strategy. The Christian artist has been crucified, and his life is hidden in Christ" (Col. 3:3 [ESV]).³⁵³

We were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Adam's greatest joy was walking with God in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:4-3:24). It is fundamental to human DNA to be connected with its Creator. When disconnected from our Creator, the essential part of our identity is mortally wounded. St. Augustine wrote that "our hearts would be restless for God until we find our rest in God".³⁵⁴ An increasingly secular age will inevitably find itself with a growing identity crisis.

The key to embracing a Christ-identity is the innate belief that one belongs and is loved. Brennan Manning, author of *Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging* said, "Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion".³⁵⁵ We are at a place of peace and completeness when we know that we are known, loved by God.

Artist Revelations on Identity

Earlier in the thesis, Redeemer Church's Kenyon Adams asserted that the church can help artists to discover their God-given identity.³⁵⁶ Colossians 3:1-4 affirms that our lives are hidden

³⁵³ Col. 3:3 (ESV)

³⁵⁴ One of the Greatest Sentences Ever Written, 2020.

³⁵⁵ "Identity Quotes," Goodreads, 2020. accessed October 4, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/identity?page=2>.

³⁵⁶ Artists and Church, 2011.

in Christ and this realization is largely fostered and nurtured in the faith community. According to Gospel Coalition's Tom Terry, "Artists in the church have a difficult time concerning identity. Their identity is deeply woven into what they create, what they produce, how they perform".³⁵⁷ The researcher addresses this assertion later when presenting results from pastoral and ministry leadership interviews.

One of the questions presented in the artist interviews was, "How closely connected is your art to your identity"? Most of the artists struggled to separate their art from their identity and found it difficult, unsettling, and unthinkable. Some elaborated more on how unhealthy that connection is for them as an artist.

In general, the researcher surmised that an identity centered on one's ability to create, apart from acknowledging that God is at the center of these gifts, pulls the artist into an abyss of autonomy that eventually thwarts their spiritual formation.

ARP5 is a musician and church planter whose instrument is his voice. Through his trumpet, he shares what he cannot convey through the spoken word.³⁵⁸ As he stated, "I have wrestled with how much I am an artist versus being a Christian. My identity as an artist can be something that is very much against what Jesus would be trying to do in my life".³⁵⁹ ARP5's identity crisis has been a problem for the musician who expressed an inevitable devastation if he could no longer play the trumpet. The battle between art and identity is a challenge for ARP5, one of Naples' most popular actresses.

³⁵⁷ Terry, *Pastors Can Support Artists*, 2019.

³⁵⁸ ARP5. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 19, 2020.

³⁵⁹ ARP5, 2020.

AR2 has struggled with her faith and expressed the need of support from mature believers who would pray for her and hold her accountable. Surrounded by a theater community that is averse to Christianity, AR2, is challenged daily and sometimes taunted by nonbeliever co-actors because of her faith. AR2's passion for acting and stage performance has evolved into a desperation to act and the fear of a lost identity if she could no longer act. As AR2 stated, "My art is very connected to my identity and sometimes to an unhealthy level. I have this urgency, almost hysteria to be on stage, and then when I do it, it is like a breath of fresh air again".³⁶⁰ After a show, AR2 often takes days to come out of isolation until the next gig. AR6 is an accomplished musician who is a perfectionist at best, mentored by some of the most notable world-renowned musicians. For over 25 years, AR6 has been an active musician the arts community. As he stated, "I think, unfortunately for me, my identity is unhealthily tied to my music. I find that my success or failure as an artist affects me more than it should".³⁶¹ AR6 has had a difficult childhood with no affirmation from his family concerning his music. As one who craves approval, failure in performance is not an option.

The detriment for one's art to become the source of worth and identity broke the spirit of singer and performer, AR7. As she stated, "There are days when I think about not having my voice. It could be gone tomorrow. My ability to perform is not my identity. I'm just a girl that sings, but I know it might not last forever".³⁶² AR7 says that her art is not her identity, but later

³⁶⁰ AR2, 2020.

³⁶¹ AR6. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, August 24, 2020.

³⁶² AR7. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, August 24, 2020.

in the interview recalled a situation at a performance where she almost committed suicide because of it.

At a recent performance, AR7 was handed a note by a concert attendee who told her she would go to hell for singing secular music. Already feeling guilty about making secular music and not walking with the Lord at that time, AR7 abruptly left the venue with the intent to drive into the Atlantic Ocean. The researcher observed that this kind of reaction is unhealthy for the artist. The researcher affirms that a discipleship ministry in the setting of soul care is critical for artists. Chapter 5 will offer an in-depth *Soul Care for Artists* overview.

Thus far, the researcher has presented three examples of identity crises among Christians in the arts; however, secular artists also deal with this challenge. AR8, a world-acclaimed actor, refers to himself as a lapsed Catholic. He lives in Naples with his male partner and adopted son. Ostracized from the Catholic church, AR8 craves the church's traditions, the atmosphere of transcendence – but is unwelcome because of his lifestyle. He is a driven artist who must always fill his time with creating and feeling relevant to the point of desperation. As he stated, “I have a restlessness in me to create constantly. It is hard to settle. I never feel settled. I have to allow myself to appreciate what I’ve done or where I am because my tendency is to be unsatisfied”.³⁶³

Philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal earlier stated that “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ”.³⁶⁴ The inner rest and self-worth are found in the heart of God, who fills the void that so many artists encounter.

³⁶³ AR8, 2020.

³⁶⁴ “Blaise Pascal Quotes,” Goodreads, 2017. accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/801132-there-is-a-god-shaped-vacuum-in-the-heart-of-each>.

J. Scott McElroy reiterated that the embracement of a Christ-identity is critical to discipleship. His first foundational method to discipling artists in the *Creative Church Handbook*: help artists understand who they are in Christ³⁶⁵ affirmed that artists need to experience and embrace the love of Jesus and to live into their identity in Christ.

Table 1.2 represents comments from interviewees on their identities and how they connect to their creativity.

Table 1.2

Identity: Created for God – Artist Comments

Christian Artists (CA)	<p>ARP5's identity and art goes against his relationship with Jesus; he would be devastated if he could no longer use his hands to play the trumpet.</p> <p>AR2 would lose her identity if she could no longer act; she is hysterical if she cannot act; it is like a drug.</p> <p>AR6's identity is unhealthily tied to his art and failure cripples him to the point of inability to function.</p> <p>AR7 wanted to commit suicide after being condemned to hell for singing secular music; she feels inadequate.</p> <p>AR11 withers when criticized, and although he is a multi-gifted artist, he often feels like a failure if he cannot please people.</p> <p>AR3 believes her fans are lying to her when they praise her performances; she is insecure, often not feeling good enough.</p>
Non-Christian Artists (NCA)	<p>AR8 fears becoming irrelevant and is driven to create incessantly; he feels shunned by the church because of his lifestyle.</p> <p>AR14 expresses his emotions and traumas through his art and believes that a force creates through him. He says he would have no identity without art.</p> <p>AR16 is searching for his identity, seeking for it in extraterrestrial realms and inner vibes that guide him.</p> <p>AR13 is overly confident and questions whether she is accepted by others, having no invitations to perform.</p>

³⁶⁵ McElroy, *Creative Church Handbook*, 64-70.

Community: Created for Fellowship

Ultimately, this thesis's essence is centered on community and the discipleship of artists to change the world for Christ. Based on the interviews and interventions, the researcher affirms that the establishment of healthy, Christ-centered artist communities would be the catalyst to discipling artists.

Though Adam walked with God, he was without community. The Creator said it is not suitable for man to be alone, so he created Eve. Then He called them to intimate community (Gen. 2:4-3:24). In an age of disintegrating families, fatherless children, virtual relationships, and precious few enduring friendships, it is no wonder that our identity crisis is accelerating.

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8 [ESV]).³⁶⁶ “We are relational beings because we are created in the image of a relational God. By definition the Christian God exists in relationship as Father, Son and Spirit”.³⁶⁷

The Gospel offers the greatest hope to the wounded through community. Relationships are restored in community, and we learn how to love as God loves. Active transformation happens when we intentionally share life, committing ourselves to accountable, interdependent relationships in God's kingdom. A creative community space is where the Story unfolds, where healing and transformation happen; in other words, community is collaboration, creating, and doing life together.

AR1 has been leading worship at churches for more than 15 years, formerly serving as a worship pastor and leads secular bands in Naples. Community with other artists is critical for

³⁶⁶ 1 John 4:8 (ESV)

³⁶⁷ Richard Plass and James Cofield, *The Relational Soul: Moving from False Self to Deep Connection* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 13.

AR1, and it lacks at his church. He craves to know his fellow musicians at a deeper level and spend time apart from the Sunday services. According to AR1, there is seemingly a void of encouraging community, beginning with the leadership. Sunday worship's "production" overshadows any connectedness among the musicians, singers, and technical team. As AR1 stated "Our worship team does not have the best community. We do not know anything about each other. We love each other, but it is shallow. It is not real relationships".³⁶⁸ AR1 is reluctant to ask for help, or prayer because of the superficial relationships on the worship team.³⁶⁹ As mentioned earlier, among artists in the AFG, there was a reluctance to share deep feelings and problems in an unsafe community, and in AR1's case, his community is an apathetic one that lacks authenticity.

"I need people to help me keep growing and using my gifts for the right reason, not about my ego but everything else",³⁷⁰ stated AR10, a drummer. AR10 craves community with other musicians, seeking collaboration. He envisions a creative space where musicians could meet other people of faith and develop friendships. Besides, his recent motorcycle accident left him physically injured, unable to play at the level he once did. AR10 seeks love, acceptance, and support from other artists.

Here is an opportunity for the church to step in and bring healing to artists like AR10 and AR1, who not only crave community, but the underlying basis of these cravings is the need for healing in hidden areas that would potentially avert spiritual formation.

³⁶⁸ AR1, 2020.

³⁶⁹ AR1, 2020.

³⁷⁰ AR10, 2020.

AR2 is afraid of being swallowed up by the culture. The desire to act and the fear of temptation in the arts community leaves her void and exposed. According to AR2, there are no outlets for artists to express themselves at her church, much less a ministry that fosters community in a discipleship setting.³⁷¹ Author Philip Ryken asserted that the church's abandonment of the arts today has resulted in the disconnection of artists from the church – the place of grace and discipleship. Ryken argued for a recovery of the arts and that it must begin in the church. Ryken argued that the church's abandonment of the arts would be a barrier to evangelizing the culture – that what is happening in the arts today is prophetic of what will happen in our culture tomorrow. He said that a significant opportunity to communicate Christ to our culture is lost through this abandonment.³⁷²

The researcher surmises that either the artists are not engaging in the Bible and are not fully committed to walking with God or they are ill-equipped to communicate their faith stories confidently. A critical discovery concerning community presented a deeper problem, directly connecting to an inner divide among artists. In this case, AR3, a Christian, local jazz singer, is averse to sharing her faith in the secular arts community. She sees a community of artists as a support network and the opportunity to relish in one's talent. Regarding community for artists of other faiths, AR3 is ok with them worshipping at a church like a New Thought or New Age church. As AR3 stated, "I think it's great that the word "God" is used freely and that all de-churched and un-churched people can attend. You can go and just worship God. You don't have to believe in Jesus".³⁷³ According to AR3, whether an artist is Jewish, Christian, or a Buddhist,

³⁷¹ AR2, 2020.

³⁷² Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 14.

³⁷³ AR3, 2020.

all faiths can coexist ecumenically, encouraging love, which she says is the Gospel message.³⁷⁴

This is an exacerbation of a potentially more significant detriment to reaching non-believers with the Gospel. Artists flock to the Unity Church for the simple reason that they can “create” their god, and “be” their god. It is highly unlikely that a Christian who frequents a New Age church is, in fact, a believer of Jesus. Nevertheless, the researcher surmises the critical need for a ministry to nurture and make disciples. Table 1.3 represents comments from interviewees on the topic of living in community with other artists, the faith community and their sense of belonging.

Table 1.3

Community: Created for Fellowship – Artist Comments

Christian Artists (CA)	<p>AR1 craves for community with the worship team and is reluctant to ask for help or prayer because of the superficiality on team and with church leaders.</p> <p>AR2 is fearful of being devoured by a worldly theater community and needs prayers, support, and guidance from a community of Christian artists.</p> <p>AR10’s motorcycle accident left him feeling lonely and without confidence, battling addiction. He is seeking love, acceptance, and collaboration.</p> <p>AR5 drifted away from the church, disconnecting from believers, often succumbing to temptation, longing for fellowship with other artists.</p> <p>AR7 has very few Christian artist friends, spending the majority of time with secular artists. AR7 feels unaccepted because she is a secular performer.</p> <p>ARP4 is introvertive and prefers to be alone when not serving at church and avoids deep conversation.</p>
Non-Christian Artists (NCA)	<p>AR8 finds community with secular artists but avoids deep connection with Christian artists.</p> <p>AR13 wants to collaborate and write songs with other artists – Christian and non-Christian.</p> <p>AR16’s overload of clientele prevents him from being with others, but he craves support and guidance.</p> <p>AR18 is mostly fulfilled when performing with other artists. He falls into depression when he is alone.</p>

³⁷⁴ AR3, 2020.

Purpose: Created for Significance

An overall consensus among most artists interviewed was that they were able to identity their God-given gifts and individual crafts. Many of them regularly display their artworks in galleries or make a successful living performing on stage. Nevertheless, when asked what their purpose was, an immediate pause and difficulty were ensued. Among the Christian artists, there was a reluctance.

God put man in a perfect paradise and then told him to make it better (Gen. 2:15). The Master Artist has called us to reflect His glory in everything we create (Eph. 2:10). In this, we find our most considerable significance; anything less fractures the artist's identity. Jesus alone restores the twisted identity as a result of our first parent's sin. Only Jesus can restore fellowship with God, redeem our fellowship with others, and give us a life with ultimate significance (Gen. 3:14).

Author David Santistevan stated earlier in the thesis that art is an essential part of God's purpose and plan and that it is entirely human, revealing the mystery of the Gospel in unique ways.³⁷⁵ As he stated, "While artists may not have been included as one of the fivefold ministry gifts, artists can function as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. It could be argued that this generation can only be reached through the arts".³⁷⁶

God has a purpose and plan for AR11. As talented as AR11 is, he found it hard to communicate his purpose in life. A multi-talented artist, AR11 plays six instruments, composes music on Beethoven's level, and is an accomplished filmmaker. Coming from a family of active

³⁷⁵ How Important is Art?, 2012.

³⁷⁶ How Important is Art?, 2012.

Naples' artists for many years, the bar is set high for AR11. One would think that with a plethora of talent, AR11 unquestionably would know his purpose. Living on college campus forced him to begin looking at what that purpose could be. As AR11 stated, "I would say it was getting that kind of independence being on my own and figuring out what faith meant for me in school and trusting that I was even on the right path".³⁷⁷ AR11 questioned himself as to what this path was - did he have to make it happen and what that might look like in terms of his faith in God.³⁷⁸ In the end, AR11 acknowledged that he could not answer these questions but that God could supply all of the answers.

AR12's home displays hundreds of his masterpieces, which he uses as a platform to share the Gospel. A self-taught sculptor, AR12 sees his life purpose as one of a storyteller of the Gospel through the works of his hands. God inspires AR12 to create works that cause the viewer to stop, think, and ponder the God revealed in these artworks. AR12 is an art evangelist, embracing the Ephesians 2:10 commission to create to glorify God and change the world. As AR12 stated, "I can use my art as a platform to speak of Jesus, and that's where my art becomes my ministry".³⁷⁹ AR12 often hosts gatherings and bible studies at his home which exposes the wider community to the Gospel and the arts. His home would be an essential atmosphere to build an arts community and also grow an arts ministry.

AR4 fears that a "cancel-culture" system is evolving in the church in how it deals with its artists. "The church has been canceling people out for decades because of age, looks, weight, or a

³⁷⁷ AR11. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 7, 2020.

³⁷⁸ AR11, 2020.

³⁷⁹ AR12. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 9, 2020.

lack of talent. Instead of connecting artists into different areas of serving, the church pushes the artists aside”.³⁸⁰ AR4’s unsuccessful quest to find purpose through her art leaves her questioning the church’s avoidance to offer extended opportunities for artists to transition, especially older artists. AR4 expressed the critical need for churches to transition musicians and singers, vocalists, and choir members into Sunday evening worship, special music, or other opportunities instead of canceling or casting them aside.³⁸¹ Table 1.4 represents responses from interviewees on purpose and significance.

Table 1.4

Purpose: Created for Significance – Artist Comments

Christian Artists (CA)	<p>AR11’s creative talents have made him famous. He is searching for his life purpose and is trusting in God to reveal it to him.</p> <p>AR12 says that God called him to evangelize with his art, giving him the opportunity to share the Gospel.</p> <p>AR4 is unsure of her purpose after being fired from the music team. She feels unwanted, seeking other outlets.</p> <p>ARP5 had to close down his church, has no gigs to perform due to the pandemic. He seeks purpose.</p> <p>AR3 does not consider herself an artist anymore after some painful experiences and a loss of passion.</p> <p>AR20 resigned after pressure to cross-dress boys in in plays. She wants to teach kids Gospel-centered art.</p>
Non-Christian Artists (NCA)	<p>AR8 cannot perform live because the arts community closed until 2021 with uncertainty. He is at a loss.</p> <p>AR21 wants to make a difference with his art, possibly teaching and mentoring young aspiring artists.</p> <p>AR15 has burn out from entertaining elite consumers, while not living out his passion to act.</p> <p>AR14 spends at least 12 hours each day in the studio sculpting for collectors worldwide, amassing a fortune; Amid all the success, AR14 still seeks his purpose.</p> <p>AR18 teaches underprivileged children to act, giving them hope. He believes it is his life’s calling.</p>

³⁸⁰ AR4, 2020.

³⁸¹ AR4, 2020.

Pastor and Ministry Leader Interview Results

The researcher interviewed Naples, Florida pastors, and leaders to obtain information about current or non-existent ministries to artists in the churches. The researcher inquired about developing discipleship programs for artists and exploring potential partnerships to minister to artists and edify the church through the arts. This research aspect is what the researcher considers to be the seeds of growth and partnerships that will inevitably be a viral discipleship program serving and ministering to artists in the local church, expanding to the broader community. The researcher also sought to understand how pastors and ministry leaders value or devalue the arts in their congregations and ministries.

Artists functioning in the congregation's worship was a point of consideration in the literature review, and within many of the interviews, it was the topic of discussion. Each pastor and leader strongly expressed their views, apprehensions, and convictions about the arts and ministry to artists in their churches. To develop a ministry to artists, partnerships with local churches are vital because we find Christian artists and those seeking to fulfill their creative callings in the local church, and that is the starting point.

