

Nigel Goodwin was born in 1937. He studied at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London in 1958 and in 1959 he began his acting career. From 1959 to 1964 he worked in theater, film, T.V. and radio. In 1964, he studied Theology at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire. In the spring of 1965, he was given a vision for the Arts Centre Group and in 1971, he and his wife opened their home to those in the world of the arts, media and entertainment industries for discussions, Bible study, prayer, encouragement and networking over delicious meals. In the summer of 1967 he began studies at L'Abri, Switzerland with Dr. Francis Schaeffer and Prof. Hans Rookmaaker. In 1982, Genesis Arts Trust was formed in response to the increasing work Nigel found himself involved with internationally and as an organization to support Christians in the arts. He has helped to found arts groups across Europe as well as in the United States, Australia, and South Africa. In 1994, Nigel and his wife moved the base of this work to the Isle of Wight. Their home on the island is used as a retreat for those of influence in the media and arts. Nigel travels internationally, preaching, teaching, lecturing and leading workshops on the media and arts. Nigel and his wife Gillian are the parents of three children. He was interviewed in Wheaton, Illinois, by Mark Neal.

Mark Neal: I'd like to begin with a comment you made yesterday. You said that modern technology has stopped us looking for fear of engagement, from listening for fear of hearing something. The idea of technology and its effect on culture has been an issue I've been interested in for many years. I feel that technology mediates much of our existence by keeping us from what is real and true, but also contributes to the erosion of an ability to think well or even of a desire to think at all. I'm interested to know what you think about this information and technology age and about Aldous Huxley's idea in *Brave New World* that we will be enslaved by what we love, that we will come to love our oppression and the technologies that hobble our ability to think.

Nigel Goodwin: Well, part of my whole background was the Huxley's and Bertrand Russell and professor C.M. Joad, and [Malcolm] Muggeridge to an extent; they were the *Brave New World* crowd between the wars who were going to build this world without God from man as the center of things. God was Victorian, outmoded, outdated, he wasn't relevant, you know, the God they didn't believe in. And of course the second world war shattered those dreams for awhile because Mr. Nasty, Slimeball, Screwtape, whatever you call him, is so brilliant at shifting the goalposts. I think it's really important to your question to look back to the Industrial Revolution and ask what was that for William Blake or for writers or artists who were used to the power of the word, the poem, or paint as a language? And why was the Industrial Revolution such a threat to that power? Because technology is ostensibly a servant, not a master. It encapsulates what is out there that we didn't appreciate or understand or know of beforehand. But it does so in order that we might know. I think that it is initially not a slave driver, or it's not Caesar that we bow the knee to. Unfortunately, it becomes that when we rely on it as the be all and the end all.

Mark: Which we do. If you asked the average person, I think they would feel crippled if they couldn't have their cell phone or their computer immediately accessible.

NG: I said to Dr. Litfin (president of Wheaton College) over lunch the other day, why not, as president, have one day a week where you ban all technology? He didn't think that were possible. He smiled but shook his head. I'd have a go if I were president at doing that if only to appreciate what you were missing. If there is no clean water, and you've had clean water, how might you reexamine what it was

like to have the first sip of water when it was clean? We think it's our right to have all this. To simply give a cell phone to every African who hasn't yet got clean water or the means to find it is somehow taking away from a culture something of their humanity and their humanness.

I think [Hans] Rookmaaker's phrase that I've been quoting on campus comes into play here: Why did Christ die? Did he die to make us Christian, or did he die to make us human? If God's intentionality, the great artist's intentionality, was that we should be fully human, to what extent does technology serve the journey of becoming fully human? So I don't want to say, as an old guy talking to a younger generation, "ban it."

Malcolm Muggeridge, who I spent time with in the last ten years of his life, said "I've put my television in the trash bin." And I said, "Malcolm, you made your name on television, people know you from the media. Why are you chucking it out now?" And he said, "Because I don't need it." I said, "Fair enough, you don't need it, and your grandchildren may not need it either, but it will be a part of their wallpaper." Cannot we teach them about the uses and the abuses of the machinery? The average American watches fourteen years of television in their lifetime. And it's not one piece of technology now, it's a whole field of guns, bombardment, armory, weaponry, that is beating on our humanity like a tornado and dehumanizing us. I've watched kids crossing the campus here, and I've touched them, and they've looked quite shocked, and they've got their iPods on and everything. To their credit, they do pull them out of their ears and stop for a moment because they saw me in chapel, and do their best to speak words and smile with their eyes and their faces. It's kind of a restorative moment to their humanity, you know? Technology is just so invasive. So invasive.

Mark: Having said that it's an arsenal that we're up against, what is the Christian's and the artist's role in engaging the culture on this particular front?

