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Art as Prayer

Eric Nykamp

Madison Square Church

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C20: Art as Prayer, Eric Nykamp

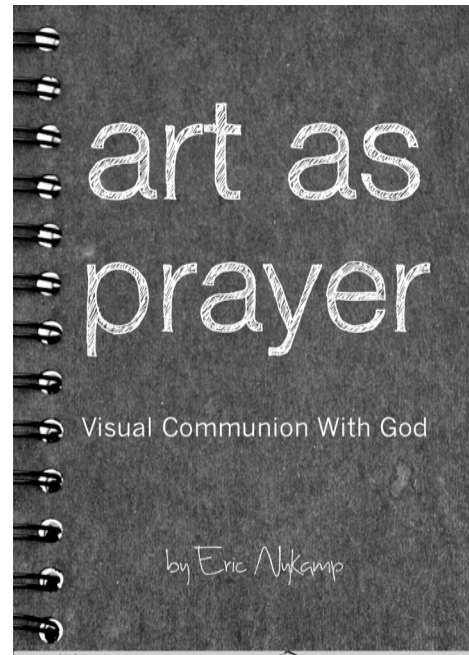
art as prayer: a way of prayer

As an artist and a Christian, I find it fascinating to hear people talk about their prayer life. Many people find deep meaning in following conventional methods of prayer, and some even find strength in reading or speaking written prayers. Yet, for me, I find it interesting to hear the stories and to listen to people describe their methods which are less conventional means to know God. For myself, I find that I grow closest to God through the process of making art, noting that each step along the way is a means of prayer, a way of becoming more intimate with God. Here are some of the exercises that I have found helpful to me.

The prayer of the eye

This is often where ideas begin, the notion that I as an artist “see” something (whether real or in my imagination) that give me an artistic idea. I believe that God is continuously surrounding us, wanting us to be more aware of His constant presence. These moments when I “see” something, which gives me an idea, are a means that I now recognize as God “getting my attention.” This kind of “holy noticing” is what I believe is the prayer of the eye.

So to pray the prayer of the eye is to focus on observing, noticing, and being aware of both God and the world around us. When we are able to balance both of



Excerpt taken from [Art as Prayer: Visual Communion With God](#) by Eric Nykamp, available at www.lulu.com. The e-book is coming soon!

Many of the paintings in this presentation are included in this book.

these things, we become more in tune with the still small voice of God, which in visual form, become the seen evidence that God desires to commune with us.

The prayer of the hand

If God speaks visually to us, I find it natural as an artist to reply back to God in a similar manner. My hands are the lips with which I speak my prayer back to God through the language of the visual. In this way I imagine that God and I commune and communicate back and forth as I visually flesh-out my idea first as a sketch, then as I respond in the moment to the paint on my canvas as I work the image there. This back-and-forth visual communication is a way that I spend long stretches of quiet time in the presence of God, completing the circle of visual communication.

The prayer of the moment

Each painting captures a moment in time, a moment that has a definite beginning and which ends when the painting is complete. The ideas, emotions, struggles, and joys of creating are permanently recorded in the surface of the paint, a visual utterance of my prayers frozen in time. At this point, the actual painting itself moves from a process to an object, which can in turn be responded to when used to begin a prayer of the eye. Each person who views a piece of art and reflects on it (while in an awareness of God's presence) is similarly praying a "prayer of the eye", the kind of artistic prayer that begins the prayer cycle yet again.

About Eric

Eric Nykamp is an artist, worship leader, and drum circle facilitator living in Grand Rapids, Michigan with his wife and three children. He and his family attend Madison Square Church.

You can learn more about Eric at his websites:

www.ericnykamp.com and www.ucircles.org