

BIBLICAL INTEGRATION OF CURRICULUM

Interpreting the Biblical Perspectives of the Creative Arts

Biblical Concepts/Principles Related to the Arts

The creation exhibits both aural (music) and visual (art) expressions of creativity that testify to God's existence, glory, and creative (artistic) mind (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:20; Psalm 8:3-4).

The "artistic" expressions of the creation possess an aesthetic dimension as evidenced by God's declaration that His creative acts were "good" and beautiful and that He is a God of beauty. God's standards for good and beautiful become humanity's standards for artistic creations (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 27:4; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Ezekiel 28:12-19; Matthew 6:28-30).

God encourages the creative arts, including singing, dancing, instrumental music, the visual arts, and literary art as expressed through poetry in the psalms, fiction in the parables, and drama in the street theater of the prophets (1 Chronicles 15; 2 Samuel 6; Psalm 150; Jeremiah 19; Ezekiel 4).

The use of musical imagery in Scripture as well as the beauty found in creation's rhythms, tones, natural melodies, and harmony reveal that God values both beauty and music (Job 38:4-7; 1 Chronicles 15:22; 16:33; Psalm 65:13; Isaiah 44:23).

Biblical passages that reveal God's instructions for the creation of artistic objects as well as the beauty He created in colors, forms, and textures of the cosmos declare that beauty and the visual arts are within His will and valued by Him (Exodus 25:9; 26; 27; 28; 35:30-36:2; Job 38).

Created in the image of God, people are empowered to create and multiply God's creativity exponentially. This creative dimension enables and requires people to develop all dimensions of culture, including the arts. People are not only image bearers, but also image-makers (Genesis 1:26-28).

The basic principles underlying the creative arts as well as the materials and artistic skills used to develop them all come from the acts of a creative God. For example, in creating light (Genesis 1:3-4), space (Genesis 1:6-7), and unity (Genesis 1), God established the basic prerequisites for the visual arts (Genesis 4:21, 22; Exodus 35:30-36:7).

Visual art need not be realistic, sentimental, or portray only idealized beauty. It can be abstract (representing nothing outside of itself), representational (natural and supernatural dimensions of creation), or symbolic. It may even represent the negative and depraved nature of a fallen world and thereby confirm Scriptural truths (Exodus 15; Exodus 26:1, 37; Exodus 28:2, 31, 33, 34; Leviticus 16; 1 Kings 7:15-22; Galatians 3:22; Romans 8:20).

The visual arts can enrich life, heightening the perception of a particular thing, and even make people more aware of its meaning (Numbers 21:4-9).

The creative arts may exist for the sole purpose of being a thing of beauty for beauty's sake or for expressing an inner response to God (Exodus 15; 1 Kings 7:15-22).

The Bible does not explicitly state the norms for developing the arts. They are implied in the intricate designs and harmony of creation, the Scriptural standards of Christian conduct, and by the fact that God associates beauty with holiness. This association demands that artistic creations exhibit excellence in composition as well as moral tone (Psalm 19:1-4; Psalm 29:2; Psalm 90:17; Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8).

Artistic creations should exhibit ability, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship. Ultimately all artistic creations should be expressed within the context of the great themes of human existence, i.e., creation, the fall, and redemption (Exodus 35:31; Romans 8:18-25).

Artistic creations should flow out of the truth that all truth is God's truth and avoid the secular/sacred dichotomy. The arts should represent all dimensions of creation and not just the religious. They may even reflect the effects of the fall, i.e., those things that are not beautiful and pleasant (Psalm 24:1; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Job 38).

Even though our creative abilities have been marred by the fall, our artistic expressions should glorify God and reflect His character (Exodus 28:2, 39; Romans 1:21-32; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23, 24).

Because of the fall, human artistic creations can be developed in disobedience to or ignorance of God's laws for life (Exodus 32:2-6, 18; 2 Kings 21:7; Isaiah 44:9-21; Amos 5:23).

Reflections of God in the Arts

Human creativity, though finite, reflects the infinite creativity of the Creator in whose image people are created (Genesis 1:27).

The aesthetic dimensions of the creation reflect the character of God, who is described as having beauty, and the One who has made all things beautiful in His time (Psalm 27:4; Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The creative acts of God "speak" for Him, revealing His existence and His communicative nature as well as His goodness (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-20).

The fact that God created ex nihilo (from nothing) speaks of His omnipotence (Genesis 1).

The harmonies, rhythms, colors, tones, textures, and forms of creation speak of God's omniscience (Psalm 19:1-4).