ARP2 pastors a congregation that is home to many millennials and baby boomers in a contemporary worship setting. Among the congregation are writers, visual artists, musicians, and other creative types. He is more of an expository teacher than a preacher, and in addition to pastoring, he is an accomplished sculptor. He incorporates creativity when preaching using word pictures. ARP2 does not see himself as an artist but as a chisel in God's hand when preaching. As an active artist in Naples' secular arts communities, ARP2 uses his art to communicate his faith.³⁸²

³⁸² ARP2, 2020.

In terms of affirming artists, the church does not elevate or celebrate the arts apart from the worship team.³⁸³ Some churches fail to value their artists for various reasons, some of which misunderstand the arts and vexed relationships with artists. Calvin Institute's Lisa DeBoer spoke to the need to utilize all artistic disciplines when she emphasized that, expressed orderly, all forms of the arts are worthy of being included in the worship setting.³⁸⁴

One way for the church to enfold and welcome its artists would be to give them opportunities to serve in worship or other places. When the gifts are in use within the church, God is glorified, and the church is edified (1 Cor. 12).

Limited creative space presents a challenge to develop artists' opportunities to express themselves or build community among other creatives at ARP2's church, and according to ARP2, finding a space is not a priority for the leadership. It was revealing to the researcher that ARP2's involvement in the arts is essential to him as a creative, although his congregation does not make efforts to give its artists opportunities to express themselves, and, apart from the worship, use their craft to serve the Body. ARP2 does not see the need for a discipleship program exclusively for artists.

P1's concern for artists in the congregation is that they would live in an intimate relationship with Jesus, which will guide their creative lives and endeavors. Like ARP2, P1 does not see himself as an artist because he views this as acting or "pretending," not preaching.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ ARP2, 2020.

³⁸⁴ DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*, 269.

³⁸⁵ P1. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 11, 2020.

P1 believes that the arts in the church should be offered, performed, or displayed with excellence; after all, we serve an excellent God who created a perfect, beautiful world. He acknowledged that his insistence on perfection in the arts is one of his struggles. As he stated, “I want everything to be perfect. I want high-end performances because I think it does a disservice to the arts and disservice to the Scriptures if the performance is not excellent. That is a struggle for me”.³⁸⁶

P1 and the researcher engaged in conversation about discipling artists. His strong views and aversion to developing a program to disciple artists eventually left him open to the possibility of support or assistance in ministering to artists at his church, although he strongly feels (as did many of the pastors) that the church should not have separate groups for artists.³⁸⁷ However, at some point in the interview, P1 expressed interest in a partnership with Storytellers Creative Arts to develop a ministry to artists.³⁸⁸ As P1 stated:

I am confident that there are numerous ways that you can partner with us to shepherd and care for artists. Your ministry is God-ordained and has come in His timing. Your desire to come alongside churches to uplift and bring more artists into the church, will equip pastors to love artists and those who are struggling spiritually with the love of Christ. The churches in Naples will benefit greatly. I envision that this ministry will be an essential tool to touch artists and partner with churches across the United States and even the world.³⁸⁹

Thus far, the researcher surmises that artists in both of these congregations are void of shepherding. However, P2 intends to understand, affirm, and build communities for artists at his church. His views align with P1’s desire to see artists live righteous lives, guided by the Spirit.

³⁸⁶ P1, 2020.

³⁸⁷ P1, 2020.

³⁸⁸ P1, 2020.

³⁸⁹ P1, 2020.

P2's church is a fast-growing one whose demographic spans from infants to seniors. The 500+ congregation recently planted a second church in Naples. He does not believe that the arts are separate from the Christian life. He believes that we are all given gifts from the Lord.³⁹⁰

P2 affirms that the arts are critical to sharing the Gospel and advancing the Kingdom mission. He believes that the arts are the only method to share the Gospel. According to P2, the vision and value of the arts start with the leadership. If a pastor does not celebrate or welcome those gifts, the congregation will be reticent to engage or celebrate the arts.³⁹¹

If not careful, pastors can control their artists, which will cause them to disconnect in the same way they would if they are undervalued. P2 acknowledged his struggles with the artistic temperaments among artists in the congregation and how he lacks in affirming them because of his agenda to control and sometimes suppress artists. As P2 stated:

Artists can be emotional because of the control issue that pastors have had or because they cannot express their art. They can be temperamental and offended easily, and so sometimes you have to be careful that you are not hurting them. The church has not typically been good at championing people's gifts. I feel like we try to control their gifts or train them to use their gifts in ways we want them to function.³⁹²

Here again, the subject of shepherding artists is brought to the fore, to be later addressed in the thesis. On the incorporation of secular music in worship, P2 believes that it is not God-honoring, although he appreciates all genres of music, apart from its inclusion in the music and liturgy of the church. As P2 stated:

I love to listen to Lionel Richie sing his old songs or Elton John, and I think sometimes we just have to be careful. I believe there *is* a Christian and secular divide. There is a difference, and I think we have to be careful when we try to cross the two. Years ago,

³⁹⁰ P2. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 15, 2020.

³⁹¹ P2, 2020.

³⁹² P2, 2020.

Kool and the Gang debuted *Celebration*.³⁹³ We cross the line when we incorporate songs like that in worship. Kool and the Gang is great, but I don't think we need that in church. There is a fine line.³⁹⁴

As the researcher previously stated in the literature review, the sacred and secular divide is exacerbated by adapting new cultural norms in worship. Steve Turley echoed this adaptation when he stated that the endorsement of secularized values and lifestyles among Christians in the music industry is crippling the witness and heightening the conflict.³⁹⁵ The church is at the forefront of the endorsement. As a result, the church tends to be skeptical about the arts, music in particular. As Turley asserted, many have resorted to removing any contemporary worship from their services.³⁹⁶

P2 is on board for developing artist community groups and acknowledged that artists need to be connected to a community group with other like-minded creatives. He affirmed that the church must find the gifts and talents and then release them through God's Word to the others.³⁹⁷

The researcher now offers another perspective from a former pastor, now a community leader. As a life coach for ministry leaders, ML1 has directed one of the largest recovery ministries in Southwest Florida for more than five years, reaching thousands of people with the life-transforming Gospel of Christ. Coming from a family of artists, ML1 is familiar with living the life of a creative. He and his sisters and grew up performing in musicals and plays, dancing,

³⁹³ "Kool and the Gang: Celebration," Song Facts, 2020. accessed October 18, 2020, <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/kool-the-gang/celebration>.

³⁹⁴ P2, 2020.

³⁹⁵ Turley, *CCM and LGBT*, 2016.

³⁹⁶ Turley, *CCM and LGBT*, 2016.

³⁹⁷ P2, 2020.

and singing.³⁹⁸ ML1 has a passion for helping the broken embrace the love and care of God.

Recovery ministry is an area of significant involvement for ML1. His ministry reaches not only men and women struggling with addiction and other challenges but provides creative outlets through hands-on artmaking for the children of addicts who have been traumatized by their parent's addictions.³⁹⁹

ML1 believes that, because of God's heart for the arts, the church needs to invest in the arts and to include the arts in discipleship. He posed the question, "If the church is unwilling to integrate art or create art as a part of its discipleship process, what keeps it from doing this? If the creative arts are so much a part of God and his heart, and how it represents him, what keeps us from putting in the time and energy to invest in it?"⁴⁰⁰

Just as Con Campbell and J.D. Payne assert, ML1 asserts that artists are a marginalized group in culture and can express themselves at certain places, visible and celebrated. They have to exist in particular pockets to feel a part of the culture.⁴⁰¹ ML1 would agree with Constantine Campbell's views on artistic subcultures where creatives are free to express themselves. Artists are a unique subculture of creatives who possess individual and extraordinary skills to devise and create art that communicates who they are, their environment, and worldviews. As Constantine stated:

To the uninitiated, it may seem strange to claim that artists live normally within their own artistic subcultures. Such a claim may sound odd because on the surface, artists often appear to be normal, well-adjusted members of the community. And often they are! (And

³⁹⁸ ML1. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 13, 2020.

³⁹⁹ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁰ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰¹ ML1, 2020.

often they are not!). Whether or not they appear this way, serious artists nevertheless are generally best regarded as a different breed.⁴⁰²

ML1 brought a wealth of thought-provoking ideas and questions for pastors and ministry leaders, reminding them of the church's inability to reach every group in the congregation. The questions are invaluable and essential to open discussion and forums on discipling artists in the church. The church cannot indulge every person or even every type of cultural circle. There is no possible way to do that. ML1 challenges pastors to consider how they might recognize and celebrate artists, inviting them to be a part of the church in a way that benefits the whole congregation.⁴⁰³

According to ML1, the church must understand what it looks like to disciple artists and how the congregation can be encouraged to embrace and pray for its artists. What unique gifts does the artist bring to the church that would not be present if he were not in the church?⁴⁰⁴ As he stated, "Whether a congregation has artists or not, God would still be glorified and worshipped. There is an aspect to who the artist is as a disciple that is invaluable to accomplish the mission".⁴⁰⁵ As masterpieces of the Master Artist, artists have been created and commissioned to "do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10 [NIV]).⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 73-74.

⁴⁰³ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁴ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁵ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁶ Eph. 2:10 (NIV)

ML1 emphasized the objective of integrating the arts into the congregation, challenging the church to think intellectually and learn systematically, as well as artistically and creatively.⁴⁰⁷

As ML1 stated:

Everyone needs to be challenged to think fluidly in a way that does not fit into frameworks and boxes. Everyone needs access to an adaptive process, and ultimately that is what discipleship is. It becomes unique as the congregation grows in Christ. If there are no frameworks for people to know God and express God artistically, there is no framework altogether. Conclusively, the church needs a process that is about educating people and fostering a real experiential knowledge of God. A process like that will lead people to express their gifts so others may know more about God. They will see Jesus more transparently and completely.⁴⁰⁸

ML1's church offers training and mentoring of worship leaders, songwriters, and musicians, shaping artists who will fan into the community and world to sing new songs and change lives. Expanding the ministry to the broader community of artists at the church would include all genres and artistic disciplines like acting, literary, aural, visual, crafts, technology, and other areas to stir up the gifts (2 Tim. 1:6-7) to glorify God and edify the church.

At the close of an inspiring interview, ML1 offered a final question for pastors and ministry leaders about the quest to identify the community's needs and the gifts of the Spirit in the church.⁴⁰⁹ He challenges pastors and ministry leaders:

Who is in our church, and what are our community's needs, and how do those two meet? That is the big question because, ultimately, we want to value artists, but part of that means they are valued and are meeting a need that exists in the church so that God can be made known. That needs to be encouraged. It is what they bring, not just that the artist plays music or paints well. People are going to know God and experience God, and be disciplined through their art. The church should not be a place for people to express themselves for the sake of the building or the gathering. Emphasizing the gathering takes away from all of the different avenues available to access and ways to invite people in.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁸ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁰⁹ ML1, 2020.

⁴¹⁰ ML1, 2020.

All of the resources and information posed by ML1, especially the questions, can be developed into a manual or proposal to develop a ministry partnership to disciple artists at the local church level. Thus far, the researcher's results confirm the need for further discussion with Naples' pastors on a partnership possibility. Based on prior interaction with participants of the research, the researcher is optimistic.

ML2 and ML3 have been involved in ministry for over 50 years, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience which add to a successful and inclusive thesis project. They are world travelers, on a constant mission to advance the mission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). In addition to a fruitful ministry, ML2 and ML3 own a manufacturing company that serves numerous cities and communities in the United States and abroad. ML2 and ML3 offered counsel and thoughts to the researcher on developing a ministry to artists. For ML2 and ML3, especially since many of their family members are artists, they are incredibly passionate.

According to ML3, there are dark ways in which the secularist society uses the arts. The world has tainted the beauty of the arts. ML3 used Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ" as an example of marring the arts.⁴¹¹ "Piss Christ," according to Guardian Magazine, is "distinguished by its calculated offense and rhetorical nature – the way it sets out to be unmissably outrageous and adopts that offense as part of its meaning".⁴¹² Serrano pours his urine into a glass immersed with a plastic crucifix. The photograph has caused shock, anger, and protest among the Christian and

⁴¹¹ ML3. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 17, 2020.

⁴¹² "Andres Serrano's Piss Christ is the Original Shock," The Guardian, 2011. accessed October 18, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/apr/18/andres-serrano-piss-christ-sho>.

Catholic faith communities worldwide.⁴¹³ ML3 believes that art can speak to and impact a life in spite of the motive of an artist adverse to God⁴¹⁴ (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. “Piss Christ”, removed to comply with copyright.

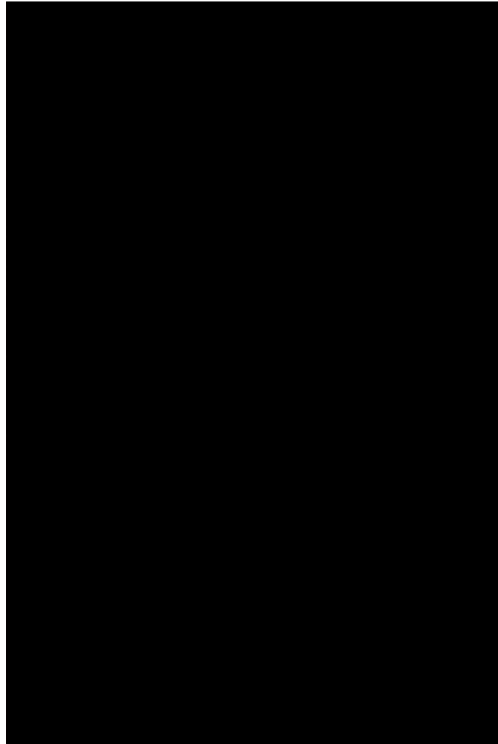


Figure 3. Nick Fancher, *Piss Christ*, 2018, photograph, *Nick Fancher Blog*, <https://www.nickfancher.com/blog/tag/piss+christ>.

ML2 and ML3 shared thoughts on a program to disciple artists. They believe that communities and gatherings for artists are critical. ML2 and ML3’s daughter’s church was formed for artists because the artists were lonely, feeling that the evangelical church had taken the beauty out of the church, removing any art, crosses, or other icons. The sanctuaries were void of anything that had beauty in it, so the artists would go to church and never feel that they could

⁴¹³ Piss Christ, 2011.

⁴¹⁴ ML3, 2020.

worship the way they wanted. That was their stimulus. The world is a lonely place, especially if you are a Christian. Their daughter gets much push back from people. Her Christianity or spirituality is expressed differently from ML2 and ML3, but she does have a voice through her art.⁴¹⁵

Formulating a discipleship program to reach artists depends on the size of the church. ML2 delved into some pertinent strategic planning considerations that will prove beneficial to the development of a discipleship program. The average church membership today is lower than one hundred.⁴¹⁶ A church of that size cannot have specific groups that appeal to people that are either occupational or gifted in some areas.⁴¹⁷ ML2 and ML3 recalled that their son was part of a race car owners' group at a mega-church he attended. The group of 10 to 12 built a thriving community. ML2 suggested that there should be dialogue on how a church can develop specialized groups for artists in the church. Some people prefer Bible studies or social engagement. Due to unique circumstances, it might not be practical to start an arts ministry at some churches.⁴¹⁸ According to ML3, there are a plethora of artistic expressions available in the church. If artists were permitted to use their gifts, the person to initiate that would be the worship director.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ ML3, 2020.

⁴¹⁶ "What is an Average Sized Church?" Worship Ideas, 2020. accessed October 18, 2020, <https://www.worshipideas.com/what-is-an-average-sized-church/>.

⁴¹⁷ ML2. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 17, 2020.

⁴¹⁸ ML2, 2020.

⁴¹⁹ ML3, 2020.

We discussed the struggles of discipling artists and why they might be problematic. Some pastors avoid interacting with artists because they cannot deal with the drama and emotions. The worship ministry is probably not the best vehicle to connect artists. Worship and arts ministry are two separate ministries. There are numerous areas in the church that an artist can be active in, such as teaching art classes in a Sunday school class related to a lesson, doing outreach, hosting art shows based on a sermon series, and countless other ways to engage. ML2 offered additional commentary on strategically looking at the pros and cons of developing a program to disciple artists while considering the role the pastor plays in this process. As he stated:

You may be hoping for a disciple-making church that can only happen if the pastor has the bandwidth for it and even the administrative skills to widen the number of people who will be actively doing the ministry. Frankly, not many pastors have that ability, and that is why many churches are small. Fortunately for some churches who have the resource of an executive pastor, the church's bandwidth could potentially increase. My guess is you probably scared the pastors into thinking that they would be responsible for recruiting an arts ministry leader who would then report to them.⁴²⁰

ML2 and ML3 bring an important and resourceful perspective to the research in that some churches may or may not have the people resources to guide the process of developing a discipleship program to reach artists. Pastors bear the load of not only feeding the flock, but they must shepherd the flock and although not doing all the groundwork, they are ultimately responsible for the ministry. ML2's mention of having an executive pastor on the team to spearhead the process is essential and will potentially speed up the process.

P3 can relate to the difficulties a limited staff would potentially have in focusing solely on the artists and their spiritual care.⁴²¹ His congregation is home to some 200 artists where the

⁴²⁰ ML2, 2020.

⁴²¹ P3. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 14, 2020.

only opportunities to share these gifts are solely in the worship ministry, with limited opportunities.

The researcher and P3 brainstormed ideas on how the artists in his congregation could be assimilated into the church and serve God through their art. The idea of visual artists creating theme-based art for sermon series would be an opportunity that would not only encourage and help artists to flourish, but they would be welcomed as partners in the ministry the church edified because the artworks would heighten and intensify the Gospel message through what they create. Songwriters in the congregation could have opportunities to write songs that could be incorporated into worship.⁴²²

P3 was the only interviewee that suggested the idea for his congregation to have an arts minister or Creative Arts Pastor on staff who would shepherd artists and be a point of contact for ministry to artists and inspire them to be active in serving God with their art as a way to minister to others.⁴²³

On discipleship, P3 acknowledged his inability to fully understand the need for a separate discipleship ministry for artists apart from the people groups in the congregation. P3 tends not to think of artists as distinct from everyone else in the congregations. He believes in categories of men, women, families, and singles.⁴²⁴ As P3 stated:

I do not think of artists as a specific group that needs discipling apart from other people, so my conversations with you are helpful because it causes me to begin thinking intentionally about artists as a particular group of people who have specific needs.⁴²⁵

⁴²² P3, 2020.

⁴²³ P3, 2020.

⁴²⁴ P3, 2020.

⁴²⁵ P3, 2020.

SCA is currently developing a partnership with P3's congregation and will in the future develop a pilot community group for artists.

P4's church does not have a particular discipleship program for artists or the congregation in general.⁴²⁶ According to P4, almost all of the congregants, with very few exceptions, have been Christians for decades. The members are engaged in the community serving God as an act of their witness to the world.⁴²⁷ On equipping artists to share their faith in the secular arts community, P4 stated, "Artists who are people of faith know the language of the arts community. Awareness of tripwires and what the major objections are to the faith are essential in sharing faith. It is missionary work".⁴²⁸

Amid the 300+ member church are artists, including several visual artists, writers, and musicians, conductors, and architects. Fifteen percent of the congregation are practicing some form of art.⁴²⁹

The researcher discussed how the pastor might communicate with parishioner artists who want to express art that might potentially be offensive. As P4 stated:

I do not set a high bar for that which would be acceptable because I consider art to be such an offering to function as a testimony. I cannot tell a person how to express their faith, but when they want to express an artistic piece in church, I take that at face value as their testimony and expression of their heart and faith. I would be inclined to say yes, but I would talk with that person about it if there were something offensive.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ P4. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 15, 2020.

⁴²⁷ P4, 2020.

⁴²⁸ P4, 2020.

⁴²⁹ P4, 2020.

⁴³⁰ P4, 2020.

The subject of artists being a problematic group was a recurring theme with many of the interviewees. Artists sometimes cause conflict in the church, making any discipleship efforts difficult. According to P4, “artists constitute a cultural enclave that has its own set of values that are oftentimes non-traditional because they are creative people and consequently the church can be often viewed as a bastion of the status quo”.⁴³¹ P4 delineated further by asserting that by nature, artists always push the envelope, and inherently, they are culturally skeptic about the church and the faith. As he stated, “In ages past, artists’ cultural enclaves were surrounded by that sense of doing their art as an act of worship. I perceive that artists’ attitude is not necessarily very kind toward the church or faith”.⁴³²

The researcher and P4 delved into conversation about a secular and sacred divide in the arts community. According to P4, Christian and secular conflicts exist just because the art community is not monolithic, having different expressions and ways of doing things. Conflict emerges based on the interpretation of another’s art.⁴³³

Worship at P4’s church often begins with a secular video clip as a preparation for worship. P4 says the clips are an artistic add-on, but it is a different art form.⁴³⁴ He believes that incorporating secular media has the potential to get people to think or to get people to laugh.⁴³⁵ P4’s views are the opposite of P2 who expressed concern for the church adding secular music to the worship set.

⁴³¹ P4, 2020.

⁴³² P4, 2020.

⁴³³ P4, 2020.

⁴³⁴ P4, 2020.

⁴³⁵ P4, 2020.

P4's heartfelt words concerning the reflection of God's love to artists, welcoming them into the family of God confirms his openness for some kind of arts ministry. He shared his struggles with how the church receives and should receive artists. As P4 stated:

I have always felt that the church was not necessarily a place the arts community considered a friendly place. That does not mean we will contort ourselves or our message to try to sound acceptable to them. The church is in the business of grace, mercy and love, and acceptance. My concern has always been that people need the Lord. They need to know how much God loves them. There is a stirring of the spirit of Christ in the arts community that brings forth any number of expressions. We have in different ways to express our God-given gifts. It is vitally essential for the church to affirm artists.⁴³⁶

ARP4 is Pastor of a church in North Naples, with one of the largest choirs in Naples, a full orchestra and paid professional section leaders. The 1,000-member congregation celebrates its visual artists by displaying their art in their Art Gallery. ARP4 often facilitates seminars on art and faith, in addition to writing articles on the faith of master artists and composers like Bach and Beethoven. Their monthly speaker events draw thousands from the community who come to hear notable authors and leaders.

Of all the churches interviewed, the researcher notes that ARP4's church has a greater appreciation and engagement in the arts beginning with worship and then incorporating it throughout the ministry. ARP4's church gives attention to the arts and how they fit into the church's calling to make disciples. As he stated, "When we host art exhibits, I will talk about arts and worship; or give a lecture in our gallery, talk about pictures, and express how we see God through that in terms of being a positive witness in the world".⁴³⁷ The choir would be considered

⁴³⁶ P4, 2020.

⁴³⁷ ARP4. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 13, 2020.

the only community group for artists at ARP4's church. Apart from that, the church does not have an established ministry for artists.

ML4 directs a discipleship ministry that supports local missionaries and provides strategic leadership training to grow ministries in Southwest Florida. ML4 met with the researcher to talk about the arts and his overall perspective on the need for arts ministry, particularly in impoverished communities.

ML4 shared ideas with the researcher about developing a strategic plan to make disciples within the arts community, beginning with partnerships among the faith community. He expressed interest in a partnership with the researcher to launch a satellite ministry in his community. According to ML4, creativity is necessary to reveal Christ, particularly to a post-Christian society. The arts allow the Gospel message to be seen, heard, and revealed to those who would shut down an ordinary conversation. Creativity through the arts is an influential evangelical tool because it allows people who would not listen and engage otherwise for cultural reasons.⁴³⁸ As ML4 stated, "Most of the Christian artists I have known have been more engaged in relationships with non-Christian artists than just your average Christian".⁴³⁹ The arts unite both Christian and non-Christian artists at deep levels. Artists speak a synonymous language when they engage in artmaking or creative conversations. That bonding is an invaluable opportunity for evangelism. Christians in the arts are best equipped to reach other artists.

This ripe harvest is at its fullest capacity in our culture today because of the detrimental domino effect that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the arts community. Non-believing

⁴³⁸ ML4. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 18, 2020.

⁴³⁹ ML4, 2020.

artists are at a more significant loss because, ultimately, they have lost their sustenance, identity, and ability to perform. It is an identity crisis at the highest level. The Christian artist faces the same crisis, but they face the crisis differently – with hope and faith in Christ. However, even among Christians in the arts, many are losing heart, discouraged, and are contemplating radical career changes to make a living during these uncertain times.

Christians and non-Christian artists need Jesus. They need salvation and inner transformation that only Jesus can give. By embracing a Christ-identity, artists will abandon themselves to the Creator, enhance their pursuit of God, live for Him, and allow Him to flow into their creativity to bear fruit for the Kingdom. Jesus said in John 15:16:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.⁴⁴⁰

ML4 identified a problem within the church concerning the discipleship of artists. He says that church leadership should not just be about preaching and teaching but also about releasing the saints (artists) they have equipped. Every congregant needs to be equipped and empowered and released.⁴⁴¹ As ML4 stated:

Artists need to be given the “green light” to go and experiment as opposed to a discipleship process that is primarily just trying to download information into somebody asking them to participate in the structures of the church that already exist. This is an inward-facing discipleship process, so that is just problematic. If it is outward-facing, who cares if they are crazy? You’re turning them loose!⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ John 15:16 (ESV)

⁴⁴¹ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴² ML4, 2020.

ML4 says that instead of pastors trying to control artists, their job is to call them to faithfulness and to hold them accountable to faithfulness but not to control how they go about the endeavor of sharing God's love.⁴⁴³ As ML4 stated:

Control leaves no room for creativity. Everything is a production. If it is a production, then you are worried about spontaneous creativity. If they are a missionary, they have to be spontaneously creative or they will not get anywhere.⁴⁴⁴

ML4 offered some strategic ideas for pastors and ministry leaders to affirm the calling of artists and walk with them through the process of living out those callings in the church and community. ML4 posed the following questions, which are essential to shepherding and equipping artists for ministry. As ML4 stated:

Through the lens of your artistic gifting and passion, where is your mission field? How does your artistic gifting overlap with the mission field that God has already placed you in? You start from there insofar as, "How can I equip you to be effective in that?", which then leads into other discipleship questions and topics such as "Does the artist have a Christ-like character and relational skills? How does the artist communicate who Jesus is to other people?"⁴⁴⁵

"It is critical to start with the lens of God already placing them on the Ephesians 4 path, into a mission field to bear fruit. The faithfulness of the artist will express their service to the church".⁴⁴⁶ Artists are welcomed as partners in his church's mission, but they are not equipped to disciple other artists. Pastors can speak into their life at a significant level.⁴⁴⁷ ML4 asked, "If a ballet dancer came to me searching for her purpose and calling, I would ask, "How can you use

⁴⁴³ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁴ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁵ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁶ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ ML4, 2020.

ballet to reveal the Kingdom of Christ? And that could happen in several ways”.⁴⁴⁸ A ballet dancer can have relationships with the ballet community in a way that no other people group can.

“The arts are like Jesus”,⁴⁴⁹ says ARP3. “They are a visual way of making invisible things visible, making difficult concepts philosophical, or theological concepts graphic and real. The arts are like words that make thoughts visible”.⁴⁵⁰ ARP3 is a retired pastor and bestselling author known in Naples for his inspirational storytelling and teaching on relevant topics that speak to all ages. His new ministry venture coaches past leaders of churches and ministries to embrace new callings in ministry – to “refire”, not retire. ARP3 sees his storytelling as a gift that God has given him to bring glory to Him – a gift that brings illumination, inspiration, transformation, and pleasure to those he shares his gift with. It gives ARP3 a sense of satisfaction that God uses him to make the world a better place.⁴⁵¹

ARP3 previously led an arts ministry in Chicago and Atlanta. As a creative himself, ARP3 rubbed shoulders with broader arts communities and is uniquely gifted in communicating and engaging with non-Christians in the arts.⁴⁵² His years of experience in the church, parachurch ministry, and the arts are integral to this research project because ARP3 is an examples of a ministry leader that is equipped to minister to artists by virtue of the fact that he has spent years developing the art of speaking to secular people, which required that he

⁴⁴⁸ ML4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁹ ARP3. Interview by William Barnett. Personal Interview. Naples, Florida, September 15, 2020.

⁴⁵⁰ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵¹ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵² ARP3, 2020.

understand their hurts and pains, what works or does not work, what to say, when, and how to say it. If the artist does not know his audience, he will not be able to connect with them.⁴⁵³

Concerning a divide between the secular and Christian arts communities, ARP3 stated:

The whole world is divided into two groups: those whose center is the creation and those whose center is the Creator. Naturally, there will be a divide because the artist's values and sense of self-worth, purposes, and in every single area of life, there will be an enormous divide.⁴⁵⁴

Creator-centered artists see the Creator as the source of their creation, as their sustenance, nourishment, and purpose. The creation-centered artist does not look to the Creator but sees the creation as a resource for who they are, their nourishment, and future security. A divide is unavoidable. ARP3 says that an animus the church has with Hollywood and film is that they have been significantly used by the power of this world. "Films can also present the Gospel. There has never been a movie made that did not present the Gospel because it is inherent in everything".⁴⁵⁵

ARP3 weaves storytelling into his preaching, which gives it a theater-performance feel. "As a pastor, I have had the unusual opportunity to be center stage many times to exercise my God-given gifts. I have told stories, illustrating and painting word pictures, bringing people to a sense of understanding".⁴⁵⁶

In the words of Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper, not just a politician but also a theologian, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which

⁴⁵³ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵⁴ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵⁵ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵⁶ ARP3, 2020.

Christ, who is Sovereign overall, does not cry, Mine!”⁴⁵⁷ ARP3 says every stroke of a paintbrush, every song, every political decision made all belong to Christ. His worldview is a Christian worldview, that everything is under the lordship and authority of Christ; everything is for his purpose and glory.⁴⁵⁸ As ARP3 stated,

I cannot think of a single art form that is not redemptive. Ephesians 2:10 says that we have been created to do good works meaning that God takes us off the ash heap of life, and He reshapes and remolds us. The Bible uses the analogy that He is the Potter, and we are the clay. God is shaping us into a beautiful work of art, and one day there will be a great art exhibit in heaven.⁴⁵⁹

ARP3 says that there were artists present when Jesus gave the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Among His disciples, there were artists. Jesus was speaking to people that were going to tell the story and tell it effectively. The disciples went to many different nations to tell God’s story – villages, towns, or a city square. The story had to arrest the attention and spark the imagination of people.⁴⁶⁰

ARP3 shared some of his struggles as an artist, which positions him and other pastor-artists to be empathetic to other artists who share similar struggles. In the context of discipleship, vulnerability on the part of leadership, especially other artists in leadership, will prove to be an asset to shaping artists’ spiritual lives. As ARP3 stated:

I think sometimes we overuse our gifts. I often struggle not to use my art to manipulate people because a good artist can manipulate the emotions, so that is a struggle. I think my art is pretty good, and when other people do not, it bothers me. I want affirmation, and when I don't get applause for my performance or presentation, it bothers me. I am a

⁴⁵⁷ “Abraham Kuyper Quotes,” Goodreads, 2020. accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/99035-there-is-not-a-square-inch-in-the-whole-domain>.

⁴⁵⁸ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁵⁹ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁶⁰ ARP3, 2020.

perfectionist, and if I do not get applause, I wrestle with wondering why I did not perform well enough.⁴⁶¹

COVID-19 has limited the audiences and patrons of the arts community, and employment for artists. It presents a danger of financial loss and the fear that when the coronavirus is over, will people come back to the art galleries or theaters, come back to the church, and what is the new normal going to be? ARP3 stated that amid the pandemic, he has grown closer to God, and his creative flow increased. He saw it as a time to reflect and create. As ARP3 stated:

It is always disquieting for anybody when the status quo changes, but I would also want to say something positive for the coronavirus. For me, this has been an opportunity for reflection, being alone and reevaluate, to develop and to practice without life getting in the way. So, I am coming out of the COVID-19 time with more artwork, more films, ideas, and projects than I had going in because it gave me a chance to slow down and reconnect with God, myself, and my art.⁴⁶²

ARP3 wants to encourage artists, painting a picture of a better world to come. The writer of Ecclesiastes said, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1 [ESV]).⁴⁶³ And then he says in verse 11, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Eccl. 3:11 [ESV]).⁴⁶⁴

ARP3 and the researcher agreed that a ministry to artists in Naples is critical now more than ever. He says that what Storytellers Creative Arts could do to help artists is to remind them

⁴⁶¹ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁶² ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁶³ Eccl. 3:1 (ESV)

⁴⁶⁴ Eccl. 3:11 (ESV)

of their purpose as individuals before God, apart from their art, reminding them of their responsibilities as artists.⁴⁶⁵

Storytellers Creative Arts could best help me by giving me opportunities to use my art in a way that impacts the world and by connecting me with other artists where we can share our concerns and encourage each other to think more biblically, to think better. A community group will help curb my worst instincts and encourage my best instincts.⁴⁶⁶

Pastor and Ministry Leader Focus Group (PMLFG) Results

Indeed, the interviews with pastors, ministry, community leaders, and laypeople were inspiring and revealing, providing a foundation for developing an intentional ministry to artists. The researcher carefully examined the differences and similarities between the views of those interviewed. The focus group's purpose was to lay the groundwork for addressing the issues stated in chapters 1 and 2. The group's overall consensus was that everyone affirmed the need for some ministry to artists, whether it is a formalized program or curriculum-based small group for spiritual formation. All of the pastors and ministry leaders expressed interest in developing a partnership with Storytellers Creative Arts to shepherd and disciple artists. The subject of the obstacles, infrastructure, people, and financial resources was discussed as some churches cannot develop a ministry of this kind presently due to individual circumstances. The group also affirmed that the vision for an arts ministry in the congregation begins with the pastor, who champions the effort and supports a plan to reach artists. Participants acknowledged that artists are a unique, somewhat problematic people group to evangelize and disciple, but also that for the most part, they had difficulty connecting and understanding the struggles and temperaments of

⁴⁶⁵ ARP3, 2020.

⁴⁶⁶ ARP3, 2020.

artists. Ministry, community, and lay leaders in the group offered their experience in strategic planning and ministry development.

A value to the process is that several pastors are or were creative in their ministry styles, preaching, and leadership. The researcher decided to delve deeper into understanding pastors as artists and the importance of championing the creatives in the congregation.

Eugene Peterson's talk on *How Is the Pastor an Artist and the Artist A Pastor* which was shared at the Hill Country Institute, tackled the subject of pastors as artists.⁴⁶⁷ The summary of his session was mainly that:

Pastors and artists are both in the business of shepherding. Both are called to live their lives artfully. The work of pastoring is both a science and an art. The work of artmaking is both a provocation and a caretaking. Our desire here is to help the pastor and the artist grow in their understanding and appreciation of their kindred work: of shepherding, of artmaking.⁴⁶⁸

Peterson said that artists helped him most in discerning the difference in embodying this difference in his life as a pastor. As he stated, "Artists pay attention to details. Artists are concerned with form...keeping the visible and the invisible integrated, intermeshed".⁴⁶⁹

There is an indirect difference between a pastor and an art curator. The commonality between the two occupations, professions, and callings reveals one significant difference: the medium and subject. Museum curators and pastors devotedly expose their patrons and parishioners to a thriving display of beauty, experienced through works of art and the Word of

⁴⁶⁷ "How Is The Pastor An Artist and the Artist A Pastor," Hill Country Institute, 2020. accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.hillcountryinstitute.org/digital-library/how-is-pastor-an-artist-and-artist-a-pastor>.

⁴⁶⁸ Pastor As An Artist, 2020.

⁴⁶⁹ Pastor As An Artist, 2020.

God.⁴⁷⁰ This comparison of two very different roles brings to light the Biblical role of a pastor revealing a powerful fusion of pastor/shepherd and curator or purveyor of the arts.

Amid the charge to shepherd a flock, preach the Word, and all the other tasks of a spiritual leader, the pastor/curator's ultimate calling is to "display the Christ of Scripture to the viewing world and to open the eyes of his audience to the pitfalls of seasonality and fashion while fashioning them to the form of Christ Jesus".⁴⁷¹ Curators (some artists themselves) represent other artists by displaying their works to the community, art aficionados, and potential patrons. As a pastor tells God's Story through the spoken Word of God, a curator reveals the inspiration and story of the artist.⁴⁷² "When a pastor/curator exhibits the work of others (be it the Apostles, Prophets, Psalmists or Evangelists), he is ultimately exposing his audience to the artwork of God".⁴⁷³

Naples Pastor-Artists

As a recap, the researcher analyzed the pastor-artists interviewed: ARP2, a sculptor, and painter worked in the Naples arts community years before God called him to be a pastor. His passion for teaching and the arts would enhance and support an arts ministry at his church. Recently, ARP5's church relocated to a larger property because of the congregation's growth, which may present an opportunity for some arts outreach.⁴⁷⁴ ML1's pastoral experience and his

⁴⁷⁰ "The Difference Between A Church Pastor And A Curator," Sermon Illustrations Blog, 2015. accessed November 1, 2020, <https://sermonillustrationsblog.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-difference-between-church-pastor.html>.

⁴⁷¹ Church Pastor And A Curator, 2015.

⁴⁷² Church Pastor And A Curator, 2015.

⁴⁷³ Church Pastor And A Curator, 2015.

