



Wisdom in Watercolor

The Power of Art Lessons

(One Wise Way to Rekindle Your Artistic Gifts)

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Your artistic bent is a gift from the LORD. Whether you want to develop those skills as a career change, serious retirement past-time, casual hobby, ministry avenue, or simply to rekindle a passion from your childhood, one of the hardest aspects of the journey is simply knowing where to start.

Lessons are a great place to begin, but they are not all created equal.

When I first started painting again as an adult (after a 25 year hiatus), I asked my husband for watercolor lessons as a Christmas gift. He did a little research and found a wonderful local art teacher who met with me for a series of 6 lessons to help me get started again. Here are some things I've learned since then (as a student and as a teacher) that you may want to consider as you rekindle your artistic gifts. . .



Wonderful Workshops- These types of art lessons are typically taught in a series of weekly lessons or as consecutive one- to five-day workshops. Community colleges, local art associations, and museums regularly offer workshops led by local and/or visiting artists. Workshops are great ways to see how artists from different parts of the world create their art. A side benefit is that you get to meet fellow artists. I treasure the new "artist friends" I've met through the workshops I've taken. If you like being in a group and learning in a systematic manner (like following a curriculum), this is may be a great option for you. You need to be prepared to spend some of the time waiting as well as the instructor helps other students or everyone in the group completes a step before anyone may go on to the next one.



Private Lessons- If you'd prefer individualized instruction and one-on-one attention, private lessons are a terrific option. They typically cost more than workshops but can be scheduled more flexibly. You can maximize your time and may actually feel more free to ask questions (without the fear of asking a silly question in front of a group of strangers). Private instructors can also tailor each lesson to your needs, making the added expense more cost effective in the long run.



Get Creative- If lessons just won't fit in your budget, consider some creative ways to get them. As a right-brained art teacher, I *welcome* the opportunity to trade

my art lessons for goods and services others have to offer. Over the years, I've exchanged lessons for data entry services, business plan development, catering at my annual open house, and, even a hair cut or two. Assess your skill set and see if there is a service you can barter for lessons. Don't be scared to ask if bartering is a possibility. If the instructor agrees, be sure to discuss the details of the arrangement so you're both on the same page in regard to what is expected. (For example, four art lessons in exchange for four hours of data entry.) Remember: When the going get's tough, the tough get creative!



Select Teachers Carefully- I encourage you to seek out teachers whose work appeals to you visually, and whose values and ethics are in line with yours. For example, I made a decision a long time ago not to create gory "shock value" or irreverent art that is an affront to the LORD or to Scripture. Therefore, I avoid art teachers who lean that direction.

How can I learn about a potential teacher? Do a little research. Many teaching artists have websites that allow you to get a taste of their work visually and read their artist's statement (their philosophy). Ask other artists in your area about the local or regional art teachers who have made a difference in their lives.



Online vs. Live- There are plenty of great online resources to show you art techniques (like YouTube, art supply websites, and even individual artist websites), but there is *nothing* like being face to face with a teacher who can paint along side you, offering interactive advice, correction, and instruction.

No matter the format of your lessons, you will undoubtedly like some particular sessions better than others, but each one you attend will teach you something new (even if it's "this medium is not for me"--- that's a very valuable piece of information). Other times, you may discover a new technique or art supply to add to your repertoire. Be assured that, with every lesson, you will always learn *something* and, in the process, you will grow in the wise use of the artistic skills the LORD has woven into your life.

Happy painting!

(By the way, I still teach occasional workshops. I'd love to get to paint with you some day! Make sure you're on my e-newsletter list at www.WisdomInWatercolor.com to receive updates about my workshop schedule.)



Debbie Hannah Skinner is a follower of Christ who is also an artist, national speaker, and writer. Her colorful "paint talks" combine biblical teaching with a watercolor painting that comes to life on stage, inspiring women to strengthen and soothe their souls by savoring Scripture. She hopes you will drop by **WisdomInWatercolor.com** for a visit!

