

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Chapter 1: In The Beginning...Creativity
- Chapter 2: The Origin of a Creative
- Chapter 3: What's Your CQ?
- Chapter 4: Identify Your Personal Genetic Code
- Chapter 5: Prepare for Creative Activation and Growth
- Chapter 6: Name Your Seed
- Chapter 7: Dreams and Visions
- Chapter 8: Determine Your Place on the Creative Continuum
- Chapter 9: Spot Your Personal Mine Fields
- Chapter 10: Survive the Wilderness
- Chapter 11: When the Vision Dies
- Chapter 12: When You Make It
- Chapter 13: Creative Staying Power

CHAPTER 1

In the Beginning...Creativity

Creatives have been called many things over the years— weirdos, long-hairs, rebels, eclectics, non-conformists, loners, dreamers, and even geniuses. When we creatives told our parents what we wanted to do with our lives, we often heard, “That’s just a hobby. Go get a real job!” We attend our class reunions and shudder when we hear classmates discuss their Junior League stints, or who has just been named president of a Fortune 500 company or married one. With shame we compare ourselves with peers who are now respected bankers, engineers, doctors, or entrepreneurs. When the attention turns to us and we say, “Well, I’ve been researching a screenplay for the last five years,” they reply, “Really? Who do you work for, Paramount?” When our response is, “No, but I’m getting ready to submit it to them,” we receive the all-too-familiar look accompanied by the following unspoken thoughts: *Doing all this work for no money...one of those dreamers. Totally out of touch. Never make anything out of herself.*

I have periodically grappled with questions about being creative: Why am I different from other people? Why do some people have more creativity than others? Where does it come from? Can we get more? Why are some people creatively more successful than others? Why does the Bible say, “Many are called, but few are chosen”? Does that saying apply to those in the creative arts?

I recall attending a music conference prior to the “mother-of-all-music-festivals,” Explo ’72 in Dallas, Texas, where I was one of the performers. Composer/arranger Paul Johnson was speaking to some of the most well-known Christian music groups in the country. Already sensing that my destiny had something to do with music, my ears perked up when he made the perplexing statement, “Many believe they are called...but only a few are chosen. There are too many Ishmaels in the Christian music industry...not enough Isaacs.” He was exhorting us to examine ourselves and determine if God had truly called us into this work, or if we just wanted to be in the business, hoping to find some measure of self-glory. I became troubled, and began to ask myself over the years, “Are you sure God is calling you to do this?” After

all, I certainly wanted to be in the center of God's will and not an Ishmael!

I have struggled all my life trying to understand what it means to be a "creative." I use the word "creative" as a noun rather than as an adjective for a very simple reason: there are certain people like me who function totally in the creative arena, meaning they make their living at and through their creativity. Not too many years ago, I went to my trusted therapist (who helped me weather many a storm), and with tears streaming down my face, asked the most sincere, gut-wrenching question I knew how to ask, "How are creatives supposed to live in this world?"

For most of us the struggle is intense because the truth is that we're different. We don't fit in. During college, I went to fraternity parties with my friends and always left filled with self-recrimination because I couldn't stand them. Everybody else was having a good time, why couldn't I? There had to be something wrong with me. It took years to understand that my "differentness" was nothing to be ashamed of, but rather to be embraced. It was during those miserable years (the bulk of my life) that I was book-ended by feelings of shame and self-affirmation.

I have spent countless years trying to understand just what creativity is, and to train myself in it. At any given time if I were called upon to come up with some creative idea—a song, a film, a book, a marketing slogan—or formulate a business solution, I have always been able to produce. I never had to wait for some mystical moment when the inspiration would hit. For me, the inspiration has always been there, but my challenge was learning how to consistently tap into it.

Creativity is not an ability for which I take credit; I have long understood that this quality belongs to the divine arena and is bestowed as a gift or a blessing. I remember once many years ago someone asked me, "What would you most like to be known for?" After some thought, I replied, "I would like to be known as someone who was trusted and respected to come forth with whatever was needed in any given area. If Stephen Spielberg needed a hit song for the closing credits of his next film, he would call me. If NBC were looking for a hit TV series, they would take my call and read my latest project. If Hallmark were searching for a brilliant new marketing campaign or product line, my card would be in their rolodex."

I am a generalist, a creative problem-solver who applies the creative gifting to whatever medium in which I am currently working.