⁴⁷⁴ ARP2, 2020.

creative giftings enhance coaching leaders. ML1's ministry to adults in recovery is essential to reaching artists battling addiction.⁴⁷⁵

Recording artist and worship pastor ARP1 has been making music for more than seven years. ARP1's experience as a songwriter and coach for worship leaders and musicians connects him to a growing community of creatives. Within this community are artists in other disciplines who crave for community.⁴⁷⁶

ARP4 has been the choir and symphony conductor at his church for many years. A skilled musician, and composer, ARP4 has written articles in top worship journal magazines. ARP4 has masterfully developed a culture of the arts at the church, but artists' discipleship is not there. He is poised to develop a ministry because the choir and orchestra's close-knit bonds already present the opportunity to build an arts community.⁴⁷⁷ ARP3 can speak into artists' lives as both a shepherd and co-creative. He brings the community sensitivity and a heart for artists. His vulnerability would help struggling artists to feel a sense of safety in an artist community. The ability to tell one's story is a significant part of the discipleship process. As an experienced storyteller, ARP3 would be a resource in teaching or mentoring other artists.⁴⁷⁸

Perspectives on Artists in the Faith Community

Kristin Jones championed the formation of arts ministries at the local church level. She asserted that the church today is experiencing a resurgence of the arts. According to Jones, the

⁴⁷⁵ ML1, 2020.

⁴⁷⁶ ARP1, 2020.

⁴⁷⁷ ARP4, 2020.

⁴⁷⁸ ARP3, 2020.

church once placed a high value on beauty and creativity, affirming the working of the Holy Spirit through the arts to bring about transformation, only to become irrelevant to the church.⁴⁷⁹

Table 1.5 represents perspectives from pastors on artists in the faith community.

Table 1.5

Artists in the Faith Community

Pastors (P)	<p>P1 has difficulty relating to artists, and knowing how to shepherd them. Artist involvement in the church is at a minimum due to conflict that dismantled the arts. Micromanaging programs and worship has hurt morale. The spiritual lives of artists are a concern. P2 believes that the arts are the only way to spread the Gospel. The arts must be presented orderly, pointing others to Christ and glorifying God. He wants to find ways to connect and affirm artists. P3 sees artists in more of a utilitarian way and not as a people group needing shepherding. The church has 200 artists in all genres, not using their gifts. P4 sees himself as an artist when preaching; he wants to involve artists in various aspects of the church to offer their gifts like a “Meet the Artist” event. The church is located in the heart of the arts community.</p>
Artist/Pastors (ARP)	<p>ARP1 believes the church does a disservice to the arts when only valuing them inside the church. He believes that God uses secular artists to minister. Annually the church hosts an evening of arts based on a scriptural theme with live art and spoken word. ARP2 is a passionate, active artist, yet does not celebrate the arts or provide venues or opportunities. ARP4 showcases the works of artists in the church and does art talks. He fully believes artists are integral.</p>

Philip Ryken addressed the church’s reticence to support and affirm the arts because of narcissism or artistic expression that does not reflect the Gospel’s truth, impeding evangelical impact. He asserted that these suspicions are sometimes rightly justified. As he stated:

⁴⁷⁹ Jones, *Soul Food*, 2.

Often the church's antipathy betrays an underlying ignorance about the arts, but sometimes the suspicion is justified. Art is always tempted to glory in itself, and nearly every form of art has been used to communicate values that are contrary to Scripture.⁴⁸⁰

Perspectives on Artists in the Worship of the Church

Kristin Jones offered a historical perspective on the arts in the church, taking us back when the arts were a staple of worship, a symbol of transcendence, and a vehicle to tell the Gospel story impactfully. Artistic expression was the norm for churches, artists free to contribute visual, aural, and musical arts, enriching the services and congregational life.⁴⁸¹

Timothy Keller teaches on the arts in worship and supports inclusiveness of the arts as a critical need of the church. Keller echoed Kristin Jones when he said, "the church needs artists to assist the Body in understanding truth".⁴⁸² Dr. Tim believes that the arts are the mouthpiece and conduit that connects heaven and earth, touching souls and opening eyes to the goodness and beauty of God. Author and pastor Timothy Keller asserted that worship is primarily valued in church and that the church must find ways to engage all the arts in worship.⁴⁸³

According to Keller, "the church needs artists to equip the church to praise God. We cannot praise God without art".⁴⁸⁴ The church tends to equate "worship" with just one creative portion of the weekly services.⁴⁸⁵ Author Jared Wilson challenged the church by posing this question: "Isn't all of life meant to be an act of worship?"⁴⁸⁶ As he stated, "One reason we have

⁴⁸⁰ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 12.

⁴⁸¹ Jones, *Soul Food*, 2.

⁴⁸² Why We Need Artists, 2011.

⁴⁸³ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

⁴⁸⁴ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

⁴⁸⁵ Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 76.

⁴⁸⁶ Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 76.

struggled to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus is that we incorrectly assign our terminology (equating worship with music only) and thereby train our people to think in truncated, reductionistic ways”.⁴⁸⁷ Table 1.6 represents perspectives from pastors on the arts in the worship of the church.

Table 1.6

Artists in the Worship of the Church

Pastors (P)	<p>P1 says it does a disservice to the arts and to the scriptures if the performance is not excellent. God is excellent and he created a beautiful world. Artists must follow that example.</p> <p>P2 believes that the Word of God is to be the focal point of worship from beginning to end. He opposes the incorporation of secular music in the worship services and expects the musicians and singers to perform excellently without distraction.</p> <p>P3 prioritizes technical and musical arts over any other artistic offerings.</p> <p>P4 incorporates secular media into the worship which is traditional in style. He feels that no member should be prohibited from expressing their creativity.</p>
Artist/Pastors (ARP)	<p>ARP1’s worship is contemporary, with only music and Singing. ARP1’s church has a worship school.</p> <p>ARP3 believes in custom designing the services in a collaborative effort utilizing all of the arts where appropriate. He connects stories and art to the Story.</p> <p>ARP4’s 200-member choir and orchestra are the focal point of the worship and an annual concert series.</p>

Perspectives on Artists and the Mission of the Church to Transform Culture

The church is experiencing a resurgence. God is raising artists in the church, equipping them with divine skills and creativity to actively advance His mission. ⁴⁸⁸ Artists are the most

⁴⁸⁷ Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 76.

⁴⁸⁸ Jones, *Soul Food*, 1-2.

prominent people in the community and society, who have the influence to change culture.⁴⁸⁹

The artist's call is to uncompromisingly present the reality of the depravity and redemption of culture.⁴⁹⁰ The mandate of the Great Commission was to *make disciples*, which means to transform lives.⁴⁹¹ Artists must be welcomed as partners in the mission by discipling, developing, and deploying them for service. Table 1.7 represents perspectives from pastors on artists and the mission to transform culture.

Table 1.7

Artists and the Mission of the Church to Transform Culture

Pastors (P)	<p>P1: Artists show Christ and make His word come alive through their art.</p> <p>P2: The Great Artist can take every artist's gift to reach the world. Artists are critical to sharing the Gospel and advancing the Kingdom mission.</p> <p>P3: Mission is to: develop fully devoted followers of Jesus to disciple our family community and world.</p> <p>P4 Our people are engaged in the community serving God as an act of their witness to the world</p>
Artist/Pastors (ARP)	<p>ARP1: There is so much more that artists bring into the world. Art is a prophetic countercultural voice in the world of brokenness.</p> <p>ARP3: I cannot think of a single art form that is not redemptive. Artists arrest the attention and spark the imagination of people.</p> <p>ARP4: Church mission is to honor God and to develop disciples and to send them out to be positive witness in the world. The choir is engaged in a nursing home music ministry.</p>
Ministry Leaders (ML)	<p>ML4: Creativity is necessary to reveal Christ to a post-Christian society. The arts are an influential evangelical tool allowing people who would not listen and engage otherwise for cultural reasons. Art allows the Gospel to be seen, heard, and felt.</p>

⁴⁸⁹ Charles David Kelley. "How Can You Embrace the Artists in Your Church?", Filmed [September 2017]. YouTube video, 2:31. Posted [September 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqQgWjDpn78>.

⁴⁹⁰ Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁴⁹¹ The Place of Art in the Church, 2018.

Table 1.8 represents perspectives from pastors and leaders on discipleship programs in their churches and discipling artists.

Table 1.8

Discipleship Programs and Discipling Artists

Pastors (P)	<p>P1: I do not disciple “groups” inside the church. I have never had a separate program for particular people with gifts or callings.</p> <p>P2: I want to grow people instead of steeples. Discipleship is not something we do but something we are. I want to connect artists with other artists.</p> <p>P3: I do not think artists are a people group that needs discipling apart from the overall congregation.</p> <p>P4: His church does not have a discipleship program for the church. Most of the congregation have been Christians for decades.</p>
Artist/Pastors (ARP)	<p>ARP1 disciples musicians and songwriters in a Worship community group.</p> <p>ARP2 uses a one-year discipleship book but not exclusively for artists.</p> <p>ARP4 believes the choir is a community group.</p>
Ministry Leaders (ML)	<p>ML4: Artists speak a synonymous language when they engage in artmaking or creative conversations. That bonding is an invaluable opportunity for evangelism and discipleship. Christians in the arts are best equipped to reach other artists.</p>

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The researcher revisits the problem and purpose of this thesis project to craft the argument that there is a secular/Christian divide in the Naples' arts community and a need exists for developing a discipleship program for artists. The researcher's ministry experience and exposure to Naples arts culture has afforded him the ability to surmise and identify the need for a transformation within this arts subculture. The thesis statement spoke to the need for an in-depth intervention of both secular and Christian arts communities in hopes that there would be viable options to address the conflicting worldviews, assess core needs in the arts community, and develop a program to foster spiritual formation.

Problem Restated

The problem stated was that the conflicting worldviews of secular and Christian arts communities have the potential to diminish the impact of Storytellers Creative Arts' ministry in Naples, Florida.

1. Many artists hold to various worldviews that are different from a biblical one. Amid the divide between the secular and sacred, both sides take on some of the other's traditions and throw out the rest – however they see “their” truth.
2. Both secular and Christian artists are on a mission to transform the culture.
3. The divide creates challenges for Storytellers Creative Arts' mission to do evangelism through the arts.

Purpose Restated

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis was to address the divide between the secular and sacred arts cultural worldviews in Naples, Florida, and develop a program to disciple artists.

Drawing from the wisdom and experience of accomplished authors, artists, and theologians, the researcher acquired invaluable content. The information gleaned is foundational to fostering a plan to disciple, shepherd, and release artists into their God-given callings. Key themes were examined and extracted from literary works with comparisons and commentary to address the problem: *Artists in the faith community, the worship of the church, and how they connect and are engaged in the mission of the church.*

All the authors agreed that *the artist's worldview* shapes and influences what they create. “Our response to art, the way we talk or do not talk about art, the way we make or avoid making art, is the truest diagnostic test of our underlying, perhaps implicit and unexplained beliefs about culture”, says W.O. David Taylor.⁴⁹²

The artist's need to express the depravity of culture with a redemptive message rings true now more than ever. Philip Ryken, Francis Schaeffer, and Michael Bauer firmly addressed the human condition and the arts. The Social Justice movement is proof of messaging with art; only the redemptive message is often lacking. No other medium is capable of changing culture than the arts. Central to spiritual formation is one's worldview. In a community group setting, topics like worldview, politics, and other cultural issues would be starting points, as these interactions reveal specific needs and open further dialogue to enhance group dynamics.

⁴⁹² Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 36.

How artists connect to and live in *the faith community* is, without a doubt, a most critical issue to consider because it is in the Body of Christ that one is formed in the nurture and admonition of God. It is a haven of support, equipping, and transformation. The researcher considered the need for pastors to embrace creatives while teaching them to follow God and grow spiritually, empathetically and lovingly. “When Christians abandon the artistic community, we lose a significant opportunity to communicate Christ to our culture”.⁴⁹³ The abandonment here happens when Christians in the arts disconnect physically, emotionally, and spiritually. According to Ryken, Taylor, and others, the church’s abandonment has scattered the sheep. Because the arts are the most powerful medium to communicate the Gospel, if artists are cast aside, an unimaginable amount of people in this world will not hear, see, feel or experience the Gospel message.

Three recurring critical needs of artists were discovered throughout the research: *identity*, *community*, and *purpose*. These three areas are to be lived out in the faith community first which will enable them to co-exist in the secular community. Some pastors are void of understanding the value of the arts and its significance to the church’s mission. A lack of utilization and value of the arts can thwart ministry effectiveness and its impact on society. “Some churches do not consider art a serious way to serve God. Others deny that Christians in the arts have a legitimate calling”.⁴⁹⁴ The church’s lack of preparedness to understand what the Bible says about creativity is another reason for the apathy artist’s experience from church leadership. Before an artist community group can be developed at a local church, pastors, and ministry leaders need a

⁴⁹³ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 14.

⁴⁹⁴ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, 9.

broader perspective and renewed understanding of God's plan for the arts. Storytellers Creative Arts can be a part of education on art and faith through workshops and other opportunities like hosting an art exhibit at the church connected with a biblical theme or message that could connect to the church's mission.

Timothy Keller and Lisa DeBoer champion the artist by making a case for the engagement and critical need for a broader expression of the arts in the context of *worship*. "Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian church".⁴⁹⁵ Almost every artist interviewed shared frustration that worship was supported and encouraged more than any other artistic expression in worship and congregational life. "Within the Christian art community, there is frustration for visual artists who observe the important place of the musical arts in worship".⁴⁹⁶ Nevertheless, there must be a balance and wisdom exercised to include the arts in worship not to distract or refocus the parishioners on performance rather than "see" God working and "hear" Him speaking through the expression. "Authentic worship begins with God, who is the object of worship".⁴⁹⁷

The call of Christ to go into the world and tell the good news (Matthew 28:18-19) includes artists, although it is often not conveyed or affirmed. Charles Kelley's clarion message is a wake-up call for pastors: "Artists are the most influential people in the community and in society. They are not the thermometer; they are the thermostat. They are the ones who change culture".⁴⁹⁸ Many artists do not see themselves as *partners in the mission of the church* in the

⁴⁹⁵ DeBoer, *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*, 269.

⁴⁹⁶ Why We Need Artists, 2011.

⁴⁹⁷ Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 98.

⁴⁹⁸ Kelley, *Embrace the Artists*, 2017.

context of what they would bring artistically. There are crucial areas of ministry where artists can be active like reaching other artists or highlighting God's creative work and plan for and through the church. "Artists have access to otherwise closed artistic subcultures. They can become missionaries to their own people in a way that non-artists cannot".⁴⁹⁹ Con Campbell's text is, for lack of a better term, a manual for art missions. If pastors can embrace Kelley and Campbell's messages and Paul's words in Ephesians 4, for the ministry's work and unity in the Body (Eph. 4:13), many more lives will be transformed, and the devaluing of the arts will be non-existent.

Narcissism and Idolatry in the Arts Community

The researcher concludes that the divide's primary catalyst is narcissism and idolatry among the secular *and* Christian artists. It flows from the church into society and also from society into the church. It is a vicious cycle that thwarts the effectiveness of ministry. Sin contaminated the aesthetics and beauty of the arts. Left in the hands of a culture against God, the arts can be used for evil – even the beauty of God's creation. A Luciferian culture over centuries has infiltrated the church:

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High' (Isaiah 14:12-15).⁵⁰⁰

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible explains the Apostle Paul's intentions in writing the book of Romans. He is writing to unbelievers as well as believers of Jesus. In chapter one, Paul gives unyielding answers to the unbelieving, teaches the believing Jew,

⁴⁹⁹ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 12.

⁵⁰⁰ Isaiah 14:12-15 (ESV)

confirms the Christian convert, exposes the idolatrous Gentile, and shows equal rank in Divine favor of both the converted Gentile and Jew.⁵⁰¹ For this thesis's sake, we focus on Romans 1:20-21, which touches on creation, and addresses idolatry among believers and non-believers.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.⁵⁰²

The arts community is not exempt; in fact, the arts community exacerbates what Paul is speaking of here as it flows throughout the church into the culture. Matthew Henry says,

Our Creator's invisible power and Godhead are so clearly shown in the works he has made, that even idolaters and wicked Gentiles are left without excuse. They foolishly followed idolatry; and rational creatures changed the worship of the glorious Creator, for that of brutes, reptiles, and senseless images. They wandered from God, till all traces of true religion must have been lost, had not the revelation of the gospel prevented it. For whatever may be pretended, as to the sufficiency of man's reason to discover Divine truth and moral obligation, or to govern the practice aright, facts cannot be denied. And these plainly show that men have dishonored God by the most absurd idolatries and superstitions; and have degraded themselves by the vilest affections and most abominable deeds.⁵⁰³

Romans 1:20-21 has often been used as a point of argument for the believer when trying to convert a nonbeliever. However, Paul is writing to both communities here, indicating that even believers of Jesus look to creation as a source of power, life, and purpose and, in many cases, dictate and control the arts to feed their desire for acceptance and value. When the believing artist's understanding or faith practice centers on works, idols, or anything that takes

⁵⁰¹ "Romans One," Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Concise), 2020. accessed November 3, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-concise/romans/1.html>.

⁵⁰² Rom. 1:20-21 (ESV)

⁵⁰³ Romans 1, 2020.

them away from the Creator and His sovereignty over creation, the arts will not be utilized or expressed as a redemptive tool, but a destructive one.

Some interviews revealed an abundance of humanistic thinking among artists in terms of their control, manipulation, and idolatrous use of the arts. Essentially, the artist's identities are overwhelmingly tied to what they make, how they perform, or who they are.

There are numerous takeaways and revelations over the past months of the COVID-19 pandemic for the artists. The death of a thriving arts community has crushed the egos of creatives, "their power" to perform, make, entertain, create, "their craving" for affirmation, acceptance, and applause for what "they do" for society. Without the ability to "do," the artist loses creative drive and interest and the inability to "be."

The majority of artists interviewed said their lives would be over; they would be devastated, lost, and incomplete if they could no longer make art, sing, write or perform, and that they would be without purpose in life. Some even likened performing to a drug or unexplainable rush that they must have in order to function between performances. The thought of negative criticism has crippled some artists. The prevalence of perfectionism, overconfidence in craft, skill, and performance has created a community of insecure creatives desperately in need of an experience with the Creator God, a shifting of self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness, and inner transformation. The researcher sees this as the core of the divide.

Many of the Christian artists were ill-equipped or un-willing to share their faith. Some responded that people are not mentally or spiritually able to understand the Gospel or that they did not have the faith in them. But isn't that why Jesus came, because humankind was lost, confused and blind (Luke 4:18-19, Luke 19:10)?

None of the artists interviewed are involved in or connected to a Christian community group of artists other than in a choir. Because of the church's stance toward the arts, artists question why God gave them these gifts if the church could not see or champion that value.

Is the church to blame, or the artist, or both? The researcher insists that both parties are at fault: the artist, because of a skewed understanding of who they are in Christ and that they have been called to create to bring glory to God, enjoy Him, love Him and serve Him with all they do; the pastor who may envision the arts as a useful tool to enhance or promote programs or grow a church, to entertain and satisfy the parishioners who idolize the mainstage performers or to control the artist and stifle their God-given gifts to edify the church and change the world.

