

January-February 2013—In the Habit/Guide—Week 2

the arts

Darren Wright

For use with devozine meditations for January 7–13, 2013.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

“I’ve recently fallen in love with the books of Herve Tullet, a french artist and author who creates art books for kids. One of my favorite books is called *Doodle Cook*. Each page includes an illustration of a place setting—a plate and cutlery—and a ‘recipe’ that invites the reader to paint or draw on the plate. Recipes may be as simple as ‘add three green circles, two blue circles, five green circles, one circle inside another circle, two black circles.’

“I play with these books with questions in mind: Where’s the invitation for us to become artists when we read the scripture or live our faith in community? Do the scriptures invite us to become artists at all? Do they inspire us to enjoy art and beauty in the world around us?

“The answer for me is a resounding ‘yes!’ or perhaps ‘They certainly should.’ There is plenty in the scripture that inspires art in us and celebrates God who painted the earth brown, the grass green and yellow, the seas blue, and the zebra a beautiful mix of black and white. If you have any doubts, wander over to Job 38 and read how the Lord describes God’s relationship with creation. How poetic, artistic, and beautiful are the words used!

“We normally go from reading the scripture straight to a sermon rather than heading off to the paint and canvas or perhaps the clay and pottery wheel—maybe we are more comfortable with words. I wonder what would happen if for at least a month every year, we replaced the pulpit with canvas, clay, crayons, paper, glue, musical instruments, and paint.” —Darren

MEET THE WRITER

Darren Wright is a Uniting Church Youth Worker serving in the Riverina Presbytery in New South Wales, Australia, as the Presbytery Youth and Children’s Ministry Worker. Darren has previously worked in congregational ministry, high school chaplaincy, and local government as a youth worker. He’s also been a petrol station attendant, supermarket employee, dairy manager, and furniture sales person. His interests include music (Moby, Radiohead, Ben Harper, The National, Muse, All India Radio); film (*MegaMind*, *Harry Potter*, *How to Train your Dragon*, *Scott Pilgrim*), TV (*Chuck*, *Doctor Who*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Community*), theology, pop-culture, working with young people in at-risk areas, and the relationship of the church and theology to pop culture.

STUFF YOU WILL NEED

Option 1: Art Gallery

- tickets to an art gallery or museum
- transportation
- parent permission slips
- copies of Psalm 8 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=218088430>)

Option 2: The Dot

- the book *The Dot*, by Peter H. Reynolds (available from amazon at <http://www.amazon.com/James-Excellence-Childrens-Literature-Awards/dp/0763619612>)
- the video “The Dot” (<http://youtu.be/t5mGeR4AQdM> or <http://youtu.be/R4RUijwQiK0>)
- One of these books:
 - + *The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse*, by Eric Carle (<http://www.amazon.com/Artist-Who-Painted-Blue-Horse/dp/0399257136>)
 - + *If I Could Paint the World*, by Sarah Massini (www.amazon.com/If-I-Could-Paint-World/dp/1862338043)
- the video of Paul Kelly’s song “Surely God Was a Lover” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzSy7WX6w9I>)
- colored paint
- paint brushes
- canvas or paper
- colored pencils or crayons
- copies of Psalm 8 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=218088430>)

PLUGGED IN

If you want to develop this session in other ways, here are a few resources that may be of assistance:

+ *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, by Dorothy Bass and Don Richter (<http://bookstore.upperroom.org/cart/upperroom/p-16501.htm>) and the companion Leader’s Guide (go to URL above and click link for “FREE Leader’s Guide” PDF)
I’m going to look at this book before I write this session; their ideas are similar to mine, if not better. The section on Creativity would be of great use for this session.

+ Peter H. Reynolds Resources:

- *The Dot* is a beautiful story about a young person who begins by saying “I can’t draw.” (The book is available on Amazon at <http://tinyurl.com/bjaay5r>. You can view the video at <http://youtu.be/t5mGeR4AQdM> or <http://youtu.be/R4RUijwQiK0>.)

