

An Artful Ministry

Declaration

We must have a discipleship of the imagination.



When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for a group of people to dissolve certain ministry assumptions and practices, a declaration of causes and principles should be stated describing this dissolution. This Artful Ministry Declaration is a summons to think and minister in artful ways, ways full of imagination and creativity.

Contemporary churches are on the hunt for the holy grail of ministry success, seeking freshly marketed programs to turn congregations around. Ministry successes are packaged and franchised, creating marketing lines of books, t-shirts, and specialty Bibles. There's almost a religious template applied from congregation to congregation. God is too rich in creativity to be satisfied with such a state of affairs. He wants us to minister in artful ways.

God intends for ministry to gloriously demonstrate his wonderful creativity. Just as He crafts one snowflake to be exquisitely different from another, so one church or one believer is uniquely distinct from another. When we package and franchise ministry success, we sacrifice this spirit of artistry for expediency, formulas, and technique. This Ministry Declaration seeks a revolt against the status quo and invites people to a discipleship of the imagination. We are calling people to action for artful ministry.

People who practice artful ministry hold the following truths to be self-evident.

- **God is an artful creator.** All of creation owes its origins to a creative God (Genesis 1:1). As beings made in His image, we share in His creative energies (Genesis 1:26).
- **God is the artful creator of me.** In Ephesians 2:10, the Apostle Paul wrote that we're "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." The Greek word translated "workmanship" is *poiema*, from which we derive our English word "poem." Through the new birth, God makes poems, "masterpieces" (NJB) for His glory.
- **God longs to artfully release every believer.** Each follower of Christ is a "faithful dispenser of the magnificently varied grace of God" (1 Peter 4:12 JBP). We're to zealously contribute to the lives of others (Romans 12:8) from the sumptuous palette of God's grace in His body.
- **God delights in artfully creating that which is new** (Romans 4:17 NASV). Our Lord is constantly fashioning new paths to work in people's lives (Isa 43:18, 19). Each believer's life is a unique novel, filled with strange characters, plot twists, and page-turning adventures. Artful ministry captures this newness, refusing to be predictable or reduced to a formula.
- **God communicates in artful ways.** Our Lord regularly appeals to our imaginations through analogies (Ezekiel 1:27,28), asking us to imagine Him though a physical reference point (Revelation 1:14,15). The vast majority of the Scriptures cannot be understood without the use of our imaginations.
- **God's artful toolbox is whatever is at hand.** He delights in using the ordinary in imaginative ways. Moses' rod became a serpent (Exodus 4:2). Jesus turned a spittle of dirt into a healing agent for blindness (John 9:6). A common clay pot became an analogy for ownership (Jeremiah 18:1-6). God delights in using the "splendor of the ordinary."
- **God invites people to do artful ministry together.** When the tabernacle was fashioned in Exodus, God employed a team of skilled craftsmen to build His dwelling place (Exodus 36:1). Two really are better than one when it comes to artful ministry.
- **God seeks a discipleship of the imagination.** Our imaginations are His wonderful gifts. This ability to paint, sculpt, and write in the studio of our minds is like any other discipline – it must be focused, practiced, and applied with excellence (Colossians 3:23).

In support of this Declaration, and with a firm reliance upon the Holy Spirit, we pledge our time, talents, and imagination to minister in artful ways. Artful ministry chooses to re-imagine church in fresh and creative ways. We do this knowing that our pledge to creativity may invite risk and ridicule. There's no guarantee of success, only the joy of living as His image-bearers. Our prayer is that our wonderfully creative Lord will receive the glory for our artful efforts.

This Ministry Declaration was developed by Navigator staff Bill Mowry (www.artfulministry.com).