

ICDF NEWSLETTER- DECEMBER 2017: “The Professional Christian Dancer”

**DANCE ARTISTS ON MISSION**

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Every artist wants their work to be significant! But what makes our art or our dance meaningful to us? and to others? We often forget that all believers in Christ have been called to participate with God in achieving His *Missio Dei* (His Mission) in the world. So what is God’s *Missio Dei*? and how can we participate in it, experiencing the excitement of knowing that our artistry has a grand purpose and significance?

God’s Mission is His overarching plan to bring redemption and reconciliation to the whole world. That is, to all people of every race, language, and people group. And, in redeeming and restoring mankind, God also brings all things under his Lordship in His eternal Kingdom. This plan of God’s has been in place since the foundation of the world and the subsequent fall of Adam and Eve, and has never really changed. His heart is to restore mankind to his original God-given identity, in perfect relationship with God and each other, and to extend and multiply His kingdom upon the earth. In sync with this mission God has called all Christ followers to participate in co-partnership with Him: continuing on with Jesus’s ministry of healing, delivering, saving, comforting, and exhorting others to enter into His kingdom of joy and righteousness. So, how do believing artists fit into God’s *Missio Dei* upon the earth?

It is clear that each member of the Body of Christ has been uniquely gifted and equipped by the Holy Spirit for building up the Church and for being a blessing to the world. This will look different for each person as they follow their unique call to ministry, which is the specific outworking of the Mission of God in practice. For dancers too, this can be outworked in a myriad of ways from being a part of a dance worship team in church, to being a part of an evangelistic or outreach dance team, to being a professional dance artist, or being part of a professional dance company. In all these roles, the mandate for the believer is essentially the same: we are called to bring God glory and to represent Him on the earth.

Even though each ministry or calling has a very specific and unique goal or mission that fits into God’s overarching *Missio Dei*, in every case we are called to be ‘salt and light’ to the world. Some dance groups have a specific goal to reach and redeem their audience, presenting a sermon in motion, whilst some individual dance artists are called to “stand out” and be a personal witness to Christ in the midst of a very secular and ungodly dance scene. Thus, wherever you are called to be, it is important for each believer to have a deeper understanding of this overarching calling and what that entails (Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 28:16-20). We do not “minister” by ourselves, or out of our own strength; “ministry” takes place when we co-partner with God through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are not connected to Christ, and our ministry doesn’t flow out of His flow of life within us, then we are just engaging in fruitless works.

Many believers either have a lack of knowledge about God's mission for the world, or need regular reminding or recalibrating to make sure they are on track with their various passions, pursuits, and ministries.

We need to remind each other that God's plan for redemption of the world has not ceased and is still continuing today. We, as believers, have a vital role to play in this ongoing mission in our particular generation. We need to know the times we live in, we need to shine Christ's light the brightest, and we need boldness and courage to declare the only means of redemption for mankind is through the inward transformation that Christ has made available to us.

God has entrusted us with much as He calls us to partner with Him in this matter of reconciliation of His created order. What could be more inspiring, grander, and challenging than this Mission? There is simply nothing else like it ... true ministry flows from the heart of God and not from our own selfish desires ... and there is nothing more exciting and invigorating as knowing you are working in and for God, to bless others. So how is your joy level? Are you on target with your mission, or do you need recalibrating?

The book of Acts includes many examples of the disciples participating with God in ministry as the Holy Spirit guided, empowered, and comforted believers in their mission. Are you spending the requisite time in prayer to receive your marching orders from the Master to go out into the world and be a blessing? Throughout scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, the Bible displays the grand mission of God for all of creation. God's mission is a universal work of reconciling all of humanity to Himself and re-establishing His reign over all creation.

Let's take a quick look at the overall panorama of God's story. From the beginning of the fall of mankind, when Adam and Eve experienced a spiritual death and separation from God due to sin, God had already proclaimed that he would send a Savior to redeem mankind (Gen. 3:15). From that day, God's mission of redeeming the fallen creation was already at work. It is seen in His calling of Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations of the world (Gen. 12:1-3); His calling of the people of Israel to be holy and priestly people through which He will bring a Savior to the world (Ex. 19:6); the ultimate atoning work of Jesus Christ by which all people can be reconciled to God through faith (Col. 1:19-20); and the growth of the Body of Christ whom God has commissioned to 'make disciples of all nations' and to establish His kingdom through the empowering of his Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20).

Think about how your dance ministry fits into this mission... What aspect of God's heart or ministry focus has God called you to? Are you pursuing your call in obedience to the Holy Spirit's promptings or are you trying to copy someone else's ministry? God's will for you will include such details as geography, right relationships, leadership and accountability structures, the specific work of the ministry, and a lot more. God seeks to reconcile a fallen humanity to Himself, and He also intends to restore the people of this fallen humanity to their original holy identity, so there is much to do!

Another aspect of God's mission for the world is to re-establish His Kingdom over all creation, which was inaugurated at the coming of Jesus Christ. This

means that all kingdoms and all arenas of human flourishing, whether it be government, education, medicine, science, the arts etc. need to come under the rule and reign of a righteous governmental head. Thus God's kingdom will transform all aspects of life. It was indeed mankind who chose, and who continues to choose, to not live under God's reign and to instead live unto themselves. Therefore, as God seeks to reconcile mankind to Himself, He also seeks to reconcile mankind to His kingly reign. Moreover, throughout Jesus' ministry on earth, He was proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God by healing the sick, casting out demons, comforting the downtrodden and calling people to repent from their old ways (Matt. 4:17, 23; 9:35; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:43-44; 8:1). By doing these things Jesus showed that the reign of God was present in a new way to defeat evil and conquer sin. The full manifestation of His kingdom will not arrive until His return, however we are to continue faithfully with His work of preaching and teaching about the kingdom to come.....

It is interesting to note that before the coming of Jesus the people of Israel did not have a specific missionary mandate except to be a witness of God's righteousness among the nations. However, this missionary mandate has experienced a reversal since the coming of Jesus, where the people of God received a commission to be sent out into the nations (Matt. 28:18-20, The Great Commission). There is a common misconception that the term 'missions' refers only to the cross-cultural effort of evangelism and social justice, however the mission field is everywhere; even in our own neighborhoods. Furthermore, mission cannot be reduced to evangelism only, because mission consists of the broad range of activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery... slavery which extends from economic necessity to God-forsakenness.

It is clear that all ministry is God's ministry, as all lasting and fruitful ministry is done out of the power of the Holy Spirit through the universal mission of God. It is a privilege that all Christians have been invited to participate in the divine plan of God to restore all of humanity to Himself and to His Heavenly Kingdom. It is out of this knowledge and conviction that believing artists and dancers can find their true purpose and confident justification for ministry.

As Eric Liddell said in the movie *Chariots of Fire*: "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." I can also attest to the fact that "*when I dance, I feel His pleasure*". If God has called and gifted you to dance, and you name His name, then bring Him glory through your giftings, and never forget that you are part of a much bigger mission that began in the very heart of Father God.

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