- *Ish* is another beautiful story about a young boy who has a love for the arts. (The book is available at <http://www.amazon.com/Ish-Peter-H-Reynolds/dp/076362344X>. On video, find a book review at <http://youtu.be/KbQty34OMIw> and the story told by a first grade class at <http://youtu.be/YfHQY4ug4OU>.)
- “FableVision,” Peter H. Reynolds’ website, includes some great interactive resources and written resources on creativity. (http://www.fablevision.com/education/creativity_tips/)
- Download a teacher’s guide based on both *The Dot* and *Ish* (find link in list at <http://www.candlewick.com/authill.asp?b=Author&pg=41&m=actlist&a=&id=0&pix=n&aud=00&audss=00&audssmenu=0000>)

+ Eric Carle Resources:

Eric Carle is a picture book artist who has released a number of beautiful collage based books, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse*, and *Tiny Seed*. Here are some of his other resources:

- Book: *Artist to Artist: 23 Major Illustrators Talk About Their Art* is an anthology of letters written to future artists by twenty-three contemporary illustrators, including Eric Carle. (<http://www.amazon.com/Artist-Major-Illustrators-Children-About/dp/0399246002?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1200156834&sr=1-1>)
- Video: Eric Carle talks about “The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art” (<https://vimeo.com/35955081>)
- Video Eric Carle talks about his book *The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse*. (<https://vimeo.com/29415782>)
- DVD: *Eric Carle Picture Writer*—View the movie trailer or buy the DVD at <http://www.eric-carle.com/picturewriter.html>.

+ Herve Tullet Resources:

Herve Tullett is an author and illustrator of children’s books that encourage imagination, independent thinking, and creativity. His books include

- *Doodle Cook* (<http://www.amazon.com/Doodle-Cook-Herv%C3%A9-Tullet/dp/0714862274>)
- *The Book with a Hole* (<http://www.amazon.com/Book-Hole-Herve-Tullet/dp/1854379461>)
- *The Game of Sculpture* (<http://www.amazon.com/The-Game-Sculpture-Tullet-Series/dp/0714864897>)
- *The Scribble Book* (<http://www.amazon.com/Scribble-Book-Herve-Tullet/dp/1854377744>)
- Video: “Herve Tullet Discusses *Doodle Cook*” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aLjOX9ZaIQ>)
- Video: Blop Films by Herve Tullett (<http://www.herve-tullet.com/fr/boite-30/Blop-films.html>)
- Herve Tullet’s website (<http://www.herve-tullet.com>)

+ Other Resources:

- Video: “Stanley Hauerwas on The Arts” (<http://goo.gl/r9Lpx>) on the website “The Work of the People: Visual Media for Mission and Worship”
- Video: “Ze Frank’s Web Playroom,” a TED Talk on creativity and community (http://www.ted.com/talks/ze_frank_s_web_playroom.html)
- Video: Stunning video of Neil Gaiman addressing the University of the Arts Class of 2012 (<https://vimeo.com/42372767>) and a comic entitled “Make Good Art” based on part of his speech (<http://zenpencils.com/?p=701>)
- Game: “The Samitomoto Drawing Game” is a great creative art game from Australia (<http://www.smarterpuzzles.com/shop/family-games/samitomoto-drawing-game-2>)
- TED videos on art and creativity (<http://www.ted.com/search?q=art>)
- Book: *Luke’s Way of Looking*, a picture book by Nadia Wheatley (<http://ow.ly/gwr4a> or <http://www.amazon.com/Lukes-Way-Looking-Nadia-Wheatley/dp/1929132182>) and the teacher notes (go to <http://www.walkerbooks.com.au/Teachers/Classroom-Ideas> and scroll down to find “Walker Classics: Luke's Way of Looking Classroom Ideas” PDF)
- Book: *If I Could Paint The World* by Sarah Massini (<http://digitalorthodoxy.com/?p=4903>)
- Song: “Surely God Was a Lover,” by Paul Kelly (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzSy7WX6w9I>)

PLANNING AHEAD

Choose one of the following options for your group session:

>> **OPTION 1: Art Gallery**

If at all possible, I encourage you to visit and allow an hour or more to explore an art gallery or museum with your group. I know the urge is to run through the space as fast as possible; but this time, encourage group members to spend at least a minute with each piece of art or history.

Invite group members to look for a piece that

- they like
- they don’t like
- makes them think
- makes them smile
- makes them sad
- inspires them
- offends them

- speaks of God
- reminds them of home
- reminds them of family
- uses blue as the primary color
- uses yellow as the primary color

After the visit, invite people to talk about their experience. Ask questions such as these:

- What engaged you? What didn't?**
- In which images did you see God?**
- Which images made you feel closer to God?**
- What did you feel as you explored the gallery?**
- When were you inspired? disillusioned?**
- Would you visit a gallery alone?**

Another conversation might be to ask the group to put together a playlist of music to listen to as they wander through the gallery. What would they include on the playlist? Why?

Conclude the experience by inviting the group to read together Psalm 8.

(<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=218088430>)

>> **OPTION 2: Creative Session**

If you choose not to visit a gallery or museum, use the session outline that follows. Consider inviting a member of your community who is an artist (music, paint, sketch, photography, glass blowing, wood carving, sculpture, collage) to join the group for this session to talk about his or her work or just to play along. Also, although it might be a bit messy, feel free to exchange the paint for clay in the creative exercises below.

CHECKING IN

Read aloud *The Dot*, by Peter H. Reynolds, or show the YouTube video.

Invite the group to paint on a large sheet of paper or canvas one dot or many dots. Encourage them to paint the dots with a variety of colors, textures, and tools, asking questions such as these: *What would happen if you painted with brushes? with your hands? What if you just dropped a dot onto the canvas?* As they paint, invite group members to talk about *The Dot*.

What in the story spoke to you?

Then invite the group to enter into discussion:

- What is art?**
- How do you express your creativity?**
- To what forms of art do you naturally gravitate? Why?**

EXPLORING THE WORD

Scripture: Psalm 8

Invite the group to read in unison Psalm 8. (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=218088430>)

Read aloud one of these books:

- *If I Could Paint the World*, by Sarah Massini
- *The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse*, by Eric Carle (You may also wish to show the video of Eric Carle talking about the book at <https://vimeo.com/29415782>.)

Invite the group to continue painting dots, to paint the world as they see it, or to paint God creating the world. (Encourage imagination: *What did God look like when God was creating the world? What did the world look like?*) Ask people to use their hands rather than brushes and to feel the paint in their hands.

As they paint, invite discussion:

Do you imagine God as an artist?

What kind of artist is God—a painter, sculptor, sketch artist, photographer?

How does God create art?

In what ways does thinking about yourself as art change the way you see yourself or the world?

In what ways does seeing the world around you as art change the way that you engage with it?

In what ways does seeing your life as art change the way that you experience or see your life?

When group members have finished painting and discussing, invite them to listen to the song “Surely God Was a Lover,” by Paul Kelly. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzSy7WX6w9I>)

SHARING IN PRAYER

Invite people to sign their dot painting. Then for each dot on the canvas, invite group members to name one person or thing they would like to pray for or about. Ask them to draw or to paint on a sheet of paper or canvas a symbol of each prayer.

TAKING IT FURTHER

- Give each person a set of crayons and paper, and invite people to use the art supplies as a way of engaging with the material in **devozine** this week.
- Purchase “The Samitomoto Drawing Game,” and invite group members to play at this and other sessions. (<http://www.smarterpuzzles.com/shop/family-games/samitomoto-drawing-game-2>)

The arts refers to the theory, human application and physical expression of creativity found in human cultures and societies through skills and imagination in order to produce objects, environments and experiences. Major constituents of the arts include visual arts (including architecture, ceramics, drawing, filmmaking, painting, photography, and sculpting), literary arts (including fiction, drama, poetry, and prose), performing arts (including dance, music, and theatre), and culinary arts A good definition of the arts is given by the Free Dictionary as "imaginative, creative, and nonscientific branches of knowledge considered collectively, esp. as studied" artistic merit." [4] So, one could conclude that art is the process that leads to a product (the artwork or piece of art), which is then examined and analyzed by experts in the field of the arts or simply enjoyed by those who appreciate the arts. The same source states Hello everyone: The following sentence is from "The black Madonna" a short story by Doris Lessing. I would like to know the difference in meaning... "The arts" Vs. "Art". Thread starter High on grammar. Start date Nov 29, 2012.