



Creativity during Covid–19

Part 1: God and creativity

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1 (NIV)

Reflection

The Bible tells us a lot about what God is like, for example: God is unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalm 102:25–27), God is all powerful (Revelation 1:8), God is eternal (Psalm 90:2, Job 36:26), God is always present everywhere (Deuteronomy 10:14, Jeremiah 23:23–24), God is wise (Romans 16:27), God is faithful (Deuteronomy 32:4), God is loving (1 John 4:8), and God is good (Psalm 34:8).

These are all important aspects of what God is like. However, none of these is the first attribute of God that the Bible emphasises. In the opening chapters of the Bible, when God is being ‘introduced’ to the reader for the first time, God is shown to be very creative.

In the beginning of Genesis, we don’t discover a master with his slaves, or a warrior with his army, or a teacher with his students, or a crafty magician with his spellbound followers... Instead, God reveals himself as a creator, with humanity as his co-creators.

God creates the heavens and the earth. God creates the sun and moons and stars. God creates all the birds in the sky and creatures in the sea and the animals across the land. Genesis is revealing the invisible fingerprint of a creative God on every otter, every mountain range, every white leopard, every icy lake, every galaxy, every person and every atom. When we consider what God has made, we see that God is incredibly creative.



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Reflection questions

- Think about the beauty and diversity of all that God has created. Spend five minutes writing a list of as many things as you can think of that God has created. Give thanks to God in prayer.

Prayer

Creator God, we marvel at all that you have created. We are amazed by your creativity. We are so thankful for the beauty and diversity in the world that shows how creative you are. Create in us a deep awareness and appreciation of how beautiful your created world is. In the midst of Covid-19, help us to remember that originally the world was completely good and wonderfully made.



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Part 2: Humanity and creativity

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

Genesis 1:26–28 (NIV)

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers – all of them skilled workers and designers.

Exodus 35:35 (NIV)

Reflection

We are called to be loving, good and merciful just as God is merciful. In these ways we are made to 'mirror' and reflect what God is like. This is part of what is meant when the Bible says that we are 'made in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27). God's nature and character should be reflected in the way we live our lives, and in the world we are a part of creating.

One way in which we are invited to reflect the character of God is to be creative. God put Adam and Eve in a garden which was peaceful, delightful, colourful, harmonious and perfect. God then asked the humans to 'work it and care for it'. They were told to creatively extend this garden, this way of being, to the rest of the world. They were to 'rule' the world in such a way that the world increasingly reflected the character of God and God's good intentions for creation.

One Bible scholar views Genesis's call to rule as an invitation to 'actively partner with God in taking the world somewhere'. Every human being is called to use the gifts that God has given them and to partner with God in creatively building the world in ways that reflect what God is like.



This could include creating a new business that pays employees fairly and that utilises local natural resources. It might be using your art skills to create a sculpture or painting that conveys a story of hope. It might mean writing a new song. It might mean creating a choir in which survivors of abuse and vulnerable people can make special bonds and find hope singing uplifting songs together. It might mean using your cooking skills to make some simple but tasty meals for your neighbours. There are endless ways, big and small, in which we can creatively make the world reflect the character of God a little bit more.

Reflection questions

- When have you done something creative, or made something beautiful, that contributed towards our sacred calling of creatively and responsibly 'taking the world somewhere'?
- What skills and resources has God given you to use to creatively extend God's garden of delight in the world?
- What resources has God put within your church community that can be used to creatively partner with God?

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- It is not only the very big creative actions and decisions that matter. God can use, and can be encountered in the midst of, really small acts of holy creativity. What can you create today?

Prayer

Creator God, we thank you that you have made us all creative in our own unique way. We thank you that we are made to creatively partner with you as you extend your kingdom of peace, harmony and joy. Help us to see what resources you have put in our lives for the sake of building a more Christ-like world. Help us find ways of blessing our local community through big and small acts of creativity.



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Part 3: Covid-19 and creativity

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

Genesis 3:6–9 (NIV)

Reflection

So much is changing during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the specifics of these changes will vary from person to person, and from country to country, few lives have remained unaffected.

Many people are experiencing significant restrictions to what they are allowed to do on a daily basis, and many people's work and community lives are changing dramatically. During this pandemic, it is hard to know what the world will be like afterwards.

However, in addition to the restrictions, there are also many new opportunities which we can make the most of. Again, these opportunities will vary across contexts. Some might notice the opportunity of spending more time together as a family. Others



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might notice the opportunity to connect with neighbours in new and meaningful ways. Others might see new creative ways of supporting their local community within the new circumstances.

Part 1 and Part 2 above explored the ideas that God is creative, and God has made humanity to be creative. Part of the sacred creative calling in Genesis 2 is about creatively extending the garden of peace, harmony and delight to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, Genesis 3 shows the beginnings of humanity's failure to fulfil this calling. Adam and Eve rejected God's instructions and chose a different way which resulted in the breakdown of relationships between God, humanity and creation.

During this time of Covid-19, there is the temptation to turn inward, away from God and others, and away from God's creative call to all of humanity. Even in the midst of this pandemic, Christians are still called to be exploring creatively how to make the world a little bit more Christ-like. While many people are experiencing the impact of the current restrictions, many people are also seeing the opportunity to change things and create new things that actually extend the horizons of possibility.

What new possibilities have arisen in the world around you that offer an opportunity to create a world a bit more like Jesus? How can we partner with God, now and into the future, with his creative, redemptive work in our local community?

As we emerge from the initial extremes of Covid-19 we can ask ourselves what sort of a world we want to build going forwards. Can we repent of the world we have created, and instead look to build one without such a huge gap between rich and poor – a world that enables us to live in harmony with creation? A world where we understand that the well-being of one is bound up with the well-being of all?

Dr Ruth Valerio and Gideon Heugh

Reflection questions

- Do you think you have been focusing on the restrictions and limitations of this time of Covid-19, or have you also been aware of the opportunities? What new possibilities have arisen in the world around you that offer an opportunity to create a world a bit more like Jesus?
- How can creative activities bring joy and hope amid the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How do you think the world could change for the good as we emerge from the initial extremes of Covid-19? How can you partner with God creatively in building a better world?

Prayer

Creator God, you are with us, even in the significant challenges we face amid the Covid-19 pandemic. We thank you that your plan for a 'renewal of all things' has not changed. Lord God, in the midst of the very real pain and sorrow of the Covid-19 crisis, help us also to be aware of the new opportunities that are emerging. Help us see the new ways in which we can participate creatively in extending your kingdom of peace, delight and harmony. Show us ways in which we can and must change, so that we are a part of building a better world.