

BUILDING TEMPLES
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This life is for building temples.

There's a voice that blows like the wind at the back of your mind though, and it tells you that words are wasted, imaginary things and that temples are built with greater offerings - the ones that go on lists and require only sweat and you point to them at the end of the day and proclaim *progress*.

Not success or satisfaction, but progress at least.

That voice is the critic that never sleeps and is ever "*put to shame by an image; For his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.*" (Jer. 10:14)

He doesn't own his shame though - he gifts it to you who listen. And he tempts you to build profane temples in places you were never meant to stay, where plastic is king and fake is safe and temples house merchandise for profit.

We run in circles to create breathless life. We clone images of our own design and step away from *imago dei* to manufacture, produce, and proliferate. The world is driven by the lust for what we can have. We long for what we can hold. We believe in what we can see.

"*Concrete concepts*, please, and make them utilitarian. It doesn't need breath as long as it has good functionality."

We substitute duty for art and usefulness for slow thoughts. "Practical" rules our day and the windy voice in the recesses of our mind blows harder with each product produced.

We are supposed to be Makers of Great Art, Builders of Temples, Children of the Living God and not slaves of dead duty or chasers of public opinion.

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Our art needs a new spokesperson.

We need a better Voice to give decibels to our living and breathing and wrestling and surrender. A better Champion. A hand pressing heavy on our back and feeding courage to us in large chunks of words and small portions of brave, because we are building up a world of living temples.

In the desert, God called the artisans by name. We wonder if He even knows ours. We make our name tags and chase our fame so that maybe God will notice our talents and pick us and confirm our hopes: that we are artisans, too.

We lose sight of His breath in us. We forget - how quickly we forget that God the Creator made us creative in His image and our best work bears His name.

He *is* calling the artisans and it's all of us in one way or another. The painter and baker and poetry-maker. The one with music in her head. The one with beauty in his heart. The one with hammer and nail and those who dream in wide swaths of color - purple for the curtains, gold for the fastenings. All the ones who see heaven and feel earth and endeavor with all their breath to write this life as a shadow of things to come, He's calling.

His voice is softer than the bite-y whisper but louder because we hear it in our hearts, where passion trumps utility and logic. He calls us by names we never dare to call ourselves.

So we write, because we hear words touching earth. We fight the blowhard voice of Practical and Useful with a sword in one hand and a pen in the other.

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His hand is a comforting pressure at our back and our very breath - every exhale joining the incense of others - is pushed out and fills the earth with facets of His glory.

We breathe deep and our lungs fill with a life lived or dreamed or begging to be written.

We make larger spaces in a world that closes in on us

We are artisans in our own deserts, who build houses for His glory with beauty and craftsmanship. The landscape starves for inspiration and our hearts would dry without beauty, would wither and evaporate right away. So we erect the ebenezers that help us through our own desert and we leave them standing for travelers coming behind, markers on the pilgrimage.

We are the author-artisans whose craft makes your sand-stung eyes weep in the desert of your own isolation. We build tabernacles for your dry places, because life is about building temples, and we are.

In our promised lands we make plans for bigger and better and we write them, sing them, and scribble on napkins the way to the Temple. We want desperately to build up edifices of His glory and a place for the worshippers to come.

We see in the greens of spring, and the hope that springs eternal bleeds out of our fingers and we write it. We put it down in permanence, scary and hopeful and open for ridicule.

In the end, all that we've written become plans for another generation - words pressed heavy in us that will be a balm in their desert and a plan in their Jerusalem. Our children, our grandchildren, for as long as the Lord may tarry, will read our hearts on screens and pages. Our craft will live longer than our lives because His hand presses heavy and they understand in writing what He whispers in our hearts.

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We are all David, handing the plans to our children and trusting the work, not to men, but to Great Inspiration: *“All this,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”* (1 Chron. 28:19)

The LORD makes us understand in writing how these living temples are built and how His Spirit indwells the space we make - comes right in and even pushes against our comfortable boundaries. We make more space with the poetry in our prose, and we tell our posterity the plans He has pressed heavy on us.

“Build the temple,” we say emphatically. Build it now, build it forward, up and ever on. *“Do it and do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God - my God - will be with you.”* (1 Chron. 28:20)

This life is for building temples.

We are the scribes of everlasting stories and whether we congregate in deserts or meet in Jerusalem, if the Author of a good story lives in us, we have temple building to do.