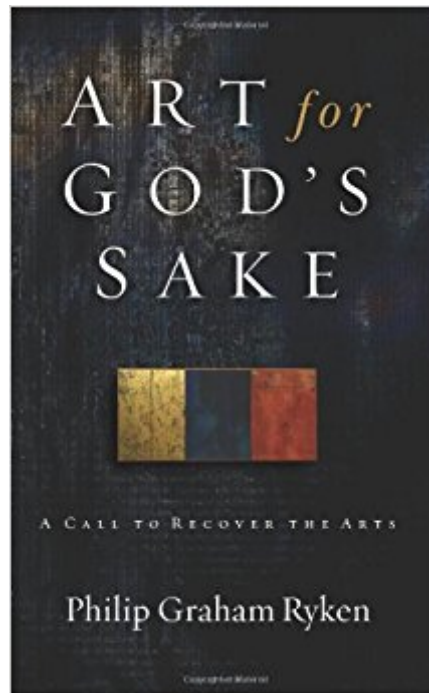


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# Art For God's Sake: A Call To Recover The Arts



## Synopsis

The creation sings to us with the visual beauty of God's handiwork. But what of man-made art? Much of it is devoid of sacred beauty and is often rejected by Christians. Christian artists struggle to find acceptance within the church. If all of life is to be viewed as under the lordship of Christ, can we rediscover what God's plan is for the arts? Philip Graham Ryken brings into sharp focus a biblical view of the arts and the artists who make art for God's sake. This is a concise yet comprehensive treatment of the major issue of the arts for all who seek answers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A small book on a big topic is a dangerous proposition. It may show disrespect for its subject by bragging that it can be read in a short time, such as Kant in 90 minutes. (Kant in 90 minutes is not Kant at all.) On the other hand, a short book can thoughtfully introduce a profound subject worthy of further consideration; it may be a primer. *Art for God's Sake* is a worthy primer; it addresses the relationship of Christian faith and art in the hope of helping Christians "recover the arts." Philip Graham Ryken, Pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and the author of several previous books, including *Written in Stone* (an insightful study of the Decalogue), has in sixty-four pages outlined a biblical view of art's place in God's world. Ryken is moved by the plight of the Christian artist whose calling and work is misunderstood or rejected by the church. He realizes that Christians may be suspicious of art because of their concern for idolatry and their repulsion toward much of contemporary art, which has abandoned the ideal of beauty and revels in the bizarre, the transgressive, and the outright ugly. Ryken also laments that Christians too often reduce art to

utilitarian and evangelistic purposes that fail to honor art as art. Further, Christians often laud art that does not take the brokenness of life east of Eden seriously. Quite frequently, Christian art is little more than pious kitsch, which he aptly describes as "tacky artwork of poor quality that appeals to low tastes" (p. 14). Yet art should be consecrated to the glory of God, and Ryken instructs us briefly to that end.

I am the worst artist in the world. I'm sure there are some who would contest that claim, but if you were to ask me to draw something (anything!) I think you'd quickly agree that I am about as bad as a person can get. It is strange that I am such a terribly poor artist as I come from a long line of very capable artists. Yet somehow, when the various family genes were combined to form me, all of those artistic genes fled. Not only am I the worst artist in the world, but I also have a strong dislike for most of the visual arts. For many years I thought that my dislike of these forms of art stemmed from my lack of talent in this area. But after much reflection I think there may be another source for my dislike of art. In my education I was constantly taught that art is inherently subjective--that meaning is assigned to a piece of art not by the artist but by the person gazing at it. I was taught that I was to study a work of art, allow it to speak to me, and understand the meaning of the work to be whatever came to mind at that moment. I may not have been able to express why I found this unsatisfactory, but it led me to dislike art and even to distrust it. In recent years I have been recovering from this viewpoint. *Art For God's Sake* by Philip Graham Ryken, pastor of historic Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, has helped in this recovery. It is a short book, weighing in at only 64 pages, but one that is thick with satisfying, biblical reflections on the arts. Ryken argues for the recovery of the arts among Christians. He argues also for the objective nature of the arts--an objectivity which encourages us to seek out the meaning the artist meant a work to display. The purpose of the book is twofold.

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