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Beauty, Creativity and the Evangelical Community

R.C. Sproul suggests a possible synopsis of the primary attributes of God to include truth, love and beauty. Truth could represent our pursuit to understand the doctrines of the faith. Love encompasses our relationship to God and our behavior to each other. But how do we handle beauty? I appreciated Ben Rasmussen's editorial entitled "Christian context loses creativity". As one who is passionately intent on doing just what Ben desires to see, the true integration of faith into significant work, I, too, am at times disappointed in the western evangelical community's aversion to truly creative solutions and expressive possibilities that fall outside "the norm". Granted, beauty is more difficult to define than doctrine or perhaps the biblical expression of love, but not any less important. I suggest that beauty is our hearts avenue to an intangible, deep, stirring, significant, lasting, motivating, and attentive connection to God. Perhaps the greatest barrier to appreciating this kind of beauty however, is our penchant for the pragmatic and efficient. While these are generally good qualities, it seems to me that for some reason, we have elevated them to reside with truth and love ... to the exclusion of beauty. Both of these characteristics place value on something for its ability to solve a problem, reduce our exertion or save time and money. When push comes to shove we tend to place final value on things that simply satisfy a function. Could it be that we don't pursue beauty because we can't measure it? Does stewardship only involve money and time? Shouldn't we be just as diligent to practice the stewardship of beauty? I recently came across a thought-provoking quote. It states, "All creativity requires a balance between stability and anarchy". To better understand this maybe we should use a synonym for anarchy, revolution, more specifically, a dramatic change in ideas or practice. What could that look like? First, we need to decide that beauty belongs with love and truth. Second, just as we seek to foster an environment where we wrestle with difficult doctrine and where we challenge each other to be open in our relationships, so to, we need to foster an environment where we pursue the varied expressions of God's beauty. We should encourage creative efforts whether it is in our specific discipline or our everyday awareness. Is this a quantifiable thing? Its not supposed to be. Will we be

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vulnerable in the face of an undefined future? Yes. Will our hearts gain a deeper understanding of the nature of God? I have experienced this and it is incredibly elevating. Is it worth the risk? Pursuing God's beauty is not a risk! David said in Psalm 27, "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple".