

# What is *Prophetic Art*?

5 Signposts of the Prophetic Creative Process



Matt Tommey

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“Raising Up An Army Of Artists to Reveal God’s Glory”

As artists and Kingdom creatives, we hear, see and feel what others tend to miss not because we've got the super spiritual mojo, but mostly because we've learned to listen with the ears we've been given. The goal of this ability is never to exalt ourselves or our work, but rather to sense what's going on in the Spirit realm through our natural and spiritual senses and translate that reality – the Kingdom - into the earth realm. That's essentially what being prophetic is all about – God using someone or something to bring transformation into a life or situation here in the earth realm. It's also at the heart of the creative process – seeing, hearing, feeling and sensing in the Spirit and co-laboring with your unique skillset and design to birth it into tangible form.

Luci Shaw, in her incredible book “Breath for the Bones” says of this moving back and forth between Spirit and flesh, heaven and earth “*Sometimes I have seen myself as an amphibian, like a frog, created for two elements. I dive beneath the lakes surface, my earthly home so that my skin doesn't dry out and wither, but I need oxygen for my lungs and have to emerge from below the surface to breathe. I discover that I am made for both earth and heaven.*” Luci Shaw, Breath for the Bones 2007 Thomas Nelson.

Like Enoch, like Moses; unlike Adam, unlike most of us, these extraordinary individuals moved seamlessly from restricted terrestrial living into the presence of freedom and life in its optimum dimension in the presence of God.”

She continues “*Not only are we responsible as artists somehow to demonstrate that it is possible to bring heaven to earth by living the life of grace in an ungraceful place, by gluing together the seen and unseen, but we are required to be links with the unlinkable, with otherwise disparate entities.*” Luci Shaw, Breath for the Bones 2007 Thomas Nelson.

Because the nature of the creative process is to prophetically “glueing together the seen and unseen”, we should always be enlarging and sharpening our unique creative language in order to be able to hear and sense what God is saying in order to release Spirit-led Kingdom expression in ways that people can respond.

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Just like God did on the day of creation as recorded in Genesis 1, we are called to come into chaos, bringing order and transformation into them as we release of the creative nature of God. In addition to bringing order and transformation to those things that are in chaos, our role as creative ones is also to be door keepers of the presence of God in the earth. What that means essentially is that we are called to release the presence of God in the earth through our creative expression and facilitate experiences were people can encounter the life and light of God is a part of their everyday existence. This is the nature of the Kingdom! Otherwise, what else are we supposed to be doing? When you reduce the Christian life to going to church and following a bunch of rules that you can never live up to, you embrace a dead form and deny the very power Jesus imparted to us through the cross, by the Spirit.

Remember my friend, your creative expression literally carries the life and light of God when you co-labor with the Spirit in your creative release. We've already covered some of this in earlier chapters, but just by way of reminder I want to lay a quick foundation so we're on the same page.

Remember in John 1:1 God is light and life and everything that was created was created through the Word, Jesus. Then in Genesis 1 God released his nature – Light - into the chaotic darkness and transformation occurred. As sons and daughters of the Creator God made in his image, so our creative expression carries His transformative nature through our prophetic voice. That process happens like everything in the Kingdom happens, by faith because faith IS the substance or the tangible evidence that the things we've seen, felt and heard in the Spirit realm are actually real. Our role is to bring them into the earth realm and allow our creative expression to be a conduit for the mountain moving power of God to be released.

Now, the degree to which we get to do this in our life is not a matter of God playing favourites, but it's based on stewarding well the gifting God has invested in us. The more you enlarge your capacity for his presence by becoming excellent at what you do the more the father will entrust to you and that's how you grow in the Kingdom. Remember the Parable of the Talents? Your belief about what's possible, who God is and who you are in relationship to all of those beliefs defines your reality.

Just like the men in the Parable of the Talents, you are I are responsible for the revelation God entrusts to us. It's literally a Kingdom investment that the Father is putting inside of you, waiting to see what you do with it. That investment has the ability to grow, produce, multiply and expand when mixed with faith or it can just sit dormant. Remember, God's Word says in Proverbs 25:2 NIV "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings."

As you think about your own unique Kingdom design and how the Father has designed you for your Kingdom purpose, ask yourself what is in your hand right now? What is it that the Father has given you – an idea, resource, tool, talent, relationship – that you can begin to steward. What needs to be chipped away? What are the next steps you need to take to see that diamond begin to come forth and shine? Don't minimize this! This is why we need the

prophetic in our creative process, so we can sense where to move and what to do next.

Again, part of that prophetic “chipping away” is in our life because for all artists and Kingdom creatives, we’re on a journey of development. We’re all growing in the gifts and talents that God’s placed within us, as led by His Spirit. The great thing is that we’re not left alone in the process. Remember, it’s called being filled and skilled. It’s about operating at your fullest capacity, being totally filled with the Spirit of God and leveraging all the skill you have to release His Glory through your expression.

Ok, so you’ve got the foundation down, right? Hear, see and feel in the Spirit, and develop a picture or impression of what you’re supposed to be doing creatively. Then, as you chip away at the diamond and co-labor with the Father with whatever He’s put in your hand, the life and light of God will be released through your creative expression as a natural outflow of the Kingdom.

As I think a little deeper about my own creative process, I recognize 5 signposts that may be helpful for you to look for in your process. They are Revelation, Skillful Response, Incarnation, Transformation and Abundance.

## **Revelatory Creativity**

When a creative idea begins to percolate, it will usually come as some sort of inspiration. Maybe you see, know, hear, smell or sense something that catches your attention and you become inspired. It may be a place, a person, a song or a natural setting that you see every day or something that you’ve encountered for the first time. Regardless of how it happens, at that moment you have an encounter. The Spirit speaks and you have an “Ah-ha” moment – a light bulb experience where you know you need to pay attention. Your willingness to sense and respond to that impulse is foundational in your ability to move prophetically in the creative process.

Defined by Google Dictionary, imagination is “the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.” Your imagination is a God-designed engine inside of you that receives impulses, desires and information from yourself, others and the world around

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you and then formulates images based on the beliefs in your heart. The root word for imagination in Latin is *imaginari* which actually means “picture to oneself”. It’s literally a picture engine inside of you.

Faith creates pictures, pictures create desires within the heart and how the heart acts as an incubator for those pictures to become reality. That’s why imagination is so key to the believer because without it, the faith process gets derailed.

Your imagination is a part of you that interacts with the movement of God within you. It is a gift to every person ever created and gives you the ability to dream, to see and know before you actually create. Just like every gift given by the Father to humanity, it has to be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus and set apart for His Glory.

Imagining is the first step in the creative process and is centered in the human spirit. For the believer, imagination interacts with the Holy Spirit in our human spirit and is then processed through our soul and body. It creates an inner picture inside of us by which we create from. This ability to see that which is not as though it already is, is the nature of God manifested through us; that is to imagine and see what is the highest, best expression of his Glory through our lives and creativity. Without a picture on the inside you can’t function creatively or in the Kingdom for that matter, which is why the enemy is all about lying to, confusing and ultimately trying to conquer our mind.

At the end of the day, it’s all about the pictures that live inside of you. Paul talked about this two times in particular as he encouraged early believers to mature in their relationship with the Father. First, in Romans 12:2 where he said “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” In other words, don’t think like the world thinks, don’t have their picture of reality and possibility in your mind and heart, but rather renew your mind with the God’s truth, which brings Kingdom transformation.

Secondly, in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV he exhorts the church, saying “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down (vain) imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” Again, Paul knew that imagining or seeing an internal picture of that which is of no use or has nothing to do with the knowledge of God, the Kingdom or Christ has no place within the mind of the believer. Not only does it not have any place, but if left to germinate, it will eventually bear fruit.

