

## Lesson 8: Art in Work

### **Introduction**

God is not just the Creator—He’s creative.

God does not just make useful things—He makes beautiful things.

God is not just the Worker (John 5:17), but the Artist, who makes all things beautiful in time (Eccl. 3:11).

*What aspects of creation show not just function, but almost “unnecessary” variety and beauty?*

The lavish, superabundant variety and beauty may *appear* unnecessary, but somehow, we *need* it.

Example: The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins died of due to grading Greek papers!

As those made in God’s image, we need beauty and we need to make beautiful things. We need art.

Without it, we are *dehumanized*—like cogs in the factory machine or talking heads in the board meeting.

### **Definition – What is art?**

The word “art” comes from Latin: *ars* vs. *scientia* (lit. skill vs. knowledge)

At the least, art involves *doing* something with a physical substance, and doing it with *skill*.

This physical substance—even sound or light—is the *medium* between the artist and the recipient.

My old definition emphasized thought: “Art is the tangible expression of inner thought.”

If art embodies a thought, the medium must be carefully chosen to *match* the thought—like a tune to a text.

*But is all art the embodiment of thought?*

Some art, especially music, embodies a spirit or a mood—or simply revels in the sheer delight of sound!

Above all, there must be something of *beauty* in the art—an intangible in the tangible that pleases us.

And yet...not all beautifying is art! There must also be skill and originality. *So, what is art?!*

Edith Schaeffer, wife of Francis Schaeffer and author of *The Hidden Art of Homemaking*, also asked:

“What is Art? Authorities do not agree” (p. 13).

“Whatever it is, surely art involves *creativity* and *originality*. Whatever form art takes, it gives outward expression to what otherwise would remain locked in the mind, unshared. One individual personality has definite or special talent for expressing, in *some* medium, what other personalities can hear, see, smell, feel, taste, understand, enjoy...but which they could *not* produce themselves” (p. 14).

Perhaps, as the phrase “more of an art than a science” suggests, our *idea* of art will always be imprecise.

### **Kinds of Art – What kinds of art can you name, and what are the media involved?**

Visual arts – paintings/drawings, sculpting, movies, photography

Performing arts – drama, dance, music

Literary arts – poetry, journaling, story, calligraphy

Craftsmanship – culinary arts, furniture, welding

### **Challenge: Add art to your work! How?**

#### **Add art to the process of your work.**

Think of doing your work as “poetry in motion” or “whistling while your work.”

Illus. Papa John’s Pizza – twirling the dough for the crust in the air!

Ponder how this Victorian woman described cleaning the steps as a young girl:

“You sort of had to wash your step, then wet...the sandstone, like you do a pumice stone style, sand it along right on the edge and then you had to get your fingers and go nice and smooth...[I] used to love scouring those steps. It’s a work of art, you know” (Himmelfarb, *Demoralization*, pp. 34-35).

*Do you see it?* The delight in the physical substance God made—the look, the feel, the experience!

*When you work, what spirit to you convey by the manner of your work?*

Calm, rude, pleasant, forgetful, patient, rushed, anxious, thankful,...

#### **Add art to the product of your work.**

With mowing the yard, what *pattern* will you add? How will you *trim* the edges and *accent* yard items?

With food, how will *plate* it and not just *present* it? Does the pizza have *pizzazz*? Does the dessert *assert*?

With homework, what *font* do you use? What *paper*? What *words*? How does it *look* and *sound* and *feel*?

These things Edith Schaeffer called “hidden art,” the art of so-called minor things in everyday life.

Again, what is my challenge to you?

*Be the creature that is creative—the one made in God’s image—by adding art to your work!*