Divide, Dysfunction or Defiance?

Commenting on a secular and sacred divide, ARP3 stated:

The whole world is divided into two groups: those whose center is the creation and those whose center is the Creator. Naturally, there will be a divide because the artist's values and sense of self-worth, purposes, and in every single area of life, there will be an enormous divide.⁵⁰⁴

There *is* a divide among Christian artists and secular artists in Naples; however, the researcher cites dysfunction and defiance that first flows throughout the Christian community.

AR11's erratic and somewhat confusing faith journey has left him doubting his faith and self-worth. The evolution of a higher conceptual thought to faith and a family of accomplished artists has raised the bar even higher for AR11.⁵⁰⁵ ARP1 acknowledges a mysticism in the arts, and he faithfully develops, trains, and releases musicians and singers, but stifles other creative types; yet, he reveres secular artists' accomplishments and giftedness whose messages are anti-

⁵⁰⁴ ARP3, 2020.

⁵⁰⁵ AR11, 2020.

Christian.⁵⁰⁶ AR3 unequivocally refuses to share her faith, yet criticizes non-believer artists, and is unwilling to “fight” over faith issues. She believes that her fans give faint and false praise of her performances, always waiting for the shoe to drop; yet, she is ok with people attending a New Age church because at least they have God-talks.⁵⁰⁷

AR2 is fighting to serve Christ as an actor in an ongoing battle against immorality. Her obsession with the stage often leaves her drained and losing sight of a relationship with Jesus.⁵⁰⁸

AR7’s fear and insecurity overtook her when a member of her church told her she would go to hell for doing secular music, literally driving her to the point of contemplating suicide. AR1 believes that everyone is born with faith in God “in the back of their heads,”⁵⁰⁹ although they spew vulgarities and live ungodly lives, he still believes that they are still children of God. He insists that it is impossible for them *understand* the Gospel and is against sharing his faith.⁵¹⁰

AR5 has very little support from a Christian community and has drifted away from the church. His battle to survive as a searching artist and the temptations attached to a self-focused arts culture leaves him disillusioned and unprotected.⁵¹¹ AR13 combines faith and humanism in her music. She believes that because God is a good God, He would never send a beautiful Muslim girl to hell. AR13 despises what she refers to as “Jesus Talk”. AR13 is a consumer who samples various religions yet refuses to embrace the tenets of the church.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁶ ARP1, 2020.

⁵⁰⁷ AR3, 2020.

⁵⁰⁸ AR2, 2020.

⁵⁰⁹ AR1, 2020.

⁵¹⁰ AR1, 2020.

⁵¹¹ AR5, 2020.

⁵¹² AR13, 2020.

At AR8's core, he desires to go to church and experience the transcendence of worship and acceptance from a church family. However, because of his lifestyle, male partner, and adopted son, the Catholic church has ostracized him. AR8's immediate reaction to Christians is hostility and defiance, with an unshakeable resolution to disprove any religion, especially Catholicism and Christianity. Acting and producing once filled that void. His wounds and defiance leave him lost and searching.⁵¹³ A14, a Naples icon, is discipling the nations, creating art that delivers a message of anarchy and aversion to a biblical worldview. His worldwide acclaim has afforded him a life of producing works that fill vast and diverse spaces. AR14's inner essence and "spirituality" drive the creative energy displayed on massive canvases. His message is reshaping generations to come.⁵¹⁴

Michael Lord's disciples (most of them artists) are taught to find strength from within their third eye of consciousness to find creative flow, power, and purpose. The Unity Church is *New Thought* at its core, accelerating a creation-centered community that avoids any allegiance or worship of *the* Creator God.⁵¹⁵ Julia Cameron's *Artist's Way* studies are subtly pulling Christian and non-Christian artists into a pool of ambiguity and independence in their creative lives, which ultimately harms the church and culture.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ AR8, 2020.

⁵¹⁴ AR14, 2020.

⁵¹⁵ Lord, *Imagination*, 2020

⁵¹⁶ Morning Pages, 2019.

The Church's Ambivalence to the Arts

Earlier in the thesis, the researcher stated that the arts have more power to destroy or give life than ever before. If Christian artists are equipped and strategically placed in visual arts, fashion, music, film, and other media they can change the culture. Nevertheless, the culture will only be changed one heart at a time. Moreover, Jesus is the only one who changes hearts. The researcher concludes that overall, pastors and ministry leaders have devalued the arts as an integral component to advancing the mission of Christ by the church.

The consensus among some of the interviews reveals that artists threaten some pastors. They are an affront to the egos of some pastors and usurp their time on stage. They are intolerant of the creative temperaments that push the envelope and rock the boat, and some pastors want to avoid any conflict. To keep the doors open and stakeholders happy, they feverishly feed parishioners' desires by providing the best "entertainment" on Sunday. What the researcher gathered most was that artists are viewed as utilitarian tools in the church by many pastors. The lack of shepherding and the misuse of artists has pushed artists away, causing some to be reticent to use their gifts in the church.

P3's ambivalence to artists as a people group needing shepherding and community guides his wanting artists to connect only on special occasions or through a sermon series. P3's narrow view of the arts leaves him content with any technical or graphic media that enhances the production on Sunday, keeping the machine going. Although there are an acknowledgment and a possible willingness to entertain the thought of hiring a pastor to shepherd artists, other more pressing issues overrule a ministry to artists.⁵¹⁷ AR15's pastor believes that serving and the work

⁵¹⁷ P3, 2020.

of the church are more important than building relationships. “God wants me to “be” not necessarily “do,” and that probably goes against my pastor’s beliefs and probably what he wants me to believe”.⁵¹⁸

According to P1, “artists are not an end to themselves”.⁵¹⁹ Although P1 affirms that all people need to be disciplined, he neglects to recognize the artists’ wounds and struggles in his congregation.⁵²⁰

Avoiding drugs to maintain a creative flow was ARP2’s quest in life from a young age to becoming an active artist. The passion for the arts was overshadowed by the call to pastor. Still, the burning desire to create and experience the transcendence that comes with it rings within his soul. His aversion to recognizing and shepherding the artists in his congregation presents a double standard that can only limit and thwart celebration and creatives’ release in their God-given callings. If *he* craves for and engages in artmaking, why can’t the other creatives in the congregation (apart from music) have that opportunity?⁵²¹

Singer AR4 said that the church has been canceling culture for years. As she stated, “Instead of connecting artists into different areas of serving, the church pushes the artists aside”.⁵²² When an artist gets older or their voices change, pastors should care and “repurpose” them by encouraging them to mentor young artists and find ways to transition them into other ministry areas with their art in the church or the community.

⁵¹⁸ AR15, 2020.

⁵¹⁹ P1, 2020.

⁵²⁰ P1, 2020.

⁵²¹ ARP2, 2020.

⁵²² AR4, 2020.

Where Do We Go from Here?

How will the church address the critical needs of artists – identity, community, and purpose? The researcher concludes that shepherding is vital to reaching artists in the church and that it can only happen in the Body of Christ. Out of the pastor and leader interviews, only 2 submitted or had a formalized plan of discipleship for the overall congregation. Pastors initially stated that an exclusive program to disciple artists was not needed because the whole of the congregation must follow a synonymous program. However, many of the pastors have no formalized plan. A formalized partnership with churches to grow a ministry to Christian artists, thus reaching the nonbeliever artist, is the immediate consideration. Artists have real-life challenges and struggle with faith crises, and they want to talk about these issues.

Paul Lamey says the church needs shepherds, not coaches. “Some pastors unwittingly eschew solid and timeless biblical terminology in favor of denuded jargon that can essentially mean anything or worse, nothing at all”.⁵²³ The Apostle Paul reminds pastors and leaders to “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28 [NIV]).⁵²⁴

Leveraging the Arts to Advance the Great Commission

The culture’s balladeers have an incredible opportunity to go into some of the world’s darkest places and tell the Gospel story. From the very beginning, the Master Artist’s purpose for creation was to have his image-bearers glorifying Him across the planet, developing, and caring for culture and civilization.

⁵²³ “The Church Needs Shepherds, Not Coaches,” Christianity.com, 2012. accessed November 3, 2020, <https://www.christianity.com/church/pastors/the-church-needs-shepherds-not-coaches.html>.

⁵²⁴ Acts 20:28 (NIV)

The ongoing bittersweet relationship between the church and the arts has led to its approaching creative expression in the church from four perspectives: (1) Godly art or Christian themed art is of use in the church, and in particular, the worship setting; (2) Avoid secular art. Secular art is not overtly Christian; (3) Separate the two. Believers can enjoy secular and sacred art, engaging in each opposite context – sacred art in the church and secular art in the marketplace; (4) Why bother with the arts? Avoid art altogether.⁵²⁵

The church is marginalizing artists. “Artists that are not being disciplined by the church will be disciplined by the world”.⁵²⁶ In the same zeal in which the church affirms and sets apart one who proclaims a call to the ministry, the church must also seek to shepherd, disciple, and release its artists, finding ways to connect artists to the life of the church and beyond. The church must catch a global vision of the arts as a viable medium to take the Gospel to the nations, near or far. An essential part of discipling artists is equipping them to shine the light of hope to a dark world by preparing them to work and co-exist in the marketplace, using their skills and passions, talents, and glorify God through their art.⁵²⁷ As J.D. Payne stated,

A majority of artists that will go into the marketplace will be going into venues that are incredibly dark places, and they are often going alone. Yes, they are believers. Yes, they’re filled with God’s spirit, but they don’t have any church encouragement, guidance, instruction, and prayer support.⁵²⁸

Theologian and author Francis Schaeffer reminds artists that as living, beautiful works of art, they must represent Christ in every aspect of life to save a broken world. He said, “No work of art is more important than the Christian’s own life, and every Christian is called upon to be an

⁵²⁵ Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

⁵²⁶ Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

⁵²⁷ Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

⁵²⁸ Payne, *Leveraging the Arts*, 2020.

artist in this sense”.⁵²⁹ Schaffer says that even if one has no creative skills, his life is the creative visual expression that glorifies God. As he stated,

He may have no gift of writing, no gift of composing or singing, but each man has the gift of creativity in terms of the way he lives his life. In this sense, the Christian’s life is to be an artwork. The Christian’s life is to be a thing of truth and also a thing of beauty in the midst of a lost and despairing world.⁵³⁰

The Artist’s Call to be Living Icons

“What if we were to read Romans 12:1 with a small change in wording: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living, *sacrificial work of art*”?⁵³¹ writes Bruce Benson, author of *Liturgy as a Way of Life (The Church and Postmodern Culture): Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship*. Benson challenges artists to see themselves as works of art. “True, we don’t usually think of ourselves as works of art, but why not? Are we not among the greatest works of art that God - the ultimate artist - has created”?⁵³² Benson echoes Schaeffer, who said the Christian’s life is to be an artwork, a thing of truth, and beauty in a lost world. As he stated,

God calls us to be artists, not in some specialized sense, but in our very being. It is this sense of being an artist that is most fundamental. The idea that we should view ourselves as works of art becomes even clearer when we consider what Paul says in Ephesians 2:10: “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”.⁵³³

⁵²⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 94.

⁵³⁰ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 94.

⁵³¹ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁵³² Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁵³³ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

Artist and author Janice Elsheimer says not only must artists create art, but when they do not, their craft is not developing. “Creative people know that not only are they missing something important when they aren’t exercising their creative gifts, but they are also shrinking from the responsibility they have to develop those gifts”.⁵³⁴

Believers are called to be icons, not idols, and as “works of art,” we were created to reflect, express, communicate, and point people to our Creator God. Philosopher Jean-Luc Marion, author of *God Without Being*, echoes the words of the Apostle Paul when he speaks of Jesus as “the ultimate icon, the icon par excellence”.⁵³⁵ Paul in Colossians 1:15 testifies that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”.⁵³⁶ Jean-Luc expounds further. As he stated,

To say that Jesus is the “icon of God” is to say that Jesus both is God and, in his very being, points to God the Father. [Icons] are like windows that do not draw attention to themselves but act as portals to God. As an example, we might say that a good sermon should not leave us thinking “what a wonderful preacher!” But “what a wonderful God!” The preacher is merely an icon.⁵³⁷

And that is what God calls artists to be, icons, not idols. Jean-Luc describes icons as mirrors that only allow us to see ourselves. “The idol depends on the gaze that it satisfies, since if the gaze does not desire to satisfy itself in the idol, the item would have no dignity for it”.⁵³⁸ Marion said that we place high value on idols because they help us to see ourselves.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ Janice Elsheimer, *The Creative Call: An Artist’s Response to the Way of the Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2001), 1.

⁵³⁵ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁵³⁶ Col. 1:15 (ESV)

⁵³⁷ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁵³⁸ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

⁵³⁹ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle.

Today, the church still struggles with the presumption and assumption of idolatry in the arts. Icons have always been controversial in the church for centuries. However, they embody the human nature of Christ, the goodness, truth, and beauty of creation, and they carry the viewer into sacred places – holy ground. Artists are called to be living stones, conduits of the love and grace of God to a fallen world. 1 Peter 2:4-5 says,

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁵⁴⁰

God Calls Shepherd-Artists

The most critical discovery found in the research is the central issue of the church's care, guidance, and shepherding of artists. The very essence of shepherding is found in the arts. The 23rd Psalm speaks of the Good Shepherd, who restores the soul and anoints the head with soothing oil for a troubled mind. Author and Speaker Dr. Robert Petterson said that artists are shepherds, going into the world seeking the lost. As Petterson stated,

Artists are shepherds to those that are lost and wounded. Heaven will stand on tiptoe to watch you, for the angels rejoice when a single lost sheep is found. You will use your art to soften hardened hearts, open closed doors that hide emotional wounds, and bring hope to the downhearted. If the Holy Spirit chooses, some will even be led back to the Father's House. And, if you listen closely, you might even hear the angels shouting with unbridled joy when you return home weary from giving yourself to this grand mission.⁵⁴¹

Jesus's Great Commission is as critical today as it was over 2,000 years ago. It is even more essential that artists have a shepherd's heart that will turn their gifts into healing tools for those desperately in need of restoration.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ 1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV)

⁵⁴¹ "The Heart of the Shepherd Artist," Storytellers Creative Arts, 2018. accessed November 7, 2020, https://45e902e2-6063-4956-a1f607b2b8c3abea.usrfiles.com/ugd/45e902_e461f5e940b848d49ca57f9de5f8a674.pdf.

⁵⁴² Heart of the Shepherd Artist, 2018.

An Unhidden City on A Hill

Revered as a “beacon of hope” for the world, America has, for decades, been called a city on a hill”.⁵⁴³ “In my mind, it is a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity”⁵⁴⁴, as spoken by President Ronald Reagan during his 1989 Farewell Address to the nation.

Puritan pilgrim John Winthrop preached “A Model of Christian Charity” in 1630 and proclaimed America to be that city on a hill.⁵⁴⁵ Winthrop said,

For we must consider that we shall be as *a city upon a hill*. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.⁵⁴⁶

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called His disciples lights of the world, an unhidden city on a hill (Matt. 5:14). As lights of the world, artists are called to be active disciplinarians, shining brightly, painting strokes of hope on a dark and dismal world’s canvas.

Colin Harbinson of *Stoneworks* says artists must embrace God’s command and Christ’s commission to be faithful witnesses of what they have seen and heard.⁵⁴⁷ Rebecca Pippert, author of *Out of the Saltshaker, Into the World* speaks of the need for authenticity in evangelism:

⁵⁴³ “Ronald Reagan and The Shining City Upon A Hill,” Our Lost Founding, 2020. accessed November 7, 2020, <https://ourlostfounding.com/ronald-reagan-and-the-shining-city-upon-a-hill/>.

⁵⁴⁴ The Shining City Upon A Hill, 2020.

⁵⁴⁵ The Shining City Upon A Hill, 2020.

⁵⁴⁶ The Shining City Upon A Hill, 2020.

⁵⁴⁷ “Art As Authentic Witness,” Stoneworks, 2010. accessed March 5, 2020, <https://stoneworks-arts.org/art-as-authentic-witness/>.

Our problem in evangelism is not that we don't have enough information—it is that we don't know how to be ourselves. We forget we are called to be witnesses to what we have seen and know, not to what we don't know. The key on our part is authenticity and obedience, not a doctorate in theology. We haven't grasped that it really is OK for us to be who we are when we are with seekers, even if we don't have all the answers to their questions or if our knowledge of Scripture is limited.⁵⁴⁸

What Makes Us Shine?

Jesus's words made Him shine; not only His words, but also His works. The same is true for the artist, it is not what we say, but what we do. What we create bears witness about us and about Jesus. “Just like Jesus, our works cause some to revile us and persecute us and utter all kinds of evil against us falsely on his account, and they cause others to give glory to our heavenly Father”,⁵⁴⁹ said *Desiring God's* Jon Bloom. Bloom stated,

The shining people have been the most servant-hearted and sacrificially loving people. They've consistently loved others in both word and deed (1 John 3:18). It's not merely what the shining people *do*, but *why* they do it and *how* they do it that makes them literally remarkable.⁵⁵⁰

As the world gets darker, moving farther away from a biblical worldview to a secularist worldview, a Cancel Culture movement threatens evangelism's impact through the arts. Christian artists are at the forefront of culture. Unquestionably, media professionals are at the center of the abyss of poisonous propaganda and indoctrination. Moreover, how does an artist exist in that atmosphere?

⁵⁴⁸ Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 20110), Kindle.

⁵⁴⁹ “Lord, Make Me a City on a Hill,” *Desiring God*, 2018. accessed November 7, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-make-me-a-city-on-a-hill>.

⁵⁵⁰ Lord, Make Me a City on a Hill, 2018.

Art must be deeply authentic in its portrayal of life as artists experience it and entirely biblical in the broadness of its vision and worldview.⁵⁵¹ Harbinson says that what artists make must engage both the good and evil, beautiful, and ugly aspects of life. Art must represent the truth and human depravity wrapped in a “redemptive and transcendent framework”.⁵⁵² “To compromise or distort the truth for misguided motives, political correctness, personal recognition, or economic necessity is to be a false witness”.⁵⁵³

The 10:27 Principle

Jesus calls believers (including artists) to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself” Luke 10:27 ([ESV]).⁵⁵⁴ The 10:27 Principle is a manifesto for the artist. Jon Bloom said that the shining people, the unhidden city on a hill is a group of sacrificially loving people.⁵⁵⁵ There are two forms of love. First, is vertical love – the love we have for Jesus. The second is horizontal love – the love we have for our neighbors. The 10:27 Principle challenges the artist to take a more in-depth look at the First and Second Commandments of Jesus to love Him with heart, soul, strength, and mind – and to love their neighbor as they would love themselves. He said in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34 [ESV]).⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵¹ Art As Authentic Witness, 2010.

