



WEEK 8: "THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND MISSION"

BY W. DAVID O. TAYLOR

[WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE SESSION: BIT.LY/2JMOTLY](https://bit.ly/2JMOTLY)

SYNOPSIS:

W. David O. Taylor's central theses:

- Art and mission is not a replacement for traditional efforts in mission.
- Art and mission can go places where traditional missional efforts cannot.
- Art and mission can do things that traditional mission cannot.
- Art and mission can take a host of expressions and perform a wide range of purposes.

Taylor's central question: How might the arts participate in the mission of the church? He goes on to give numerous examples in a wide array of artistic mediums, from visual arts to music to church buildings to art ministries. Our encounters with various forms of art, including our physical, bodily encounters (singing, dance, liturgical movements), all have the ability to shape us in ways that only art can.

Ideas matter, and the content of the Gospel message in our churches is necessary to the life of the Church. But we also have to remember that we are all in the business of storytelling, culture-shaping and heart-forming. In order to change a society, we have to capture people's imaginations. And the arts are crucial to this endeavor. Typically, Taylor argues, conservative Christians don't take the arts seriously enough. If Christians are to shape the imagination of the public square, it will be due to the body of Christ, everywhere across the globe, releasing artists to remain faithful to their vocations. We need to cultivate works of art that enable us to name and celebrate all that is good in the world, art that helps us to articulate the world's brokenness and inspires us to do something about it, art that invites us to want the good and the Source of all that is good.

For so many people today (including the "Nones" in our culture), it is difficult to imagine how the Gospel could be good news. People fail to feel that God is a loving and good God. They see no tangible evidence of the Gospel in their personal, social, and public lives. This is why the arts matter. The arts enable people to grasp the Gospel, to feel it deeply, and believe what may seem improbable or impossible about the kingdom of God. Any time art allows human beings to become whole or makes tangible the Shalom of God in the world, it fulfills the mission of the Trinity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. W. David O. Taylor says that artists deeply crave hospitality. What are a few tangible ways that we as the Church can intentionally care for and show hospitality to the artists in our congregations?
2. Why is it crucial for the Church to come alongside artists and help them grow?
3. Have you personally experienced the power of art to communicate the Gospel? Have you seen it engaging “Nones,” or religiously unaffiliated people in our culture? How/why do you think this was effective?
4. Why is it important for the Church to embrace the art forms found in our diverse culture? For example, how might singing songs in a foreign tongue shape us?
5. What do you think W. David O. Taylor means when he says that works of art make the familiar gospel strange again?
6. Are you aware of art organizations, groups, or ministries in your city or community? How might your church consider partnering with them to support their work, or to collaborate on some project for the good of the city or neighborhood?
7. What is one way in which your church building might show concrete love to your immediate neighbors?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Books W. David O. Taylor referenced in his session

[*For the Beauty of the Church*](#) by W. David O. Taylor

[*The Theater of God's Glory*](#) by W. David O. Taylor

[*Contemporary Art and the Church*](#) by W. David O. Taylor

[*Worship and Culture*](#) by Glaucia Vasconcelos Wilkey

A ministry W. David O. Taylor referenced in his session

David Bailey's [*Arrabon*](#)

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Show an artist hospitality by inviting him or her into your home or taking them out for coffee. Take time to truly see their work. If you don't know an artist personally, support the local arts scene by going to see a new singer/songwriter, taking your family to a local art exhibit, purchasing items handmade by a local artisan, etc.