Because I have continually stretched my own creative envelope, I view creativity with complete awe. It is a gift the world needs most desperately now, as we face countless crises and challenges: immorality, ethical chaos, global terrorism, wars, economic instability, epidemic diseases, overpopulation, and poverty, just to name a few. As a world, we need creative solutions.

I believe the Creator has these solutions. Furthermore, I believe He desires to gift His children with world-changing and wealth-producing blessings so we can be better stewards of those things most on His heart and fulfill the purposes for which we were created. We are approaching a time in history like no other, when a great wave of creativity is building in the heavens, ready to be released. Will we catch it? Will we be found worthy as a generation to receive the inspiration and the ideas that will better our world? Or will God find a people glued to their remotes or their favorite website, receiving data from transmitted sources other than the Divine? Just what is creativity, and how can we use it to change our world?

UNDERSTANDING CREATIVE TEMPERAMENTS

I stumbled onto the beginnings of understanding being a creative through a client of mine that regularly utilized the Myers-Briggs personality type testing in their personnel interviews. One day I took it just for fun. Through it I learned that most creatives (writers, musicians, artists, dancers, performers, sculptors) fall into the NF temperament (Intuitive-Feeling), which is one of four basic personality temperaments according to Jungian theory. What became more enlightening to me, however, is that this group is a far cry from composing 25% of the population! On the contrary, extroverted NFs make up only 5% of the world's population, whereas introverted NFs like me make up only 1% of them. No wonder I had felt different all my life! I also began to understand that the central core need of NFs is to find their meaning and purpose in life. That idea certainly resonated with me because over the years I often was depressed, thinking I had missed my purpose, only to begin the search all over again. As Keirsay and Bates explain in their classic book, *Please Understand Me*, it is the NFs "restless search of self" that runs throughout his/her life.¹

Other personality types began to interact with my findings, and something resonated about creativity with them as well. I recall

the first Creativity Training Workshop I held to try out my material for the masses, so to speak. One man who had never thought of himself as creative stood up at the end during our feedback time, and with tears running down his cheeks he remarked, "I don't know when I have ever been so personally inspired. This workshop really spoke to me." I suddenly saw a bigger picture and began to understand that creativity is not merely limited to those few who try to earn their living through it. Rather, it is that divine quality which separates us from the animal kingdom...that mysterious essence given to everyone by the Creator, in varying degrees.

In the mid 70s, I had a performance scheduled in Nashville. I was fronting for well-known author Ann Kiemel and knew that one or two record producers would be in the audience, coming specifically to hear me. Pretty heady stuff. I decided, therefore, that rather than do the traditional intro of Ann after my show, I would write a song about her by way of introduction. I thought it a brilliant idea. The song was cleverly written, since I had researched all about Ms. Kiemel. I had the audience in the palm of my hand. At the end of the song I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Ann Kiemel." The audience went wild.

Following the performance, many flocked to say how much they enjoyed my show. I remember three young teenage girls in particular, saying, "You were wonderful. You are so talented." I basked in their adoration. A couple of years later, I realized that one of those girls was a very young Amy Grant. Imagine my reaction watching her career rise to stardom while mine shrank into oblivion. For more time than I'd like to admit, I was pretty disgruntled, thinking God somehow favored Amy over me. Even worse, that she was a chosen "Isaac," and I was the rejected "Ishmael."

It was years later when I came to realize that the Isaac/Ishmael syndrome is not quite so easy to peg. The reason is ironically simple: God is after our heart attitudes, and our obedience and perseverance in whatever He has called us to do. His concern lies in the process of our personal growth, not simply in how far we have climbed the record label ladder. My career was just as important to Him as Amy's, but unfortunately it took many years of heartache and self-recrimination before I realized it.

Interestingly, some years later Amy and I met once again at a writer's meeting in Nashville. We shared the same publisher at the time. After the meeting, she came up to me and graciously said, "I know you

from somewhere, but I can't place it." By then I had gotten free of the green-eyed monster, and we laughed at the memory together.

MY CREATIVE BACKGROUND

I have earned my way as a "creative" for over 30 years. During much of the 70s, I performed a one-woman show on the college circuit. I sang, spoke, played piano and guitar, wrote all my songs and material, designed my marketing materials, planned and orchestrated my tours, and recorded an album.