You see, it’s in our human spirit, through the process of imagining that we connect to the divine consciousness or the Kingdom within us. Instead of connecting to our rule and reign or, as Paul says “the pattern of this world”, we connect to the rule and reign of the divine Kingdom that lives inside of us through the cross of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s how we prophetically bring heavens reality and nature to the earth. This process of imagin-

ing is not only crucial to your creative process but to your whole life because creativity and living a life of passion and abundance are directly connected.

God's purposes are always followed by His promises and His promises are always followed by His pictures. When His promises and pictures are mixed with faith, they transform our identity into what God has already declared is true – an identity that can fulfill His purposes and release the fullness of the Kingdom here in the earth. It's a beautiful circle: purpose, promises, pictures, identity.

Consider for a moment, Abraham in Genesis chapters 12-17. God wanted to establish covenant with humanity and had to do it through a man. The purpose? Relationship. Out of the purpose came a promise when God said He would make Abram the father of many nations, bless him, protect him, make him fruitful, make kings come from him and continue the blessings throughout his line of descendants. Then, God gave Abram a picture in Genesis 15:5 when he said: "He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be. 6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Do you see? The picture took root in his heart. Then what happened? God changes his name from Abram to Abraham in Chapter 17 and with it comes a physical demonstration of the promise – circumcision – that showed the reality of the new identity which was rooted in the promise portrayed in the picture that was established by the purpose.

Just to give you another beautiful example of how this works think about when the angel Gabriel came to Mary in Luke, chapter 1. God's purpose was to redeem the world through sending Jesus. So he sends Gabriel and Gabriel says to Mary in verse 28 "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Basically Mary freaks out, gets scared and the angel has to reassure her of God's purposes again for her life and reassure of her of her identity in Him. Then, once that's done, the angel gives Mary a picture – an expected end – that she can mix with faith in order to see God's plan established in the earth. What happens then? She runs down the hill to her sister Elizabeth's house in order to tell her the purposes of God over her life, stand in her new identity and give testimony to the promise and pictures the angel deposited in her heart.

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So what's the bottom line here? Your ability to imagine – that is, see with God – is vital in your ability to creatively demonstrate the Kingdom and it's tied to your acceptance of God's purpose for your life, the identity He's established in you through Christ and the promises He's given you and a son and daughter in the Kingdom. Sometimes God will give the picture as with Abraham and Mary, and sometimes the promises and purpose produce the pictures like with David.

Think about it, David was a lover of God and a worshipper. Firm in that identity, I'm sure God began to give him dreams, visions and promises that began to take root in His heart. How do I know that? Because I know God and that's what He does for anyone who asks. As He mixed his faith with the promises and pictures began to form in His heart of what could be - worship, everyday, for years, with unlimited access to the Father – and sure enough the purposes of God were established in His generation. Doors began to open, people began to respond and affirm His purpose and eventually he fulfilled that purpose as King and the establishment of the Tabernacle. Why, just because God wanted it that way? No, it was because God found a man who would dream with Him to release His nature into the earth realm through imagination and see transformation happen.

There are practical ways to begin strengthening your imagination. Pray in tongues, ask God for pictures, meditate on His word and specifically His promises regarding your identity and your purpose. As you do, pictures will begin to form. Mix your faith with the picture and the promises and watch God begin to bring it forth.

## **Skillful Creativity**

The next step in the process of prophetic creativity is not just imagining what could be, but then stepping out and responding. You have to see and agree. If you only see, then you'll just be frustrated because hope (a picture of an expected end) deferred makes the heart sick. On the other hand, you can go through a bunch of wrote motions but unless there's a picture of your expected end mixed with faith, you're going nowhere fast.