⁵⁵² Art As Authentic Witness, 2010.

⁵⁵³ Art As Authentic Witness, 2010.

⁵⁵⁴ Luke 10:27 (ESV)

⁵⁵⁵ Lord, Make Me a City on a Hill, 2018.

⁵⁵⁶ John 13:34 (ESV)

Artists are called to love the Lord with all their “art,” and to extend that love to others, blessing, healing, and pointing them to the all-loving Savior of the world.

Resources for Discipling Artists

The researcher selected discipleship program resources as a reference to develop a structured program for artists. Three programs were selected.

Author Todd Morr defines discipleship as “the holistic care of a small group of people who are consistently experiencing Jesus’ life and teaching together in a healthy discipling environment where they are learning to submit every area of life to the lordship of Jesus”.⁵⁵⁷ *Saturate* is an inciter for the accelerating Gospel movement globally, equipping disciples to proclaim Jesus and participate in His mission. The organization’s leadership essentials are resources for building healthy, thriving environments for discipleship and a practical ministry tool to evangelize artists.⁵⁵⁸ *Saturate*’s ten qualities of a healthy, discipling environment are: (1) Empowered by the Holy Spirit, (2) Gospel Saturated, (3) Community Influenced, (4) Missional, Serving Others, (5) Holistic, (6) Frequent and Long-Term, (7) Experiential, (8) Individually Tailored, (9) Modeled, and (10) Expectation of Multiplication.⁵⁵⁹

Forge equips leaders to engage in local mission. It is an action-reflection course⁵⁶⁰ that is a useful resource for involving artists in short and long-term missions through visual, aural,

⁵⁵⁷ “Creating An Environment for Discipleship,” *Saturate*, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://saturatetheworld.com/2017/08/29/creating-an-environment-for-discipleship/>.

⁵⁵⁸ “About,” *Saturate*, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://saturatetheworld.com/about/>.

⁵⁵⁹ *Creating An Environment for Discipleship*, 2020.

⁵⁶⁰ “Get To Know Us,” *Forge America*, 2020. accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.forgeamerica.com/about>.

musical, and other creative methods. Participants have homework that requires them to engage in missionary activities in their context, with follow-up debrief, to develop missional strategies.⁵⁶¹

Forge helps people learn how to be a catalyst and foretaste of the coming Kingdom, re-imagining and re-shaping the church to engage and influence the world with the Gospel.⁵⁶²

According to Lifeway Resources, approximately 259 million people in the United States and Canada do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. *Life on Mission* by Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe is a Bible Study with media resources to guide people on the path of discipleship, equipping them to share the Gospel. This five-session Bible study will invite people to connect with God's mission and equip them with tools to live lives that matter.⁵⁶³ One of the study's components is the *3 Circles Life Conversation Guide* which helps answer common questions simply and memorably, equipping one to begin naturally and actively sharing the Gospel with others. Answers to common questions of faith like: What was God's design? How did we depart from God's design through sin?, and Can anyone escape brokenness and what does brokenness feel like?⁵⁶⁴ This resource is a creative method to disciple artists and artists to disciple others. The arts can be creatively incorporated into the Gospel message using illustrations and other media.

⁵⁶¹ Forge America, 2020.

⁵⁶² Forge America, 2020.

⁵⁶³ "Life On Mission," LifeWay, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/product-family/life-on-mission>.

⁵⁶⁴ "3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide," LifeWay, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide>.

From the Artist's Way to God's Way

Earlier in the thesis, the researcher supported the problem statement's case pointing to various religions and secularist views that have significantly infiltrated artists' lives. Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*, a New Age book study and devotional's indoctrination of thousands of artists worldwide, offers a spiritual path to recovery and creativity. The book speaks the language of creatives' passion for creating while living autonomously, controlling their destinies through internal powers. Cameron's disciple-making method has led millions of artists into portals of creative beliefs and practices that oppose a biblical worldview.⁵⁶⁵ As Cameron stated, "The Universe responds to my dreams and needs. There is a unity flowing through all things. This unity is responsive to our needs. Unity responds and reacts to our positive spoken word". She says that artists are co-creative beings, working with and within a larger whole, embracing and containing a Source, which embraces and contains them. Artists overflow with an unlimited supply when they draw from their inner Source.⁵⁶⁶ *The Artist's Way* diminishes the evangelical impact to and through artists.

An alternative curriculum to take artists on the path to spiritual growth *God's way* is *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity* written recording artist and author Michael Card⁵⁶⁷ (See Figure 4).

⁵⁶⁵ Unlimited Supply, 2012.

⁵⁶⁶ Unlimited Supply, 2012.

⁵⁶⁷ Michael Card, *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 162.

Figure 4: “Scribbling in the Sand”

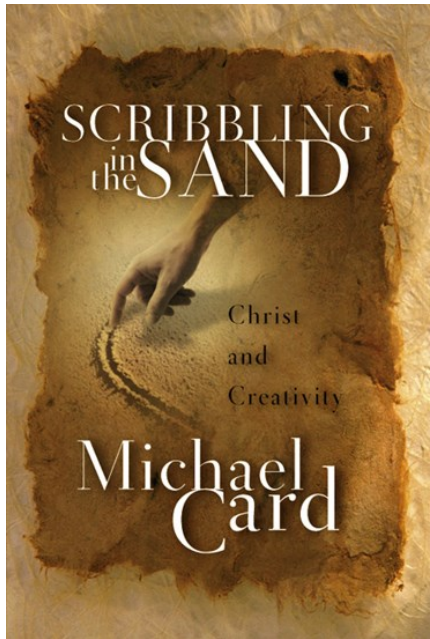


Figure 4. Michael Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, JPEG photo, IVP Press, <https://www.amazon.com/Scribbling-Sand-Creativity-Michael-Card/dp/0830832548>.

The Artist's Way puts the power and creativity into the artist's hands to access an inner essence that creates through them. Card's text reverses the order and places creation in submission to the invisible uncreated One who made them in His image and implants ideas and creativity divinely into their being. He said all art forms attempt to translate what is unseen into what is seen.⁵⁶⁸ Painter Joel Sheesley defines content in art like the New Testament definition of faith that calls faith 'the substance of things hoped for.' " Art, especially as we engage in it with a redeemed vision, becomes an activity of faith, translating the "substance of things hoped for" with words, paint and other materials into the content and form of art".⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ *Scribbling in the Sand*, 2020.

⁵⁶⁹ "Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity," Goodreads, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/948321-scribbling-in-the-sand-christ-and-creativity>.

Just as during a worship experience, Card says that what the artist creates, writes, dances or sings can open up such a space in time through which God may speak; the possibilities are astoundingly conceivable.⁵⁷⁰ Our lives, our creativity are hidden in Christ, not within ourselves. It is the Spirit at work within us to devise, design, and develop creative ideas to reflect God's beauty, goodness, and truth in a dark world. As mentioned by Card,

Painting might become a window through which a confused world looks and sees the sane order of God's creation. Music could be an orchestrated echo of the Voice the tired ears of humankind have longed for ages to hear. This is art through which God is seen and heard, in which he is incarnate, is "fleshed out" in paint and ink, in stone, in creative movement. From the flat, gray point of view of the fallen world they are only scratches and scribbles in the sand, but in the light of eternity they become the occasion for divine revelation.⁵⁷¹

Scribbling in the Sand will encourage artists to live in the light of eternity through full abandonment, experiencing the creative flow of the Holy Spirit that breathes new ideas into our inner being, feeding the creative soul, overflowing into our lives and others through worship and artistic expression.

Scribbling in the Sand is an exploration of the biblical foundations of creativity, God's way. The source of inspiration is creativity embodied in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. Creativity is a vital expression of discipleship. God's creative imagination leads to a lifestyle of humility, obedience, and servanthood obtained through God's creative imagination, demonstrated by Jesus when dealing with the people about to stone the woman in adultery (John 8:1-8). As artists, we tell the Gospel Story through our scribbles in the sand. The text includes prompts for devotion and art journaling, practical advice, and a study guide for small groups.

⁵⁷⁰ Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 17.

⁵⁷¹ Card, *Scribbling in the Sand*, 17.

Creating Communities for Creatives

Human beings need to belong; they need to know that they matter. The answers or the solutions for identity, community, and purpose are not found in being an artist. Though being an artist is *part* of the identity, it is not *the core* of the identity. It is the manifestation of being an image-bearer. The whole of who the artist is, is in Christ. “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:3-4 [ESV]).⁵⁷²

One cannot orient something uniquely to an artists’ identity other than recognizing the uniqueness of what it means to be an artist. Identity, community, and purpose are all spiritual, emotional needs that we have as human beings, made in God’s image.

John Ortberg, the author of *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You*, said, “God did not create you to be anybody else. He pre-wired your temperament. He determined your natural gifts and talents. He made you feel certain passions and desires. He planned your body and mind. Your uniqueness is God-designed”.⁵⁷³

All discipleship communities need three elements: worship, community, and mission. The artist’s purpose should be externally focused. Frequently, some Christians in today’s culture make purpose about themselves, rather than about God. God’s mission in the world must frame the purpose, instead of the purpose coming from self-fulfillment. It is crucial to find our significance in God’s mission, but our significance must flow from God’s action and must not be limited to one particular role (or roles) in our life.

⁵⁷² Col. 3:3-4 (ESV)

⁵⁷³ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 162.

A Tangible Methodology

A tangible methodology that is practical, relevant, and experiential supports creatives' learning styles and temperaments. This methodology establishes a discipleship foundation in their lives. A Gospel-driven theologically-sound curriculum, combined with creative expression, collaboration, and group discussion, will foster healthy relationships. Ministry leader and coach ML1 comments:

How do you establish a program to connect with God and others and themselves tangibly? It connects to the artist's mind. It involves the body, and it allows for a profound experiential reality of God's spirit in their life rooted in sound theology. I think theologians (in much of the West) indoctrinate people making sure everyone goes through the seminary school. I think we have expected less from people that think and process differently like artists.⁵⁷⁴

Because of the creative temperament and unique learning styles, many artists will not learn in a classroom setting. The goal is not to shape the thinking of the creative but to spiritually form them, guide them into healthy relationships with Jesus. Pastors are called to take the congregation (artists) on a journey to see, hear, and experience the Gospel in the way they have been designed, being sensitive to how they process information.

Group dynamics is the most effective method. A plethora of topics are shared. The method of group dynamics cross-pollinates a diverse group of artists. In an atmosphere of group participation, purpose surfaces and community forms. On the subject of group dynamics, ML1 offers these insights. As he stated:

Group dynamics are the most effective for authentic, experiential discipleship - knowing, loving, and representing God. Knowing God, understanding who He is, loving Him, having affection for who He is, and representing Him - telling the world about Him and embodying the reality of the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ to the watching world.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁴ ML1, 2020.

⁵⁷⁵ ML1, 2020.

Award-winning musician and singer, Michael Card offers advice to artists who want to build community with other artists in the church:

Do all that you can do to be a part of, foster, and pour yourself into community. Do your best to make that community a part of your own fellowship. If nothing like that exists in your church, seek to establish one. If that is not possible, put together a local group that is composed of believers. It can be evangelistic in character - not absolutely closed to non-believers, but care should be taken, for problems can quickly and subtly arise when a different value system is introduced into your group.⁵⁷⁶

That is potentially the starting point of dialogue with pastors and ministry leaders, to encourage the formation of community groups, and to recruit leadership from within the artists of the local church to eventually assume leadership.

Bruce Benson said that if God is a creator, we are likewise intended by God to be creators and to enjoy community with Him and others.⁵⁷⁷

There is great value in a community of artists. “Rejoicing in the dance of life that springs from the artist’s brush and the poet’s pen, they find themselves enlivened and connected in new and unexpected ways to God, to other people, and to creation itself”.⁵⁷⁸

Creative Soul Care

Based on the results of the research and the recurring themes of identity, community, and purpose, the researcher concludes that the care of the soul or soul care is a critical component of ministry that both Christian and non-Christian artists would spiritually benefit from, and in the context of a discipleship program, including this track in the curriculum would enhance ministry

⁵⁷⁶ Michael Card, *Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 162.

⁵⁷⁷ Benson, *Liturgy As A Way of Life*, Kindle

⁵⁷⁸ Bauer, *Arts Ministry*, 1.

to artists. Foundational to reaching artists is Colossians 3:3, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3 [ESV]).⁵⁷⁹ The verse affirms that our lives and our art are to be submitted to Jesus and that it is *He* who creates through us as we surrender our lives to Him.

Recovering and nurturing a Christ-identity, connecting artists to a community of creatives, and inspiring them to serve God with their art is at the heart of our focus and strategy. The artist’s worldview plays an innate role in what they create, shaping values, decision-making, career choices, relationships, and life facets. When the soul is not well, we fall into an identity crisis abyss with a lack of purpose. In soul care, the artist realizes and embraces their God-given potential, stepping into their destiny. Caring for one’s soul means caring for one’s life - resting, devoting time to prayer, bible study, journaling, and living in God’s presence through the creative process. Artists experience soul care in a community with other like-minded creatives searching for their individual, customized callings.

The researcher is developing community groups for artists in order to meet the spiritual, social, and educational needs of the artist. Social media and virtual communication are the most utilized resources in culture today, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. God has opened a disproportionate opportunity to reach artists with the love and hope of Jesus Christ. The following group and activity models are designed to disciple and build artist communities:

⁵⁷⁹ Col. 3:3 (ESV)

Artist Community Group Ideas

The researcher brainstormed and drafted models for building artist communities based on the research, interviews, and information gathered from focus groups. Some of the groups would connect artists in both the secular and Christian communities.

Creatives Connect (CC) is a Christ-centered social media group for artists that meets via Facebook, linked to the central community social hub for creatives on the website. This group has three purposes: social connection and community building, showcasing talent, and devotional teachings for spiritual growth and evangelism. The group will reach thousands in the United States and abroad. The group is intentionally kept at a manageable number to train leaders to host new groups on social media and other models with later expansion. Most or all members will eventually get to know and interact with each other regularly.

Pray for the Arts (PFA) is a monthly community group for artists and others to pray for the arts and artists from around the country and abroad. It is a time for artists to connect and support one another in a safe environment of acceptance and love. Artists intercede in prayer for the state of the arts, the redemption of the arts, and for each other.

Collage Community Groups (CCG) are communities of inspired artists – creating, collaborating, connecting. Artists do life together. The various group types are creative expression and collaboration: music, visual arts, cooking, drama, bible or book studies, and social gatherings. Groups will be located in art galleries, studios, offices, and other creative spaces, meeting weekly, following individual schedules (See Appendix A).

Creative Soul Care Life Groups (CSCL) are evangelistic groups designed to heal, nurture, inspire, and unleash artists to follow their individual, customized callings, developing a relationship with Christ and renewed purpose. The creative community is where the Gospel

Story unfolds, where healing & transformation happen. Groups are limited to 12 members and a leader. CSCL groups will be open to both Christian and non-Christian artists.

Group Praxis

The group praxis follows a four-part pathway: (1) *Heal*: Artists are often wounded. Healing is best experienced in community. “When I said, “My foot is slipping,” your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy” (Psalm 94:18-19 [ESV]);⁵⁸⁰ (2) *Nurture*: Artists are often isolated and are best nurtured in a community of those who share similar struggles. “The Lord, your God, is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love, he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17 [ESV]);⁵⁸¹ (3) *Inspire*: Artists often lose the sense of transcendence and can best be inspired in a community where they discover their purpose and direction for their craft. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:20-21 [ESV]);⁵⁸² (4) *Unleash*: Artists are often blinded to their greater responsibility to the watching world. Artists can best be unleashed in a community that challenges them to create art that expresses faith, transforms lives, and elevates culture. “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8 [ESV]).⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Psalm 94:18-19 (ESV)

⁵⁸¹ Zeph. 3:17 (ESV)

⁵⁸² Eph. 3:20-21 (ESV)

⁵⁸³ 2 Cor. 9:8 (ESV)

Theme/Topic-Based Group Models

Artists interviewed expressed their desire for a variety of groups for individual or mixed artist types. The following are some suggested group topics and themes, all with a Gospel-centered focus:

Vision Collective. More than just an assembly of filmmakers, Vision Collective seeks to congregate Naples and the surrounding area's most zealous visual artists for a night of discussion, discourse, encouragement, and enlightenment. This group is open to high school seniors and college students.

Visual Communicators. A picture is worth a thousand words. Art has been aptly called the silent language of the soul. This small group setting will seek to understand and explore the elements of that purely visual language. We will explore the use of symbols, motifs, and design elements to communicate a clear message that resonates. We will seek to lift our work to a higher level.

The Muse Writers Café. If you are an avid writer, developing your first book, or already a published author, this community gathering was created with you in mind. The purpose of *The Muse* is to gather once a month for a delicious meal or activity enjoying a Neapolitan venue. Together, our group discovers and provides the utmost encouragement within kindred listeners' space as we embrace each other's developing stories and written works.

Mixed Creatives. Meet with all types of artists, including painters, writers, storytellers, photographers, sculptors, performance artists, musical artists, filmmakers, actors, designers, etc. to discuss techniques, share critiques, create together, and network. Guest speakers are featured who share their testimonies.

Stories of the Masters. This interactive group will feature discussion on the life stories of master composers and musicians. We will take a journey through the creative spaces and inspirational stories of faith of some of the greatest musicians in history. The group includes visuals, storytelling, and performances.

Vloggers, Bloggers and Marketers. This is a group for modern creatives who utilize technology and the internet for their outlets. Vloggers, bloggers, self-publishers, and internet marketers are welcome. Also welcome are speakers, writers, coaches, and consultants. Let us share our knowledge, spur our creativity, bounce ideas, trade ideas, offer critique, cross-train, cross-promote, and create content together.

Healing through Music. Inevitably, we will all face trials and hardships along the way. Whatever style of music one favors, active listening can help clear the mind and leave a feeling of refreshment. Explore ideas for reaching those dealing with extreme trials and collaborating on programs to bring music into communities.

Free for All Expression. This is a group for out-of-the-box creatives who enjoy art-making together and great conversation. We will collaborate on group art service projects.

Storytellers Open Mic. In an “open mic format,” storytellers share stories and ideas and the joy of listening to a good story.

Curricular Resources for Artist Community Groups

The researcher analyzed several published Bible-based resources for artists in a small group setting. Collectively, artists in all genres and vocations can benefit from the resources. Spiritual formation is at the core of the materials, but the materials will also include impactful life stories of artists who overcame challenges, plus theological teaching and group discussion activities. See Appendix B for the *SCA Arts Ministry Curriculum Draft (AMCD)*.