It was actually during this time in the mid-70s when I sensed God's call that I was to be a songwriter. I had written songs since the age of 13, but performing showed me that there was no greater thrill than to pour myself into a song and touch an audience with it. Embarking on my songwriting path, I invested all my energy into learning everything I could about the craft. I commuted to Nashville; worked with renowned publishers; and with some of the top writers in the business, wrote all kinds of songs, everything from country to disco. I was relentless in my obedience to the call and in honing my songwriting expertise, but I was also forced into the practicality of helping us earn a living. My husband had begun graduate school, and I came off the road and started my first normal job as the first female disc jockey in Lexington, Kentucky. There I was also challenged to write and produce radio commercials. After a move to Denver, again I was challenged by the head of a recording studio to begin my first entrepreneurial venture: a jingle production company. During the 1978-79 recession, I segued into promotional work for Denver's CBS affiliate where I won an Alfie Award for the best 60-second TV spot featuring original music.

In the early 80s after our move to Georgia, I began my own advertising agency in order to support my songwriting pursuits. Creative Concepts Advertising initially began as a jingle writing/producing company, but mushroomed after I implemented a creative strategy God gave me in 1985 to help local businesses in Northeast Georgia. I later learned that God's larger plan for my business expansion was to enable me to survive as a single mother, since my husband would soon leave me.

This idea was actually the first of many creative business solutions given to me, not only for my personal survival, but also as a way to help others. The concept, which challenged existing FCC broadcast

rulings at the time, took nine months to develop. I created an entirely new paradigm of broadcast production which I termed M.A.G.I.C. Spots (Multi-Advertiser Group Image Campaigns). Through them, small-town businesses could be grouped together in a single commercial and share the cost of a major-market advertising campaign. The success of these M.A.G.I.C. spots not only enabled these businesses to grow, but it grew my advertising agency into one of the most respected agencies in North-east Georgia as well. Though my previous expertise was in jingles and broadcast commercials, I was forced to stretch creatively again as two of my initial three M.A.G.I.C. clients asked me to handle their advertising and promotional work. To do so, however, required that I learn a new set of creative skills—graphic design and layout. Soon, I became adept in designing logos, print ads, business proposals, brochures and direct mail campaigns, as well as placing media buys and managing entire promotional and image campaigns. In retrospect, I must say that the birth of a creative idea is one of the greatest adrenaline rushes in life. In a later chapter, I will discuss it further and suggest ways to become more open to these glimpses into divine illumination.

The 80s stretched me into yet another arena after Tom and I adopted our son, Tyler. Though I was ecstatic about my new role as a mother, my trips to Nashville ended as did my musical dreams, or so I thought.

One day a friend said, “I don’t want to see you give up your music. Let me help you apply for a grant. What have you always wanted to do?”

Finally, I replied, “I’ve always wanted to write a musical,” but reasoned I would write the music while someone else wrote the story. I was advised, however, that to increase my chances for a grant, I should write everything. So I said I would try. But what to write about? I waited for my next big idea, which finally came the night of auditions for a theatrical musical production where I was hired as music director. Never had I been involved in theater before, and never had I been a musical director. But I was hired to produce instrumental tracks on my newly purchased recording equipment for which I had no clue how to operate...yet!

A young African-American woman auditioned *a cappella*, but there were no parts for black actors. Why she was there I’ll never know, but I will forever be grateful. Her voice blew me away. It was then that I knew I was to write a black musical, one that would showcase undis-

covered talent like hers. The year was 1986, and there were no contemporary black musicals at that time. Weeks later, I received a letter from the governor bestowing the grant and informing me I had one year to write this musical. My only problem was that my husband had just declared he didn't want to be married anymore! Now as a single mother trying to write a black musical, I faced my greatest creative challenge at the worst personal time of my life.

My assignment, however, turned out to be a gift from God because it was a creative way to channel my hurt and anger. That year changed my life for until then, I had never written anything longer than a 3-minute song. During those 12 months, one passage in the Bible captured my thoughts: "In everything there is a season...there is a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:1-4). Writing the musical I entitled *A Time To Dance* became an exercise in faith that God would one day bring me from my time of mourning to a time of dancing.

In 1987, I received a phone call from a producer who had read my fledgling script and wanted to discuss staging the musical. During our initial lunch meeting, David Thomas, artistic director of the ART Station Theater in Atlanta, said, "I'm sorry to stare at you, but I have read your script and listened to your music, and never knew until this moment that you were white." I smiled and replied, "David, you've given me the greatest compliment you could ever give me as a writer, for if these characters, songs, and the overall story rang true inside of you, then I succeeded as a writer."

A Time To Dance was produced first in 1989 and has since won 11 musical awards. Throughout the following pages, you will see how it was to change my life again eleven years later.