Basic Values and Norms Related to the Arts

A Biblical perspective of the arts focuses on the following values:

- Beauty
- Harmony
- Accuracy
- Precision
- Orderliness
- Diligence
- Creativity
- Imagination
- Originality
- Wonder and awe
- Humility
- Thoroughness
- Responsible use of the arts for God's glory

Teaching Distinctives of a Christian Perspective of the Arts

The Christian teaching of the arts encourages students to conform their lives and artistic creations to the image of God and Scriptural standards of excellence.

The Christian teaching of the arts encourages students to develop and exercise their talents with righteous attitudes for the glory of God and the service of others.

The Christian teaching of the arts emphasizes that all artistic creations and their presentation must be God-centered rather than ego-centered.

The Christian teaching of the arts emphasizes the necessity of exploring, appreciating, and perhaps developing the creative arts in both the sacred (worship and praise) and the secular realms. At the same time, it recognizes the unity of truth and does not actually divide artistic creations into secular and sacred.

The Christian teaching of the arts, while encouraging creativity and imagination, establishes defined learning goals for each project, thus avoiding the non-directed approach to talent development.

The Christian teaching of the arts encourages creativity, not only for the satisfaction of the artist and others, but also for the glory of God.

The Christian teaching of the arts includes art history. It shows how the arts have contributed to cultural development and have been the primary means for reflecting the worldview of a culture.

The Christian teaching of the arts is not a neutral activity, but reveals the worldview of both the teacher and the artists.

The Christian teaching of the arts encourages the application of the arts in the service of society, including the exploration of ethics and values related to such application.

The Christian teaching of the arts emphasizes that the wisdom and talent for artistic development are gifts from God.

The Christian teaching of the arts emphasizes the evidence of purposeful design in the universe and strives through the teaching and learning process to show how the arts reveal God.

The Christian teaching of the arts strives to reinforce many values, including diligence, beauty, and creativity as students endeavor to understand and discover the principles upon which artistic creations are to be developed.

The Christian teaching of the arts sees art not as a means of glorifying humanity, but as a means whereby people can understand God's design for creation and establish His call of stewardship over creation, including the development of cultures.

Attitudes and Skills to Be Manifested in Students from a Study of the Arts

A study of the arts will reveal to students their distinction from lower forms of creation and how they reflect the image of God.

Through a study of the arts, students will come to appreciate the value of beauty, form, order, balance, contrast, color, tone, harmony, and other values inherent within God's created order.

A study of the arts will enable students to create works of art that reflect and imitate God and His standards of excellence (Philippians 1:10).

Through a study of the arts, students will employ their artistic abilities and creations for the praise and glory of God as well as for the service of society and the Church (Psalm 149:1).

By studying the history of the arts and how the arts shaped cultures, students will become better equipped to understand their culture and reach out to it with the gospel, especially to those whose gifts and vocation center in the arts.

Through a study of the arts, students will be able to develop Scriptural criteria for creating and judging works of art.

A study of the arts will encourage good work habits, including planning, completion of work, following instructions, and objective self-evaluation of a work of art.

A study of the arts should allow students to enjoy their own creative activities as well as those of others (1Timothy 6:17).

Points of Conflict with Secular Approaches to the Teaching of the Arts

The Christian teaching of the arts emphasizes that all creative works should be done for the glory of God, not for the development of the ego of the artist.

The Christian teaching of the arts rejects the popular and permissive notion that all forms of “artistic” expression are valid.

The Christian teaching of the arts rejects the subjective approach to the arts that affirms that all principles for artistic creation and evaluation have no real existence in themselves apart from the constructs of the human mind, i.e., they are not inherent within a designed and created order.

The Christian teaching of the arts acknowledges that there is creative “art” that is objectionable, including that which is sensual, cynical, or outwardly defiant of God and His creation.

The Christian teaching of the arts avoids purely aesthetic criteria as the basis for evaluating the creative arts. Rather it emphasizes the necessity for including all evaluative criteria, even the moral.

Teaching Strategies That Can Help Communicate the Biblical Perspective of the Arts

Study how the arts reveal the attributes of God.

Study biblical examples of artistic creations.

Study the biography of Christian artists.

Analyze the worldviews of particular artists and how their views were used to create works of art.

Discuss the implications of the philosophical position that principles for the creation and evaluation of the arts have no transcendent reference point, and those that do exist are relative and are established only by human preference.

Discuss the ethical implications related to the development of the arts.

Bibliography

Perspectives have been compiled from the following resources, each of which contributes much to the concept of the Biblical integration of school subjects.

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