Victoria Emily Jones’s review of three literary resources for small groups in churches focuses on the intersection of Christianity and the visual arts. “I’m thrilled to see products popping up that are designed to lead church groups—Sunday school classes, outreach classes, midweek Bible-study classes—through masterworks of religious art, fostering visual literacy and an appreciation for the church’s rich cultural heritage”,⁵⁸⁴ said Jones. The curriculum appeals to artist believers, however, the resources can also be used as an evangelistic tool for non-believer artists.

The resources were developed with group participation (discussion questions and activities) in mind. The average church attendee with no previous knowledge of art history could engage with the curriculum.⁵⁸⁵ “Despite the common aim to use biblical art to inspire deeper engagement with scripture, each product takes a different approach”,⁵⁸⁶ said Jones. Jones reviewed these newly released resources: *Imaging the Story: Rediscovering the Visual and Poetic Contours of Salvation*, which has four action components: Read, Respond, Reflect, and Make. It brings together scripture texts, visual art, and discussion questions and integrates poetry, emphasizing *making*; *Inspired to Follow: Art and the Bible Story*, a discipleship course developed by St. Martin-in-the-Fields, in association with the National Gallery, is divided into twenty-two hour-long sessions, using artworks from the Gallery to foster discussion on key elements of the Christian story and their implications. It is organized by scripture narrative, covering all 66 books of the Bible. *Through Artists’ Eyes*, a three-part series, covering different

⁵⁸⁴ “Biblical Art Curricula for Small Groups,” Art and Theology, 2018. accessed October 6, 2020, <https://artandtheology.org/2018/09/29/biblical-art-curricula-for-small-groups/>.

⁵⁸⁵ Biblical Art Curricula, 2018.

⁵⁸⁶ Biblical Art Curricula, 2018.

mediums, teaches about canonical artists and their masterpieces and the inspired Word of God. Each session focuses on a specific work of art, scripture texts, and a stated theme. Artist biographies, historical context, formal analysis, and biblical interpretation are interwoven in the curriculum.⁵⁸⁷

The Art of Helping Others: How Artists Can Serve God and Love the World, by artist and social justice activist Douglas C. Mann. He offers a call to artists to live lives of creative incitement to the glory of God. “I’ve made it my goal to ensure my heart leaks the love of God. I am an artist who seeks a love willing to die for. Because I remember Love wasn’t always what leaked from my heart and shaped my life”,⁵⁸⁸ says Mann. *The Art of Helping Others* speaks to Christians interested in ensuing art as a lifestyle of social justice, service, and worship. It connects Christians who want to live more artistically, those pursuing creative vocations in ministry as agents of justice through God’s love. Mann defines this lifestyle as “creative incitement,” a curative act integrating lives where and how God would direct them.⁵⁸⁹ The book includes Mann’s creative journey and his involvement with social justice arts, including group discussion questions and collaborative project ideas.

Rory Noland’s *The Heart of the Artist: A Character-Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team* is a resource for churches and ministry teams to nurture artists’ spiritual formation. Noland addresses a plethora of struggles and character flaws that Christians in the arts battle. “We don’t stumble on these character issues by chance; they are part of our nature. It’s

⁵⁸⁷ Biblical Art Curricula, 2018.

⁵⁸⁸ Douglas C. Mann, *The Art of Helping Others: How Artists Can Serve God and Love the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 20.

⁵⁸⁹ Mann, *The Art of Helping Others*, 11.

what comes with being artists”,⁵⁹⁰ said Noland. Recognizing the limited resources available for the spiritual formation of artists, Noland surveyed his fellow creatives to get definitive information concerning their struggles and needs as artists, prompting him to author the book. As he stated,

Selfishness, pride, perfectionism, defensiveness, jealousy, envy, emotional imbalance, and lack of discipline – many people struggle with these character flaws, but Christians with artistic temperaments will face all these issues at various points of their lives if not throughout, simply by virtue of being artists.⁵⁹¹

The text includes group discussion questions, activities, and stories of artists to inspire and challenge the artist’s devotion and spiritual growth. For over 25 years, Rory Noland has come alongside churches to assist them with ministry to artists and creative team development. He observed two dynamics with how the church deals with its artists. (1) The church cuddles artists and tolerates their shortcomings, and (2) the churches use and abuse of its artists.⁵⁹²

Constantine Campbell’s *Outreach and the Artist: Sharing the Gospel with the Arts*, appeals to creatives with a passion to serve God with their art through evangelism and outreach. The resource is ideal to direct artists toward serving, giving back and loving Jesus, and their neighbor as themselves (Luke 10:27). Campbell shares his convictions that drove his passion to write the book. As he stated,

As a Christian I am thankful to God for many things, not just the arts. Even more significant than the life enriching arts is the life resurrection work of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more precious than the gift of forgiveness, relationship with God, eternal life, membership in the body of Christ, and the privilege to serve the true and living God.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ Rory Noland, *The Heart of the Artist: A Character-Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 9.

⁵⁹¹ Noland, *Heart of the Artist*, 9.

⁵⁹² Noland, *Heart of the Artist*, 9.

⁵⁹³ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 11-12.

God calls artists to serve Him by reaching those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with the Gospel. *Outreach and the Artist* addresses three concerns: *evangelism with artists, through artists, and to the arts*.⁵⁹⁴ Campbell's book speaks to the core of this DMin. thesis. The text includes artist profiles and stories and theological studies for artists on the doctrine of creation, evangelism, and God's sovereignty. A section of the text is dedicated to the arts and the church and how artists and local churches can work together in ministry. Campbell emphasizes that the artist is a conduit of change, called to create and present the Gospel. It is the power of God that works in the creative process to save and transform lives.⁵⁹⁵ As Campbell stated,

In the sense of discussing our strategies, understanding of artists, and going forward and outreach – this does not mean that it is ultimately up to us to see people saved. God is sovereign, and he will bring about his purposes. Our job is to be faithful and fulfill the works of service he has chosen to give us. In his grace, believers are mercifully included in a partnership with God for the task of growing his church. He does not rely on us, but we are involved nonetheless.⁵⁹⁶

The researcher's agenda for the focus groups included a question about what the artists would like to receive in a community group. The synonymous need was a safe community where artists would be free to discuss tough topics, relevant to artists and their struggles.

Storytelling is a powerful medium to prompt the listener to be open and vulnerable. And in many cases, they find themselves in the story. Author and speaker, Dr. Robert Petterson's *The One Year Book of Amazing Stories: 365 Days Seeing God's Hand in Unlikely Places* is a

⁵⁹⁴ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 12.

⁵⁹⁵ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 13-16.

⁵⁹⁶ Campbell, *Outreach and the Artist*, 16.

resource that addresses real-life stories of artists who struggle with and overcame some of the same struggles that artists today wrestle with. Petterson introduces the text this way:

J.K. Rowling says, ‘There’s always room for a story that can transport people to another place.’ Great stories take us to the hidden places of our unexplored imagination. They have the capacity to touch something deep within us – something that goes beyond mere facts and cold logic to empower us with transforming insights. Stories remind us that we are not alone and inspire us to believe that the impossible is actually possible. That’s why God fills the Bible with epic tales of adventure, intrigue, and love – and why, when Jesus wanted to move people, he told stories.⁵⁹⁷

Petterson’s *Amazing Stories* speak to both the believer and unbeliever which makes this text an invaluable resource for evangelism, particularly reaching artists. Petterson tells the inspirational stories of some of the most renowned, accomplished artists, writers and performers that ever lived. *The One Year Book of Amazing Stories* is an excellent resource for a book study with group discussion, small groups talks on the topics of identity or purpose.

Special Events and Equipping

The Gathering of Creatives (GOC) is a quarterly gathering for all community group members and attendees for an evening of connecting, fellowship and faith journey testimonies from artists, the Gospel message and an invitation to accept Jesus Christ. The social gathering includes special music, live arts expression, food, and a guest speaker (visual artist, filmmaker, writer, etc.) who will do a live demo presentation of a film, monologue, paint live, and other expressions. The purpose of this gathering is to minister to the community groups on a larger scale, get updates from groups, and brainstorm potential community ministries that the group members can collaborate on.

⁵⁹⁷ Petterson, *Amazing Stories*, vi.

Created to Create Arts Conference

The *Created to Create Arts Conference* (CTCAC) is a two-day gathering of inspired artists, enthusiastically impacting culture. The conference's purpose is to inspire deep faith and relationship with God in the artist's heart, teach and mentor artists to hone the craft to create excellently, and release artists into their callings to change the world for Christ. The conference features notable speakers and artists, plenary and breakout sessions, worship, small group interaction and fellowship, an open art and music studio, an evening of music and arts showcasing local Naples Christians in the arts, and a juried community art show. The onsite conference is also "live" on social media with access through the website. See Appendix B for the *CTCAC Schedule Draft*.

Make, Do and Serve: Collaborative Community Projects

Creative Week Collier (CWC) is a 5-day celebration of creativity, innovation, and culture. Creative Week Collier is an opportunity to experience the arts through making, doing, and serving. CWC drives the outreach programs of Storytellers Creative Arts – healing and transforming lives through the arts. Both Christian and non-Christian artists are amicable to serving the community, making this project a catalyst for finding commonality among the artists.

Artmaking and collaboration is a significant way to unite secular and Christian artists across Southwest Florida for a day of serving the community through acts of kindness and creative expression. It is an intrinsic avenue for evangelism. CWC calls on all creative types to develop exciting ways to showcase ideas, and it is a prototype to an expanded ministry in other cities and states.

Developing A Strategy for Arts Ministry

The researcher's Pastor and Ministry Leader Focus Group (PMLFG) drafted a 3-year plan to grow a thriving arts ministry that would disciple artists and release them to fulfill their God-given callings to advance His mission of redeeming the world. All the interactions and meetings were productive. The researcher is converting both focus groups into steering teams that will drive the programs and provide ongoing advisement. See Appendix D for the *SCA Strategic Plan Draft*.

The key strategic focus is leadership development. In order to expand to other cities, states and countries, a beta base operational plan developed as the prototype will grow the ministry worldwide. A comprehensive template for discipleship groups and church partnerships will guide and springboard growth and transformational impact (See Appendix E).

The lingering pandemic, political unrest, and inactivity have stolen the artist's passion for creating, and reduced flow of creativity. A malaise, brokenness, and a purposeless atmosphere flows throughout the arts communities of Christian and non-Christian artists who doubt significance and second guess their abilities. The strategic plan's overall goal is to guide the believer artist back to the place of peace and abandonment with Jesus. Creativity flourishes through a life hidden in Christ. It is in His presence that we are known and loved. Christians in the arts will regain their identities through a biblical worldview, do life with other artists, and fulfill their callings to disciple artists and anyone else.

This strategy will not only reach and touch creative souls, but the Body of Christ will be blessed and edified.

Partnering with Local Churches to Disciple Artists

Storytellers Creative Arts was born out of the conviction that the arts can be tools of transformation in our culture communicating the Gospel in compelling and creative ways to a media-focused world. We are image-bearers of God the Creator - created to create. Since its beginning, the church has been and remains the lead of creative artistic expression through worship, liturgy, and bringing hope into a fallen world. Over time, these creative methods and resources have changed, but the church still has been called and mandated to glorify God through music, performance, visual and technical media, inventions; in other words, creating works of art in all mediums of craftsmanship.

Connecting artists to congregational life will give them a voice, value, and various avenues to serve the Body. Artists will (in the unique ways they were created) follow the church's discipleship path, engaging in Bible studies, serving opportunities, and other congregational opportunities. A ministry to, with, and through artists would embody the church's mission and vision in contributing to the local church and beyond. It is a vital way to assimilate artists and other creative types into the life of the church.

If artists are not discipled or connected to the church, they can potentially disconnect and find a home or venue to create in unhealthy environments. An artist community group that works in tandem with the congregation's mission and vision will be the tie that will binds and develop a healthy process of spiritual formation of the artist.

This structure prevents silos and allows artists to be free to express or be what God called them to be in all the uniqueness he has placed in them. Ephesians 4:11-13 and Romans 12:4-8 are manifestos for active serving, utilization of God-given gifts, and unity, which includes artists.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.⁵⁹⁸

Romans 12:4-8 gives specifics on how the gifts are designed to edify the church and advance the mission of Christ, and the importance of inclusion:

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.⁵⁹⁹

The development of a plan to come alongside churches as a bridge of support to assist with the assimilation and ministry to artists will require input, feedback, and ideas from church leadership regarding how it would work in an individual church setting, adapting to the church's existing discipleship program.

Pastors will embrace their artists with a new empathy, and they, too, will have a renewed understanding and appreciation for the arts as it is integral to the church's mission to change the world. It is a work in progress, and the researcher notes that developing arts ministries at the local church level can potentially present problems with programming, budgeting, and possible internal conflict. Each partnership is essentially a customized program built around existing ministry programs of the local church to equip fully devoted followers (artists) to make disciples, one heart at a time.

⁵⁹⁸ Ephesians 4:11-13 (ESV)

⁵⁹⁹ Romans 12:4-8 (ESV)

Table 1.9 is a matrix that represents the foundation of church partnerships with Storytellers Creative Arts to disciple artists within the local church.

Table 1.9: Church Partnerships to Disciple Artists



The Creative Church Handbook: Releasing the Power of the Arts in Your Congregation is a resource to help pastors to connect, guide, and release a rising generation of artists. Author J. Scott McElroy challenges the church to imagine the local church as the place in culture to experience creativity, beauty, and transcendence.⁶⁰⁰

The handbook gives practical advice and tools to mobilize and shepherd artists, develop structures and guidelines for an arts ministry, enhance the worship with creative elements, and engage the broader community.

⁶⁰⁰ McElroy, *Creative Church Handbook*, 13.

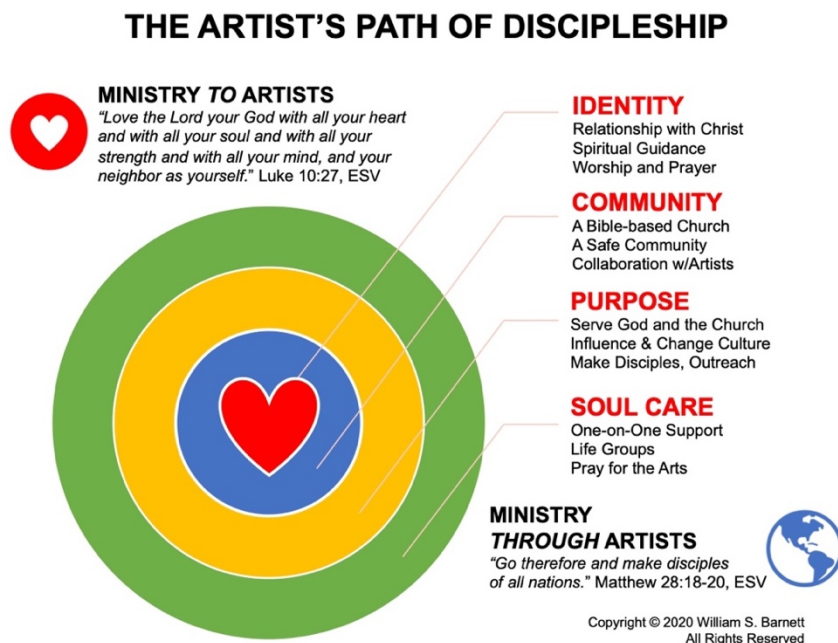
The Artist's Path of Discipleship

Artists are custom-made by the Master Artist, who has ordained and equipped them to carry out His work and glorify Him. The church is called to help them *embrace a Christ-identity, experience authentic community, and discover their God-given purpose.*

Table 1.10 (p. 214) represents *The Artists' Path to Discipleship* (APD) highlighting the three foundational themes of *Identity, Community and Purpose* with the sub-themes for each. It is a blueprint and the nucleus of the development of evangelism and discipleship resources such as bible studies, community group resources, and supplemental resources for counseling artists.

From a broader perspective, The APD can be used to develop a viral, worldwide ministry to and through artists using the template as the foundation for beta base of operations with Naples, Florida as its base location. With virtual ministry being at the highest in accessibility and usage, these materials can be converted into PDFs and electronic forms which will allow the participants immediate access of the teaching materials.

Table 1.10: The Artist's Path of Discipleship



The Art of Leading and Shepherding Artists

Leading and shepherding artists begins with loving, caring, and accepting artists as individually, gifted people, helping them grow spiritually and releasing them into their God-given callings. When the church inspires, disciplines, and releases its artists, leading them into a personal relationship with God, they will love God, others, and themselves more intently (Luke 10:27), actively using their gifts to edify the church and change the world (Eph. 2:10, 4:11-13; Matt. 28:18-20).

Five Steps to Successfully Lead Artists

1. *Be attentive.* Pray and seek God's direction, and for ideas, and ways to serve with the arts.
2. *Be accepting.* Hold the ministry loosely, understanding that programs and functions change.
3. *Be patient.* Walk in God's plan and timing, love and shepherd artists, and develop leadership skills.
4. *Be empathetic.* Encourage, invest in, and do life with artists building a community of compassion.
5. *Be faithful.* Stay the course of building a safe, thriving ministry to and through artists.

Integrating the Arts into Congregational Life

According to Francis Schaeffer, living in a relationship with God involves the totality of the artist's whole being. He stated,

If Christianity is really true, then it involves the whole man, including his intellect and creativeness. Christianity is not just 'dogmatically' true or 'doctrinally' true. Rather, it is true to what is there, true in the whole area of the whole man in all of life.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰¹ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 16.

To equip artists to be *whole* in mind, body, and soul, pastors must shepherd, teach, and encourage to develop character through spiritual formation and create communities with artists to build relationships and hone their craft with creative excellence to serve the church with their art.

The church needs to value its artists, acknowledging their worth and invaluable contributions to meet current needs in the church so that God can be made known in the church, community, and world. It is what artists bring, not just performing excellently or professionally. The Body of Christ will know God and experience God and be disciplined through their artistic expression in worship and other pertinent areas of the ministry, not for the sake of programs, events, and gathering alone, but to hear and experience the Spirit at work in His church.

It is not practical or realistic to assume that a disciple-making church can only happen with the pastor at the helm. Some pastors do not have the bandwidth or the administrative skills to widen the number of people who will be actively carrying out an arts ministry. Not many pastors have that ability, which is why many churches do not grow over 100. The resource of an executive pastor could potentially increase the church's bandwidth to develop and operate a thriving arts ministry.

The following questions were compiled and developed through interviews, focus groups, and surveys to inspire and equip pastors and leaders to shepherd and disciple artists:

1. What does it mean for artists to be disciples?
2. What resources do pastors and leaders need to be equipped to develop a discipleship program for artists?
3. How does the church develop a Christ-like character and relational skills in artists?
4. How does the artist communicate who Jesus is to other people?
5. How can pastors equip artists to be effective in their calling?

