

Refrigerator Art

Since the first recorded act of God is creation, we know He is creative. And since we know that we are created in His image, then it follows that we are also creative—all of us! For some, our creativity is expressed through the traditional arts—music, dance, acting, writing, or visual art. For those who don't practice these things, your God-given creativity may be expressed through cooking, teaching, mechanics, engineering, relationships—you get the picture.

In his book, *Imagine That* (Moody Publishers), Manuel Luz writes about how God loves to see everyone express their creativity:

“...the Master Artist smiles at the creation of His creation. He genuinely takes pleasure in the work of our craft. He takes what we create and hangs it on His refrigerator door.”

I love that image—that God is as proud of my creative expression as I am of my own children's work—more, I'm sure. And what a great thought, that God *wants* me to be creative! But not just me, *everyone!*

LET IT OUT

Being in music ministry, we naturally find ourselves with people who express their creativity through music. As leaders, however, we often overlook a very basic role we have as stewards over talented, creative people:

Creative people need a creative outlet.

It's a simple concept, and one we all probably agree with on the surface. But it is vital for the health of our team members and for the health of our ministries that creative outlets are encouraged and cultivated in the way we plan and execute our worship ministry.

CLIPPING WINGS

“But wait,” you say, “I'm in charge! I've been hired to call all the creative shots!” I wholeheartedly believe that sentiment is simply bad stewardship and bad leadership—in fact it's downright prideful to be on a team of creative people and yet be the only one whose creative ideas are exercised.

I want to offer a challenge to you. (For this example, I will use a band setting, but the concept is transferable to any of your creative teams.) For next week's worship set, choose a song that your team has done a million times. One that, while still being a great song, you know your team is probably tired of. Then, at this week's rehearsal, tell your team you're using that song. After



By Tony Guerrero

the groans die down, turn to someone on your team—the bass player, maybe—and say, “Joe, we've done that song so many times, I know we're tired of it. But it is still a good song. I want you to take the song and come back next week with a brand new way for us to approach it.”

When you come back for the next rehearsal, watch what happens. Suddenly, that bass player is more interested than ever in what the drummer is doing. You'll see the entire mood of the band lift a little as they not only try something new, but get direction from somebody else. You just did something rare in the creative arena—you gave away your creative authority.

FLIGHT LESSONS

My pastor, Rick Warren, states, “When you give authority with responsibility, you'll be amazed at the creativity of your people” (*The Purpose Driven Church*, Zondervan). The creative “authority” over your team is yours as the leader, which also means it's yours to give away. The “responsibility” the team member has is that he or she must operate within the boundaries you set—what styles are acceptable, what the band can actually pull off, and not losing the audience or the lyrics in the arrangement. But when this experiment is properly exercised, you will be amazed how much creativity has been sitting on your team, unused!

“But what if I don't like the arrangement?” There are two issues: what you don't like and what won't work. An arrangement that doesn't work for your congregation (like a heavy-metal version of “Above All” in a church of senior citizens) or one that destroys the meaning of the song should not be used. Remember, the “authority” is still yours, even if it was on loan. But an arrangement that works well and that lifts the spirit of the band without getting in the way of the congregation's worship should be used, even if sometimes, you don't love it. You may not like that little reggae feel he added, but everyone else might. Let it go. Believe it or not, not everyone loves every idea you have either! But they put up with it.

This is just one example. The point is, find ways to let your team member's creativity shine. Don't hog it all. God wants to hear from everyone. Let His refrigerator be covered with the work of your entire team!

Tony Guerrero is the Director of Creative Arts at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, where he tries hard to practice what he preaches, and sometimes gets it right. He is also active in the jazz world. Visit him at tonyguerrero.com.

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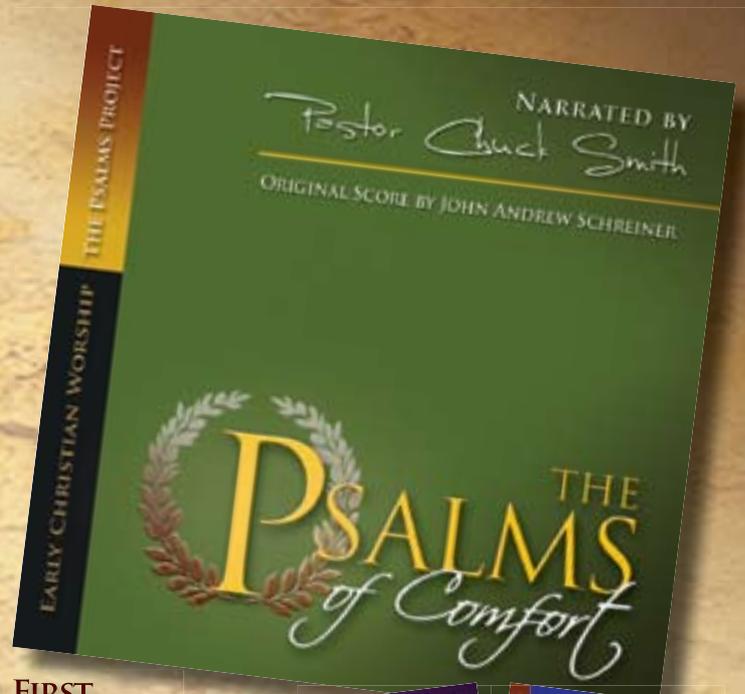
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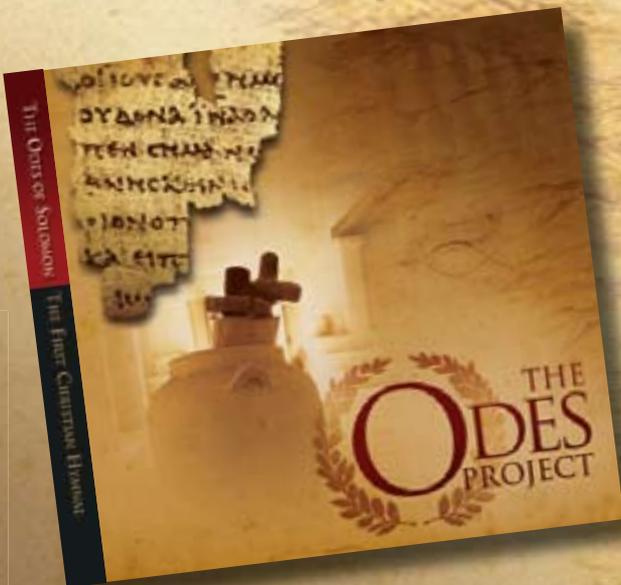
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