

My Artistic Journey

I have always loved to draw and create things, but I desired greatly to be a teacher and didn't consider art to be part of that. Art came to the forefront almost by "accident", but I realize now that it was God's providence. I took an art class during my high school senior year. I enjoyed it tremendously, and was very successful. I encountered a scheduling difficulty in my first year in college and only a drawing class would fit the time slot. Three weeks into the class, I was hooked. I made the decision then to major in art. But to please my parents, I added an English major, and a minor in education (also God's providence). I knew God was blessing me, and I thanked Him, but my relationship with the Lord was very immature.

After graduation I moved to Seattle to be with my grandparents. Because my move was almost last minute, I could not find a full-time teaching position. Instead I substituted in a high school for one semester. That was tough. I could teach subjects well, but substituting quickly made me realize I had little practical experience in classroom management. I learned more about teaching in that one semester than in all of my schooling. The Lord was in that too. Realizing that my desire to teach was fading and my desire to create was growing, I found a part-time office job, which gave me oodles of time to draw and paint. My artworks showed in several exhibitions, and some sold. Selling artworks validates the artist and the creative effort. That was all the impetus I needed.

But the Lord had other plans. I moved back to Texas, where I met my husband. My first six years of marriage were spent being a full time wife and mother, which left little or no art time. I knew there was a higher goal for art than decorating walls and shelves or becoming famous. The discomfort prompted me to ask the above questions and more. I realized how important prayer is when you have family, so that became my focus for a period of time. As I looked in prayer at my artistic journey through cycles of valleys and mountaintops, I saw that my art was selfish. We must grow personally in the Lord, but self-development should have an outward aim to be shared as testimonies of God's grace and provision. The Lord began changing me and "re-purposing" my direction in art, increasing my vision from just inward to include outward. But I didn't know how that would manifest.

Our pastor asked me to teach 5th - 6th grade in his new Christian school. I agreed, since our son was then eligible for K4. That was a major watershed in my life. All the desire to teach returned like a flood into my heart. I soon learned that too many students were deficient in basic manual and academic skills and how to think for themselves. Eventually art was added to my teaching schedule for the entire school. I recognized the anointing of the Lord, teaching me how to present art, and how to use art to teach core curriculum with greater effectiveness.

The day of great inspiration: Prompted by the Holy Spirit, I wrote an enrichment theme around "Trees of Righteousness" (Isaiah 61:3) integrating art with language arts, handwriting, mathematics, history, science, and music. My students remained interested for

nearly six weeks. One morning in early prayer, I distinctly heard the Holy Spirit's words in my inner ears, "You shall write an art curriculum." I was "high" for almost two days. The Lord has continued to direct me to write art curriculum manuals from a Biblical worldview for K-high school. During this time I continued to receive recognition and cash awards for artworks, encouraging me to keep creating. I give the Lord all glory!

I could have entitled this article "Who Wants to Learn Patience?" Learning patience is not instant (duh!), because our modern world programs us with many conveniences for quick results. Romans 5:3b states "... knowing that tribulation produces perseverance ("patience" in KJV), and perseverance character: and character, hope." Art has taught me perseverance and patience in many practical ways. I've had to wait for paint to set so that I don't ruin a good start by continuing too quickly, practice skills over time for continual and gradual improvement, and wait on the Lord to bring to pass what He has begun in me - specifically the art curriculum. The Lord spoke the words, "You will write an art curriculum." in 1984 (!), and over the years I've dealt with disappointment, discouragement, defeat, rejection, interference, wavering in faith, and my own detours. I would not have learned from this experience if I had not learned to patiently wait on the Lord to discern His leading. In my own strength I would have given up. I'm glad I didn't, because in the last three years the Lord has been opening doors for publication and favor. The lyrics in Michael W. Smith's and Martin Smith's song "Grace" speak eloquently about the Lord's leading in my life: "All these years You've carried me; You've been my eyes when I could not see." I value highly the lessons of perseverance and patience through tribulation in bringing me closer to the Lord.

I now believe I am walking in the good works God has prepared for me (Ephesians 2:10). Notice that the phrase "good works" is plural. I'm sure He will continue to increase my vision and will take me from glory to glory and from victory to victory as I walk with Him.

For me, art now has a two-fold purpose: to be creative like our Lord, developing in Him inwardly, and to share outwardly what I've learned. Sharing has been just as exciting as the creative process in learning how to form intuitive knowledge into concrete expression. My focus now is to teach children (and adults) HOW to think through art. Our public school system, Hollywood, TV, the mainstream news media, and more, are teaching us WHAT to think. I've learned over the years that the brain must be developed by activities, but the mind must be trained by the Word of God. Therefore, I am convinced that creativity is part of everyone's good works in the Lord, no matter what category the creativity and good works fall into. Art activities can be connected to God through Scripture, science, mathematics, language arts, history, and other arts. So, please, don't overlook the benefits of art activities for yourself and your children.

If you have never given art a try, I strongly encourage you to do so. You will experience relaxation, pleasure, and stimulation of the brain and mind. Do your best, just don't have expectations of masterpieces at the beginning, and the experience will be thrilling. And don't let possible criticism from others discourage you. You will be "stretched" and have fun in the process.