NG: Right. Well, to say I think, all that we've said and more. To constantly revisit the source and ask yourself "is it serving me, am I doing what I do better, because of this? Am I more fully human because of this or is this occupying me? Who's in the driving seat of my life?" The more we provide to help us ostensibly do the job, the more we need to watch our backs. It's interesting, in the "free world," we've become more fearful. To what extent is technology making us fearful? How does terrorism, for example, find new ways with tools that are around, to create terror? Because we're not free, we're more bound. When I come into America, I will now be strip-searched, my eye will be checked out, my passport has always been checked, my whole hands are checked. What else will I check, with technology, to make people feel safe sitting next to me on an airplane?

Mark: Well, it's interesting. I think we've seen losses in the relational realm as we use technology to retreat from face-to-face conversations through social networking or any type of technology or media that allows us to communicate at second hand. Do you think there have been losses, as a result, in the spiritual realm?

NG: I don't want to compartmentalize the spiritual. I think there's a wonderful connectedness between the mental, spiritual, and physical which we're all meant to interact with to the fullness and betterment of one another. One of the problems of specialization today, even in academia, is that we've lost connectedness, so not too many people talk about the beauty of science, the aesthetics of science. They talk more about what it will do. And even in art today, because the left brain dominates, so often leadership adopts the utilitarian attitude about art.

Why did the great artist, the creator, first make things and what are we meant to learn from that? Does he do a bad job or a good job? In terms of who we are in the spirit realm, does the computer itself devalue the spirit world? Does it in some way control the spirit world and what's out there? I believe that the prince of the power of the air doesn't have to be the prince of the power of the airwaves! I think Christians should be involved in the airwaves, you know? The first place to be captured in any battle is nearly always the TV network and the radio station because people know that these voices touch masses of people. So again, am I a lesser human being or more of a human being because of technology? I think it's not either/or. Is it serving the fullness of who I am or is it diminishing and weakening?

I said the other day that God strengthens our weaknesses, whereas Screwtape weakens our strengths. Because if you can weaken people's humanity, you can devalue and trash it and if you can trash it, you can deny it or dismiss it. Whereas if you're strengthening somebody's weaknesses, then you're enabling them to be more whole, complete, God's intention for them. You know, human becomings, becoming like Christ. Each person's way of seeing, knowing, interpreting, comprehending, and understanding will ascertain the way they do, see, and respond to life. This is not so much an answer as brush strokes on the canvas, you know? Technology can be a wonderful tool. But is the television on when you go and have dinner with somebody or do we immediately answer the phone when it rings? We need to invent more pleasant tunes, you know, happy ways of interrupting. It's very strident technology. It's not very melodic, therefore not very human. And it's instant and demanding. We all think we need to be out there twittering, but perhaps we don't. In the past, if people wanted you, they found you. If they really wanted you.

Mark: It's been that way for two thousand years. In the last one hundred years, look where we've gone. The pace of life was incremental then, and now we can't keep up with the changes.

NG: And people are falling apart. In the business world I've been saying that people should bring the soul of who they are to the business place. Because people will do better business if they don't lose their humanity in a driven world. But equally, you can help the art world be less self-indulgent, less flaky, less, you know, weird sometimes. So I think the technology was first made, consciously or unconsciously, not actually just to make money, but to communicate better. I think the question is communication. What are we actually communicating when we are fully involved? Does email communicate? Well, it communicates something. But how do we fight for the personal and the relational with technology? How do we help people know that we are actually thinking of them, caring about them, reaching to them, that they matter, that they're important? I think the more technology we have the harder we have to fight for that. Eyeball to eyeball. Ear to ear. Hand to hand. Heart to heart, you know? How do we waltz together and dance together in the cacophony of modern choreography?

Mark: You speak quite a bit about the image of God in us and how we are fearfully and wonderfully made and how we should look for that spark of the image of God in each person. Like striking a match in a dark room, or lighting a candle in Plato's cave to show light to the people chained to the walls. How do we, on a practical level, begin to recognize the image of God in others in a world that's become increasingly impersonal?

NG: Right. Great question. Well, I think you can only recognize in others what you've identified in yourself first. If you haven't embraced your own humanity and a sense of what that means, you won't

recognize it in anybody else. But to the extent to which you have, it is lovers who love and carers who care. Angry people create pools of anger and poison. So how comfortable are we in our own skin? We've all got room for improvement and it isn't about improving somebody else's skin. I believe God does that. But it is about bringing to the table that which you have and honoring and recognizing other people's humanity. If you believe every single breathing human being ever birthed is made in God's image and you know that because you've discovered it and it is being discovered in you, then that will be your approach to everybody. I'm late for most things because I engage everybody, you know? Do I do that from a pure motive? I don't know. Who has a pure motive? When my wife and I did a Myers Briggs test years ago it came out "Nigel needs people"(my wife didn't). Extrovert, introvert. Complementary gifts, in a way. I think extroverts often are covering up something, I think introverts are often dying to get out. But do we battle with that all our lives or do we recognize difference and the complementary nature of difference and dance with it?