6. Through the lens of the artistic gifting and passion, where is their mission field?
7. How does the artistic gifting overlap with the mission field that God has already placed them in?
8. How can the church recognize and celebrate artists, inviting them to be a part of the church in a way that benefits the ministry?
9. Where and how does a church start a specialized community group for artists in the church?
10. How can congregations be encouraged to embrace and pray for its artists?
11. What unique gifts does the artist bring to the church that would not be present if he were not in the church?
12. In what ways can the church lead God's people into the beauty, goodness, and truth with renewed awe, wonder, and transcendence through the Spirit at work through the arts?

One of the enrichments of the research process was the opportunity to hear the needs and areas of improvement and support from the interviewees. These are breakthroughs, God-given gifts that shine the light of hope and potential for partnerships and extended ministry beyond this project:

1. A community group to help arts curb their worst instincts and encourage my best instincts.
2. Good instruction to be a better leader and minister to artists at my church.
3. Equip me to love artists and those who are struggling spiritually.
4. Help me to stop controlling the gifts of artists or train them to use their gifts in ways *I* want them to function.

5. Thinking intentionally about artists as a particular group of people who have specific needs.
6. Ways to bring dignity to artists and their artistic expression, not limiting them to Sunday.
7. Give artists opportunities to use their art in a way that impacts the world and by connecting them with other artists where they can share concerns and encourage each other to think more biblically, and thereby to think better.
8. Artists need the Lord and to know how much God loves them.
9. More available outlets and spaces to collaborate with artistic expression without the fear of judgment or barriers because of cost. It would be an open, welcoming space.
10. A Creative Arts Pastor who will be a point of contact for ministry to artists and inspire them to be active in serving God with their art, by ministering to others.

Conclusion

The researcher drafted a plan which sets the course of direction for Storytellers Creative Arts over three years, evolving into a viral discipleship arts ministry. The present-day resurgence of the arts is a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that reads, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:23 ([ESV])).⁶⁰² God is pouring out His Spirit onto the balladeers of our culture who will be significant and integral purveyors of Truth with their art.

⁶⁰² Joel 2:23 (ESV)

President John F. Kennedy advocated for the arts and artists, often reminding the American people of its value and power to change the culture. In his 1963 address at Amherst College, Kennedy stated,

The artist, however faithful to his personal vision of reality, becomes the last champion of the individual mind and sensibility against an intrusive society and an officious state. The great artist is thus a solitary figure. In pursuing his perceptions of reality, he must often sail against the currents of his time. The artist's fidelity has strengthened the fiber of our national life. I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth.⁶⁰³

This DMIN thesis represents 30 years of arts ministry and experience – work to the glory of God, to bring the Light of hope to a darkening world. Over a year ago, the researcher set out on an intentional journey, embarking on a quest to address the problem of a divide in the secular and sacred arts communities, with an end goal of developing a discipleship program for artists in Naples, Florida, with a broader vision for worldwide expansion.

The problem was addressed through a wealth of resources, archives, interviews, focus groups, and wisdom from the minds of some of the most outstanding scholars, theologians, authors, leaders, clergy, and professionals in the various artistic disciplines. The intimate interviews with artists, pastors, and leaders afforded the researcher the tools to build a case and address the problem.

Out of all the knowledge absorbed, the most impactful experience was meeting and building community with a host of artists whom the researcher is blessed to call friends. In the process of these interactions, the researcher not only gained a better understanding of the arts

⁶⁰³ “Remarks at Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, October 26, 1963,” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/amherst-college-19631026>.

culture in Naples and the challenges of both Christian and non-Christian artists, but God opened a disproportionate opportunity to look inside the window of creative souls and experience an indescribable empathy and appreciation for God's image-bearers, and a newly fueled passion for serving the artist subculture of the world.

The abstract that preceded the chapters affirmed the powerful force of the arts to transform the world. God is calling the church to disciple and unleash creatives to fulfill their life purpose to serve Him with their God-given talents. The need to be affirmed and celebrated as partners in the church's mission can only materialize through the church's leadership, who shepherd and care for its artists. Pastors are the critical players in the establishment of arts ministries in the local church. Through intervention, brainstorming, shared wisdom and ideas, God orchestrated a nucleus of support and greater interest in finding ways to disciple and raise a new generation of artists who will commend the works of God to others and declare His mighty acts. (Psalm 145:5).

All the study participants allowed themselves to be vulnerable, relive painful experiences, share the joys of their creative lives and endeavors, and face some of their deep inner yearnings to fulfill their customized callings. God met us there and blessed our efforts, which we pray will yield fruit that lasts for generations to come.

In conclusion, there is a divide, a spiritual, universal divide in our culture, exacerbating adversity against a biblical worldview and intensifying a cancel-culture. The arts are at the center of this conflict, and it is through the arts, God will redeem the world, restoring beauty, goodness, and truth.

The harvest is ripe, and there is a plethora of artists, writers, musicians, storytellers, and performers who need to be loved, inspired, and given hope so that they can bring life, light, and the love of Christ to the least, the lost, and the last.

In the end, two action steps connect to the mission of ministry to and through artists. God gives the church two mandates in Scripture that must function in tandem to accomplish the mission. The Matthew 28:18-20 mandate to make disciples, preach and teach the Gospel, connects to the first action step, to disciple others. For the purpose of this thesis, the artist subculture is the targeted focus. A primarily unreached people group – artists can potentially change the culture more than anyone else in our culture. Art has a way of moving people as nothing else does, and we must reach the artist.

After discipling the artist, the second step is to equip them to disciple others. The second biblical mandate is connected to Matthew 25 in that Jesus says:

I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me.⁶⁰⁴

The goal is for artists to share the Gospel, reaching the least, the lost, and the last. Among these is the non-believer, addicted, imprisoned, mentally ill, and disadvantaged. The proof that Matthew 28 has done its work is Matthew 25. The call to make disciples in Matthew 28 and the social component in Matthew 25 are connected, and so that is why we minister to the artist and release them to reach the world for Christ.

This journey and gleaned resources will equip Storytellers Creative Arts to enthusiastically come alongside pastors, churches, and ministries to evangelize, develop, and deploy artists as disciples who transform their families, communities, and world.

⁶⁰⁴ Matt. 25:35-36 (ESV)

JRR Tolkien said the juxtaposition of human creativity with divine creativity means that engaging one's creativity is an imitation of God and a form of worship.⁶⁰⁵ All of God's creation has been implanted with the human impulse to create. In *The Mind of the Maker*, Dorothy Sayers argued that the God-image (imago deo) in humans was creativity when she said, "The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things".⁶⁰⁶

The researcher ends with a wisdom-filled quote which has flowed through the thesis. Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer is one of the most inspiring scholars on the subject of the arts in the Bible, and more importantly, God's plan to redeem the world through ordinary people who may or may not see themselves as artists. As Schaeffer stated,

No work of art is more important than the Christian's own life, and every Christian is called upon to be an artist in this sense. He may have no gift of writing, no gift of composing or singing, but each man has the gift of creativity in terms of the way he lives his life. In this sense, the Christian's life is to be an art work. The Christian's life is to be a thing of truth and also a thing of beauty in the midst of a lost and despairing world.⁶⁰⁷

To God be the glory, great things He has done!

⁶⁰⁵ "Tolkien Contra," C.S. Lewis Institute, 2020. accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/1207>.

⁶⁰⁶ Tolkien Contra, 2020.

⁶⁰⁷ Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 84.

IRB Approval Letter

June 1, 2020

William S. Barnett

IRB Approval IRB-FY19-20-429: Developing A Discipleship Program for Artists in Naples, Florida

Dear William,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ralph Baeza, DMin, DBA, PE
IRB Mentor

Liberty University

Appendix A

COLLAGE COMMUNITY GROUPS (CCG)

Session Format Template (1.5 hours per session)

- *Creative Expression* (35-45 minutes – beginning at 6 pm)
Group members come early to write, paint, play music, and collaborate with others, showing their work, etc.
- *Worship* (15-20 minutes)
Worship and Prayer, led by the group leader or someone in the group that is a worship leader or musician – could vary each session, or the guest storyteller could lead if they are a musician. Spoken word or poetry or other artistic elements can be included.
- *Hot Topic & Group Sharing* (20-30 minutes with a refreshment break)
Each week there will be a hot topic. A video clip or curriculum will be chosen, related to that topic.
- *Storytelling* (20-30 minutes)
Guest Artist (Writer, Filmmaker, Singer, etc.) shares their story and a demo)
- *Announcements, Connecting & Refreshments* (10-15 minutes)
Group members enjoy fellowship and refreshments together

Appendix B
CREATED TO CREATE ARTS CONFERENCE (CTCAC)

Schedule Template

Day One

5:00 pm	Mixers (Various Locations on Campus – See Map)
5:30 pm	Plenary Session #1
7:00 pm	Celebrate the Arts!
9:00 pm	Reception & Art Show

Day Three

8:30 am	Mixers (Various Locations on Campus – See Map)
9:30 am	Worship
10:30 am	Keynote Speaker
11:15 am	Boxed Lunch (Fellowship Hall)
	Mixers (Various Locations on Campus)
12:15 pm	Breakout Sessions
1:00 pm	Break
1:15 pm	Breakout Sessions
2:30 pm	Celebration! (Worship Center)
6:00 pm	After Party

Appendix C

ARTS MINISTRY CURRICULUM OUTLINE DRAFT (AMCOD)

*Helping artists to embrace a Christ-identity,
experience authentic community and discover their God-given purpose*

William S. Barnett, M. Min.

* * * * *

1. Identity, Community, and Purpose
 - *Identity*: Created for God
 - *Community*: Created for others
 - *Purpose*: Created for significance
2. The Master Artist
 - Unfolding the Creation Story
 - Bezalel: Spiritually Empowered to Create
 - The Goodness, Truth and Beauty of the Arts
3. The Creative Call
 - God Calling: The Isaiah Six Encounter
 - You Were Made For This!
4. Hidden In Christ, Growing in Creativity
 - The 10:27 Principle
 - Perspectives for the Creative
 - Embracing A Christ Identity
 - Experiencing Authentic Community
 - Discovering Your Purpose
5. The Creative Temperament
 - Discover Your Spiritual Gifts
 - Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
6. Art in the Church
 - Developing Arts Ministries in the Local Church
 - Partnering and Supporting Churches and Ministries
 - Artists Advancing the Great Commission
7. Creative Soul Care
 - Don't Feed the Monster!
 - Creatives In Community
 - Soul Care Life Groups

8. Raising A Generation of Creatives
 - Inspiring and Equipping Artists
 - Honing the Craft: Creating With Excellence
 - Shared Interest Groups
9. Passion to Action
 - Be: *Productive, Active, Skillful, Successful, Innovative, Optimistic, Nurturing*
 - Seven Motivations for the Creative
 - Crafting a Manifesto
10. Creative Collaboration
 - Community Arts Projects
 - Arts Outreach and Evangelism
 - Art Installation and Performance

Appendix D

STORYTELLERS CREATIVE ARTS 2021-2023 MINISTRY STRATEGIC PLAN

William S. Barnett, M.Min.
President and Founder

Abstract

Storytellers Creative Arts is a network of artists advancing the Great Commission.

A tsunami is upon us. The moral foundations of our civilization are being swept away. The children of the next generation will inevitably inherit a wasteland. The major catalyst of this destruction is the media in all of its expressions. Most alarmingly, the media is dismantling and reshaping the next generations. Renowned philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer said that art reflects the culture and then changes it. The arts have more power to destroy or to give life than ever before. A worldwide coalition of artists equipped to advance the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18), strategically placed in visual arts, fashion, music, film, and other media, can change the culture. Too often, the method to evangelize appeals to intellect in order to reach the heart. The culture will only be changed one heart at a time, and Jesus is the only one who can change hearts.

Vision

Active disciple-making communities of artists.

Mission

Transform the world through the arts, one heart at a time.

Core Values

We are made in the image of our Creator to create art that is good, true, and beautiful.
We are redeemed by Jesus Christ to bring redemption to a fallen creation.
We are gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission through our art.
We are nurtured and equipped for service in a Christ-centered community.
We are guided and sustained by the inspired and inerrant Word of God.
We are called to glorify God by doing all things with integrity and excellence.

Methodology

We intentionally create Christ-centered
communities to nurture, equip and
send artists out to bring healing to
broken lives and to elevate culture with their art.

Core Principle

“We are His masterpiece created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

2 Initiatives

Ministry *to* Artists

Disciple and equip artists – the most influential people, in the most influential places.

- Artist Support Network
- Virtual and satellite community groups
- Conferences and webinars

Ministry *through* Artists

Unleash and send artists to impact the culture in their spheres of influence.

- Ministry partnerships with churches and organizations
- Outreach to the least, the lost, and the last
- Collaborative community art projects

3-Year Goals and Objectives

1. Develop and Implement Programs to Minister *To* Artists
2. Develop Outreach Opportunities for Ministry *Through* Artists
3. Develop Solid Governance and Management

Key Strategic Emphasis: Leadership development

I.

Goals (Measurements) 2021-2023

Disciple and equip artists – the most influential people, in the most influential places.

- Artist Support Network
- Virtual and satellite community groups
- Conferences and webinars

2021

- Research organizations with a similar mission to determine areas of synergy

- Develop solid discipleship template/curriculum and guidelines for Artist Discipleship Groups that is scalable and marketable
- Identify and train leadership for satellite groups
 - Contact at least two prospective leaders by December 31, 2020.
 - Launch the first core group in Spring 2021.
- Seek avenues to regularly connect with non-Christian artists.
- Establish at least 3 Artist Community Groups in SWFL by the end of 2021, reaching at least 60 people.
- Maintain and grow the Creatives Connect Facebook group.
- Maintain and Grow the Pray for the Arts Ministry.

2022

- Identify and train leadership for satellite groups.
- Maintain three artist discipleship groups and add three additional groups in SWFL, reaching at least 120 people.
- Continue to explore partnerships with ministries in other cities.
- Host Arts Conference and Art Show in Fall 2022 or Spring 2023.

2023

- Identify and train leadership for satellite groups.
- Maintain 6 Artist Community Groups in SWFL and establish three other satellite groups reaching at least 180 people.
- Host Arts Conference and Art Show in Fall 2023 or Spring 2024.

Strategies and Tactics (2021-2023)

Community Groups

Develop Organizational Structure

- Identify leadership for expansion.
- Analyze group organization, engagement and support.

Develop evaluation criteria to determine impact and life transformation

- Develop metrics for growth and impact.

Strategies and Tactics (2021-2023)

Arts Conference and Evening of Music and Arts

Arts Conference & Evening of Music and Arts

- Organize a steering team to plan the details and budget.
- Develop a plan for focused seminars to target specific audiences.
- Survey interests of artists in community groups.
- Develop an effective communications plan.
- Assure that seminars are at least break even financially.
- Develop an effective communications plan.

- Develop a database related to the gifts and talents of the Christian artists in the community.
- Ensure that event at least breaks even financially.

II.

Goals (Measurements) 2021-2023

Develop Outreach Opportunities for Ministry *Through* Artists

- Ministry partnerships with churches and organizations.
- Outreach to the least, the lost, and the last.
- Unleash and send artists to impact the culture in their spheres of influence.

2021

- Continue or establish partnerships with up to four churches and organizations reaching at least 1,000 participants.
- Continue hosting Redeemed and Restored and Inspired Men's Collective Groups reaching at least 24 people.
- Revitalize and recruit new volunteers and establish a volunteer leadership team.

2022

- Add up to four new ministry partnerships reaching at least 2,000 participants.
- Maintain current outreach programs and add one new outreach program reaching at least 60 people.

2023

- Add up to four new ministry partnerships, reaching at least 3,000 participants.
- Maintain current outreach programs and add two new outreach programs reaching at least 100 people.

Strategies and Tactics (2021-2023)

Outreach Programs

- Clarify the purpose and outcome of interactions to guide and encourage a personal relationship with Christ.
- Develop a sustainable format and curriculum.
- Recruit and train instructors and facilitators.
- Evaluate partnerships that subscribe to the SCA mission.
- Create opportunities for artists in community groups to engage in outreach.
- Capture success stories and testimonials.
- Develop metrics for growth and impact.

III. Goals (Measurements) 2021-2023

Develop Solid Governance and Management

2021

- Review and update by-laws, board terms.
- Invite new directors.
- Add staff members as needed.
- Grow and expand the donor base.

Strategies and Tactics (2021-2023) *Governance*

- Change the name of the organization to reflect our mission more accurately
- Develop Board of Directors
- Redefine roles or talents needed
- Recruit new directors
- Determine the staffing needed for growth
- Add one paid or volunteer administrative support person in 2021
- Develop an organization chart with projected growth.

Resources Needed (2021-2023)

Program Coordinator

The president will recruit a Program Coordinator by January 31, 2021. The Program Coordinator will draft an initial layout for a manual and curriculum, volunteer support, and participants by March 2021. The draft will include lesson plans, art and music activities, and devotionals with biblical subjects and themes relevant to the people groups served. The Program Coordinator will recruit a think tank of individuals to write and publish the materials, completing the project by June 2021. Team roles include essential volunteers gifted in all arts, curriculum writing, administration, strategic planning, and community liaison.

Development Coordinator

Along with a board member, the president will recruit and retain a Development Coordinator that will be a volunteer or a paid contractor by February 2021. The Development Coordinator will research grants that apply to the SCA ministry needs connecting to the community involvement, gathering prospective grant applications by March 2021. The Development Coordinator will also manage all fundraising events, creating a calendar of events and as a strategic plan by April 2021. The Development Coordinator and the Arts Outreach Coordinator will connect with local church pastors and ministry leaders to explore financial support and ministry collaboration by March 2021.

Core Leadership Team

The president will recruit and develop a core leadership team consisting of the following:

- Arts Outreach Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Creative Consultant
- Marketing Coordinator
- Special Projects & Events Coordinator
- Development Coordinator
- Education & Curriculum Coordinator
- Counseling Advisor
- Spiritual Advisor
- Prayer Coordinator

This team will be recruited and assembled by June 2021. Along with one board member, the president will write job descriptions for the core leadership team by April 1, 2021.

Prayer Coordinator

The president will recruit a Prayer Coordinator by January 31, 2021. The Prayer Coordinator will assemble a team of individuals by February 2021 who will regularly pray for the ministry, serving as the core SCA prayer ministry team. The Prayer Coordinator will draft a vision and description of how the ministry will serve Storytellers. The SCA Prayer Coordinator will organize 2-4 annual concerts of prayer gatherings for the entire ministry team and board of directors, designing a template with all the event components. Develop a working prayer calendar and communication resource to disseminate all prayer needs and reports to the SCA team.

Grant Writer

An experienced contracted grant writer will be recruited to work with the president to obtain grant funding.

Advisory Commission

The president will assemble a commission of advisors consisting of leaders and professionals in the areas of ministry, strategic planning, business and the arts who will offer expertise, experience and advisement on ministry programming and development.

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