This whole process of seeing and agreeing is explored in detail within my book "Creativity According to the Kingdom." Suffice it to say, within your life there has to be a constant infilling of the Holy Spirit through an intimate relationship with Jesus. That produces desires, dreams, passion and pictures. It affirms your identity and causes you to triumph. At the same time "faith without works is dead." There must always be a response and that response is based in your skillset. As you grow in being filled, you must also grow in being skilled. Giving attention to both simultaneously, as led by the Spirit of God produces maturity and brings you into a place of increase. Proverbs 18:16 NKJV says "A mans gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men." If you want influence in the world system, if you want to be a conduit of Kingdom transformation then you must pursue skill.

## Incarnational Creativity

If imagination is source and skilful, Spirit-led execution is the process then surely art is the product. Your art, or whatever your creative expression happens to be brings into reality that which up until this point has only been a hope. The act of creating is by its very nature incarnational because it's bringing the purpose and promise of God into the earth in tangible form. No longer is this thing we've dreamed of just an idea, but now it has become an evidential reality.

This incarnational process is a core part of God's divine nature. When we participate in His divine nature - through His precious promises - we then become participants in the incarnation, bringing the divine into the earth realm for all to see, interact with and be transformed by.

God led the way and gave us the pattern. God wanted to redeem the world (purpose) and so began to let the word out through his prophets (promise) that there was a Messiah coming. Through the prophets of old, God began to give a picture of what this Messiah would look like, how He would act and what He would do when He came (picture). The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us (skilful execution on the part of God co-laboring with Mary resulting in the Incarnation.). Now through the Holy Spirit and our ability to co-labor with him in our creativity, our artwork becomes incarnational (because we are joint heirs with Jesus in the new covenant), revealing the Nature of God in the earth. This is not a one-time event but our new, everyday reality as sons and daughters of the King.

For me, this is where the rubber meets the road. The Kingdom of God is established in the earth as sons and daughters release demonstrations of the reality of that Kingdom into the culture, regardless of their unique gifting or calling. Jesus promised that we would do greater works than He did, that signs and wonders would follow those who believe in Him. My friend, your creative expression was destined from the very foundation of the earth to be the incarnated demonstration of God's Kingdom in the earth.

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# Transformational Creativity

When your creation does come from that place of Spirit-birthed, skilfully produced incarnation, it literally becomes a conduit for transformation. Why? Not because of us, in and of our talent but because it's carrying the very Light and Life – the very nature – of God. Just like the sacrament of communion, your art, like the simple bread and wine, becomes a means of grace whereby God can commune with his people.

Since Spirit-born creative expression is both prophetic and incarnational in nature our art has the capacity to speak and continue speaking to everyone who encounters it over time. It's a lot like the stone cairns that you see throughout the Celtic landscape of Scotland that were created and placed there to show the way over time. These stacked stone monuments act as reminders that in the middle of what seems like nowhere, there is a trail. Our artwork and creative expression can be a cairn of sorts in the Spirit, declaring that there is a path that leads to life through the person of Jesus. Instead of just having a one-time encounters, we literally have the opportunity to set up these places of intersection in the Spirit for generations to come. Songs that would be sung for generations, buildings to be built that would declare the Glory of the Lord, even tangible objects used in daily life all acting as intersection points where God shows up and connects with His children.

Our artwork literally becomes, as in Psalm 23 a table prepared to nourish those who come and sit before the King in the presence of everything that seeks to kill, suppress and confuse them. Oh to think of it! That the overflow of your life! The very expression of your heart and hands would be used as a demonstration of the transforming love of God. You see my friend, art and beauty are not ornamental, as some out suppose. They are essential for all life because it is through them that we touch the very nature of the creator God.

