**Vocation IS Ministry**

*Our abilities, whatever they may be, are God-given. Our work, no matter what we do,*

*matters to God. Our jobs, well done, show our love for others.*

**Episode Three: Creation, the Workplace**

*Stewardship comes with Ownership, Ownership Demands Stewardship*

The Responsibility of Life. Matter vs Materialism. Enjoy the first, Reject the second

1. Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31 “good = beautiful”
2. Gen 1:28; 2:15 “place needs human attention”
3. Gen 2:9 “place is profitable and pleasing”
4. Gen 2:19, 20 “people in a place responsible for it”
5. Isa 65:17-25; Acts 3:21; Rev 21:1 “place repurposed, not replaced”

The Rhythm of Life. God gave creation the ability to create

1. Gen 1:11 “sprouting vegetation”
2. Gen 1:20 “teeming, swarming creatures”
3. Gen 1:11, 12 (2), 21 (2), 24 (2), 25 (2) “after its kind”—species
4. Gen 1:4, 7, 14, 18 “separated” = “everything designed for a place”
5. God gave creation rhythm, cadence, order, harmony, predictability

The Rulership of Life. God passed on the responsibility of creation

1. Artistry—God made, worked (2.2)
2. Regulation—God separated
3. Organization—God called
4. Evaluation—God saw
5. Appreciation—God saw “it was good”

The Realm of Life. *First a word about “beauty” and “aesthetics”…*

1. Reminded where we came from and where they are going to
2. Responsible participant with God in managing the creation
3. Residence: “home” is important to everyone
4. Reality: This world IS my home, I’m NOT just passin’ through
5. Relationship: community necessitates place

The Response to Life. Questions for the Christian to consider . . .

1. How does where we live impact what we do? (urban-suburban-rural; nation-state-community)
2. How does what we have impact what we do? (possessions-skills-ideas)
3. How does our view of material things influence how or why we work?
4. How do we depend on the rhythm of creation for our work?
5. How does ownership demand stewardship?

*Interest To be among, with, find the worth of something; inquiry, lovers of wisdom; Ennui a restless, unsettled, aimless nature, a tendency toward self-obsession, exhaustion; unsustainable interest, perhaps, because we are too focused on ourselves; we are interested in the wrong things.*

*Satisfaction: most enjoyable human focus, the pursuit of an interest (Matt 6.33; Prov 8:17)*

*Original Intention Humanity’s relationship with creation: production and protection.**Cultivation, development, and management are necessary for fruitful outcomes in anyone’s “garden.” Process and results of work are tainted by corruption (Gen 3:17-19) but work is still good (Ecc 5:18-20).*

*Earth Keeping Conservation, keeping, and guarding against abuse of creation are also necessary. Cooperation between creational-care and business-enterprise is possible, acknowledging the tension between free markets and lawful restraints under God-given authority (Lev 20:22-24, Deut 11:13-17, Prov 27:23-27).*

Aesthetics (Beauty) Truth, goodness, and beauty are generally accepted indications of human creativity. Pleasure in life suggests outside standards which allow for innovation within life’s margins. Architecture, theatre, painting, poetry, music, artwork of all kinds by all people everywhere suggest humans were made to express and enjoy aesthetics.

Biblical Theology of Aesthetics God is Truth: all truth is His, and truth reflects Himself (1 Kgs. 17:24; Ps. 25:5; Isa. 45:18, 19). God is Beauty: equality, harmony, symmetry, and proportion have their source in Him (Gen. 1:3, “He separated,” meaning all things are given their exact place; Ps. 27:4; 90:16, 17; 96:6-9). God is Good: He sets the standard for both expression and evaluation (Gen 1:3, “He saw that it was good”; Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:17-18). All good things come from God (1 Chr. 29:14, 15; Jas. 1:17; 1 Tim. 6:17). Creative skills come from God: intelligence, knowledge, craftsmanship (Ex. 28:3; 31:1-11; 35:30, 31; 36:2; Is 28:23-28).

The Creator created creatures who creatively create from creation. Humans are made in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). People represent God and are God’s representatives on earth (Ps. 8). God’s likeness in humanity imbues creativity, intelligence, willfulness, design, purpose, planning, imagination, and appreciation with the creation (Pss. 111:2; 145:3-13). Creation was intentionally made to entwine utility (trees made good for food) and aesthetics (trees made pleasing to the eye, Gen 2.9). God combined strength, balance, function, and beauty in His creation as do His creatures (Gen 1; 2:5, 8, 15).

Artists used their God-given gifts (Ex. 26:2) of artistic design (35:32) and abilities of intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship (35:31) who could also teach (35:34) and who were stirred to do the work (36:2). Songs were rehearsed in Israel (1 Chr. 15:19-22). Order, arrangement, preparation, skill, creativity, and professionalism are important. 1 Chronicles 15:16-16:6 records a full choir, orchestra, and a dance troupe punctuated with “shouts” and percussion (vv. 25, 28).

Aesthetics—value judgments about creation—is dependent upon personal interpretation of reality through the lens of Christian thought (“and God saw,” Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, etc.). While the culture maintains personal and experiential parameters are outside of others’ authority, The One who made humanity demands certain standards (Gen. 2:16-17). Truth is grounded in eternal verities (Ps. 119:160). Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder; rather, appreciation of creation is based on The Creator (Gen. 2:9). Goodness is not relative; rather, within a fallen world, both method and message can coincide with a biblical framework of creative expression (2:19-20).

Christian Practice of Aesthetics Appraise the relationship between human creativity and purpose in life. Persuade students that value, meaning, and order find their source in God. Approve that pleasure and enjoyment is integral in a Christ-centered view of living. Recommend imagination is a reflection of God’s image. Affirm that taste, inspiration, vision, beauty, and appreciation have a source in a biblical-revelation controlled environment. Research an artist, go on a field trip to an art museum, or discuss the artwork of a specific sculptor, painter, etc. Discuss the problem of idolatry in artistic communities. Develop a biblical view of worship that corresponds directly to the arts. Explain that art in any form rehearses the struggles and joys of life. Exhibit aesthetics as a display of truth versus falsehood; the latter necessitating redemption. Display the battle between right and wrong through drama. Propose solutions to corruption through artists who display redemptive exhibitions. Harmonize artistic expressions to reflect God’s intention of wholeness. Express joy of The Creator and His good creation through beauty. Rehearsal and repetition is the discipline of the artist, overcoming creation’s corruption and the creature’s laziness. Aesthetics can remind the Christian of God’s words and works. Taken from Mark Eckel, “Beauty (Aesthetics),” *Christian Education Encyclopedia* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2014)