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TWO PAGERS FOR THOUGHT- TAMING CHURCH PRODUCTION

There is a common beast among us in church production. It is a two-headed modern monster. The culture outside the church sets the pace and leaders of congregations are challenged to either chase it or re-define it on a weekly basis.

Every church's creature is different and every Creative Arts Director and/or Worship Leader will find their feet firmly planted when face to face with this hybrid animal sooner or later.

But let's go back to the beginning of the recent modern church. Let's check the test tube and petrie dishes to see where all this began. I'll use a movie reference to illustrate.

In the movie Jurassic World scientists create a new breed of dinosaur. They use "a little bit of this and a little bit of that" and before they know it they have created an "asset " that is 'bigger' 'badder' and with 'more teeth'. In the big business of amusement parks they have to 'compete' and appeal to an audience that needs something 'new'.

Well, you guessed it... something goes terribly wrong. That's right it wouldn't be a Hollywood blockbuster if it didn't right?

The 'asset- hybrid -dino' goes on a murderous rampage because it was raised in captivity and never had to socialize. The story take a brilliant turn at the moment when the lead (Chris Pratt's character) says, "Now I know why they didn't tell us what this dinosaur is made of...Its part raptor" (Raptors are the highly intelligent ravenous predators...etc... the movie is worth watching again)

Church production is like a hybrid beast. Every church mixes its God-given art and artists with the "raptor" language of the world. There are parts of this 'test tube baby' that was never meant to exist. Good intentions started and have successfully navigated the mega-church-big-production-seeker friendly-model. They set out to evangelize and 'speak in the language of their secular listeners'. The wave of that inspiration has carried us from conception and into today. But now there is a problem... now there is an issue that is much like

the old 'telephone game' where something is said to several people and by the time it gets to the last person, what was said is nothing like when it started.

God's grace covers new movements and the creativity that led to that convergence of time. But then the temptation to copy and paste and re-do what worked before enters the building. The 'raptor' of creating a different "Oscar's production" each Sunday morning put together by volunteers and halfway trained personnel, comes in like a flood. The task is daunting and can easily turn into our own towers of Babel. But maybe by just talking about it, identifying it and bringing it to light we can stop the rampage and receive God's grace and inspiration for what He wants to do with the people He has put together.

So here are a few thoughts to ponder. Maybe they will help to manage, tame and hopefully domesticate the monster of church production.

- 1. People first...no matter what... Schedule first...Invest into, encourage, train, counsel etc. Make this the priority. An atheist looking in will be moved if they actually see a difference in how church people do production.**
- 2. Always tether everything creative and/or 'cool' and 'amazing' (quotes are in there for a reason) with what is Godly and scriptural. God's Word never changes and is the same yesterday, today and forever. There is always a cause and affect. Be mindful of this at all times. In the beginning you will think this instruction is for the congregation and every visual and audio presentation. But soon you will realize this directive expands to a much greater distance. This is for you and your discipline and for your team and every worker helping to make a grace filled -evangelizing-Christ -centered stand in the midst of a broken world.**
- 3. Like our own bodies, we must always feed the spirit man. The flesh man must weaken in order for the strength of God in our lives and the lives of others to prevail. The church is a body and the Arts department holds in many ways the majority of percentage in the area of the "management of flesh". Fine Art, Visual Art, Music and Story are powerful vehicles that walk a very fine line (In my opinion narrower than the camel going through an eye of a needle). When you are a Christian and even more so a Christian leader trying very hard to speak the dialect of a secular world, you will have to answer the question, "Why do you guys audition at church? (This was a question from a world famous drummer who is on the fence of believing.)**

In the end, what answer will we give? What details will we provide as to why we chose that graphic design, chose that song or made those volunteers work all those many extra hours for Christmas and Easter.

Only you...Oh mighty leader will be able to answer. Only you will be able to account for all that was given and to you was required. Only you will be able to explain how you caged the two-headed hybrid and took IT into submission for the glory of God.