## Abundant creativity

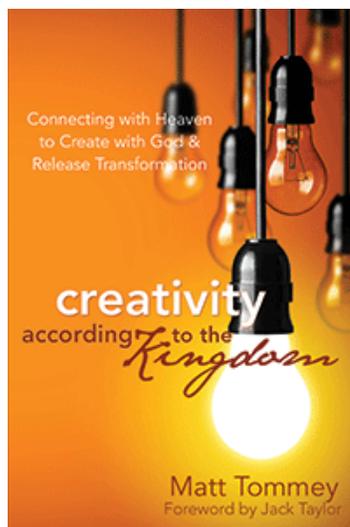
The result of Kingdom transformation is always life, especially when it comes through the creative expression of sons and daughters. Life abundant. Life everlasting. Life rooted and grounded in love and the abundance of the Father of all Life. God's abundance overflows when it transforms the hearts of man and through His grace He activates the dormant places in the heart causing vision, purpose and desire to spring forth. Man fully alive, fully satisfied in God, fully loved by God and fully able to stand in His Kingdom purpose.

A life of abundance and creativity always manifests in our life when we come into alignment with the intention or design of God for our life, whether as co-creators or ones interacting with the Spirit-birthed creation. This doesn't mean we'll never have another problem in our life or that grace is some ticket to easy street. It does mean, however that worry is no longer an option because at the end of the day, you know you are secure, provided for and in the Beloved of Almighty God. Otherwise, we stay frustrated in the ego portion of our being - our soul, mind will, emotions - wresting with feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness and frustration.

This understanding of how prophetic creative expression is birthed and transformation is released should encourage you because it takes the pressure off of you to perform. Rather, you just simply cooperate with the design of God in and through your life. You don't have to be this or that, just stand as a son or daughter, receiving and stewarding that which God has entrusted to you.

Abundance is basically coming into harmony with the frequency of God in the earth and in our being. Otherwise we create dissonance by playing notes that don't work together and tension, stress and anxiety are the result. I don't know about you, but I want to be in harmony with all that God is doing!

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**This ebook is an excerpt from “Creativity According to the Kingdom: Connecting with Heaven to Create with God and Release Transformation”.**

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## **Matt Tommey**

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## **About the Author**

Matt Tommey has spent over twenty five years cultivating a successful creative career as a visual artist, musician, author and creative catalyst for artists. Since the age of five, Matt has been singing, playing the piano, leading bands and writing music. His passion for music and creativity led him into a career in creative ministry within various churches where he served as a worship and arts pastor. It was there that he began to understand the deep connection between spirituality and thriving as an artist.

In 2003, Matt took a break from his ministry pursuits and founded a boutique creative agency in metro Atlanta, working primarily with small businesses and nonprofit organizations as their outsourced marketing department. After a few years, the company expanded regionally and started working with larger clients on projects including branding, collateral design, web design, printing and marketing strategy.

While a student at the University of Georgia in the mid-1990's, Matt found a book on willow basketmaking and began experimenting with the use of kudzu and other natural materials in basketry. This hobby soon became a passion for Matt, providing a vehicle where he could not only connect spiritually in nature but release more of the creative passion that lay inside his heart. Now Matt pursues his passion for sculptural art basketry using natural materials as a full-time artist at his studio in Asheville, North Carolina's River Arts District.

In 2009 everything started coming together for Matt. Disparate parts that seemed unconnected converged in a supernatural spiritual experience where Matt realized that he was created to be a father to creative people and was called to raise up an army of artists to reveal God's Glory. Almost immediately, Matt wrote "Unlocking the Heart of the Artist" which is now used around the world by artists of every creative medium to overcome roadblocks to creativity, break the starving artist curse and thrive as an artist. The passion of Matt's heart is to help artists live the life of abundance, joy and creativity they were created to live.

Matt now lives in Asheville, North Carolina with his wife Tanya and their son, Cameron. He works as a full-time woven sculpture artist, podcast host and mentor to thousands of artists around the world. He is a member of the prestigious Southern Highland Craft Guild and in 2010 he was included in the "American Artist Under 40" registry by the Smithsonian's American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery. In 2018 Matt was recognized as one of the country's best artist mentors by Professional Artist Magazine.