The War of Art

This is not a mistake. I don't mean the art of war, that is a different topic. *The War of Art* is the title of a book, by Steven Pressfield. I did not like the book. But its main idea, reflected in the title, really helped me.

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Confession and Celebration

Before I dive in, I have a confession to make and a celebratory note to share.

Celebration: This is issue number 50. This means I've been at it for over four years now. I am not running out of ideas, so that is good. I still thoroughly enjoy doing this, which is even better. So here's to the next 50 issues!

Confession: However, this last month was a bit full. It included the Biblical Studies Consultation for YWAM Europe, which took a lot of my time. I have therefore, and this is the confession, been looking for a shortcut. I will present the text of my talk at the consultation. In itself, this does not call for an apology. The topic of the talk fits within the overall subject area of this blog, which is all about creating a learning site in the area of biblical studies. Being creative work, this is a form of art. The apology goes to those who were present and have already heard the talk: sorry, you are not getting anything new here.

Art and War

So what is the war of art? There are two words here that need clarification.

Art. First, the word *art*. This is art in a broad sense. Anything we craft or create – such as a lecture, a sermon, or a learning environment – is art. So teaching the Bible is a form of art, as is any form of creative work.

War. The second word: *war*. It is Pressfield's metaphor for what happens when we attempt to do creative work. It is as if everything within and around us, but especially within us, conspires to stop us.

Resistance. A different word for this is *Resistance*.

It's most common form is **Procrastination**. We will do anything but the creative work we are called and created to do: a computer game, Facebook, answering e-mails…

Imagine the following situation. What if we were completely free to do whatever it is we most want to do, with an audience and a platform guaranteed, no meetings we HAVE to attend or other responsibilities we MUST do? What would happen? What would we accomplish?

I am in a situation where, for significant stretches of time, this is almost how it is. There is not so much that I HAVE to do. There are few meetings. There is so much that I would LIKE to do. And it is so hard to actually do it, to get it done. It is amazing. It is war.

Why?

As an aside, if you ask, why resistance, Pressfield thinks it is above all our fear of success. Imagine: what if we hit the bullseye and become truly successful at what we do? This would catapult us beyond what we know and feel secure with. We are therefore afraid of success and sabotage ourselves. That is what Pressfield thinks. He may be right.

How to Win the War

It has certainly been a multi-year battle for me. And here is the number one rule or guideline I have discovered for myself, next to "I must have a schedule." (That is another one: I *must* have a schedule, one for the week; next to regular to-dos, this schedule needs to include some priorities set in the form of larger projects I need to give time to.) It is this.

> **Do your creative work first.**

Of course, there are days, perhaps many, where we have to be somewhere and do something else first, and it is not in our power to decide this. But when it comes to those blocks of time that are under our control, what do we do first? With what do we start?

I know that for me, this is the key to creative productivity. I am deeply convinced of this. And yet, amazingly, so often, I start with other things. Easier things. But things like correspondence, accounting, administration, or booking a flight, normally don't need my best energy. Creative work does.

By the time I'm done with the easy tasks and turn my attention to creative work, the best of my energy has been spent. Or I am out of time. That is the War of Art. It is a daily battle. If we want to fulfil our creative potential, we must learn how to fight it. For me, it starts here, and I keep telling myself (because too often, I am still not getting it):

> **Wilrens, do your creative work first.**

Feel free to fill in your own name.

> **…., do your creative work first.**

Questions to Ponder

I finish with a few questions. Perhaps it is worth taking a minute to think about this:

- What is your number one challenge in terms of managing your time?
- What is a crucial principle or technique you have found to be helpful for you?
- What difference would it make for you if you would learn to "do your creative work first"?

Any answers you would like to share? Leave a comment http://www.wilrens.org/2018/06/CALS50/#respond

References

Steven Pressfield (2012), *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* (New York: Black Irish Entertainment LLC)

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