If everyone is made in the image of God, light in the cave, then I think it's really important to look for that in others and to encourage, feed, water, and support what you see: the light that lighteth every man or woman that comes into the world. Made in his image, they have a light. However broken, postmodern, scattered, beaten on, bashed, hurt, abused. We're all some of that, It seems to me when you feed that without judging it, when you love that without judging, it flickers and flowers. It may even shout at you, because darkness retreats after shouting at light. The poison, the pain, the dehumanizing in a person (scripture calls it sin), that which separates us, is exposed by the candle that comes towards it. And sometimes the more anger that comes from a person, even rational, well-argued anger, the more it has to do that. And that only affirms the images of God in that person and in you. Does that make sense?

Mark: Yes. Absolutely. It brought to mind a quote by Lewis, I'm not sure where it is, it may be in *Mere Christianity*, but he says something to the effect that if you could see every person as they are they would be either a being of such glory that you would be tempted to fall down and worship them or a horrible creature, that you would only meet, if at all, in a nightmare.

NG: Right. Exactly. And Lewis is brilliant at that. He had to discover it from Tolkien, but it is the mystery of the myth, the far back story. Everyone has in them a yearning, a memory, a longing. One of the things that really keeps me going is people who cannot escape from their skin and their humanity. And while there's breath in them, there is a faint or not so faint *cri de coeur*. Things ought not to be this way. And people are not logical to their presuppositions of meaninglessness. They can argue it well in books, on paper, and on platforms around the world, but they can't live it, eat it, and sleep it 24/7. If you blow your brains out like Hemingway because you can no longer get it together physically and have relationships, you're saying you've got brains to blow out. So something is there rather than nothing. And there are some givens about humanity, aside from any faith journey, that are always true. In making us in his image, God has put into us the desire to yearn for and find him. So, in every human being there is a treasure hunt, you know, and there are clues. And godly men and women who've begun the journey are called to help each other help the world find its journey. G.K. Chesterton said, "people who don't believe in God don't believe in nothing, they believe in anything." So there's no such thing as unbelief. Everyone has a world view and that world view is declared in their journey every day.

Mark: Samuel Johnson wrote or said once that the only end of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it. What would you say should be the end goal of all art, of all striving to produce something good or beautiful or truthful in a world where art is increasingly marginalized by

multiple distractions or seeming irrelevancy?

Nigel: I think if art becomes irrelevant, the world becomes sterile. Art gives to the world potency. It gives to the world aroma, diversity, imagination, creativity, color, shape and design. Why would the great artist say of himself that he makes things? Why would he invite us, in his wisdom and generosity, to be little creators under the creator? To be partners? As I understand it, the arts are a gift to humanity from the one who made us, and as such, do you leave the gift under the Christmas tree the whole year and let the children wait? Or do you give them that gift so they may unwrap it and work with it? So a received gift, an unwrapped gift, a worked out gift requires skill, wisdom, knowledge and ability. It requires a whole number of ingredients.

A college can look at the gift in a student and help to discern what the best tools are that will polish and improve that gift in order for it to be put into the workplace that it might enhance, bring beauty to, and challenge the marketplace presuppositions. It might do a whole number of things out there in the marketplace. So a gift has to be received and worked at, but then it has to be offered back, initially, to the one who gave it to you because it is actually given to show forth the giver's "who-he-is-ness," his glory. As C.S. Lewis says, glory is not a cheap commodity in a 21st century hymn, shouting at God, you know, it is a weighty, heavy, reverent, hushed, bowing before. It is huge, big-time stuff. And God isn't asking for a big canvas, he's asking for obedience. He's asking for us to get on with it. He's actually saying "this is what I put into you, this will help to make you more who I intended you to become. And so it's not only for his glory, it's for the good of the one working at it. But also, part of art's intentionality is for the watching world. For God's glory, our good, and the good of the watching world; that is the role of art. People don't have to wait until they've got all those things right to make art, but I think that's the high calling of art.

Mark: Speaking of that calling and of making art, in his book *Art Needs No Justification*, Hans Rookmaaker says this: "Christians need to wake up. Their feeling of powerlessness or futility needs to be replaced by a new impetus to work." So taking into consideration this age's particular climate, why are we asleep and what does it take for us to wake up?

NG: Yes. It often does take shock to wake up. What does God have to do to get our attention? He's chosen a people to reflect his glory and when they don't do it then he chooses other people, you know? The birth of Jesus is a wake up call. The life of Jesus is a wake up call. The death and resurrection of Jesus are a wake up call to the world to be reconciled. "All things," says Colossians, and that includes the arts, "are being brought back." Now some things will not come willingly back, but all *will* bow the knee, all *will* be brought back. I think what Rookmaaker's saying there is that to be a Christian and to be an artist is not some soft, subcultural activity. We are called, wherever we are, to be a counterculture, to be the aroma of God. And in a broken, fallen, fragmented, postmodern world, it gets tougher and tougher. This is not a world where godly values are the norm. It never has been of course, in one sense. So to say America is a Christian country is probably not a healthy, honest statement. For me to say that I'm here at Wheaton as a missionary to Wheaton and America makes people smile because they wonder, you know, do we need you or do we need *it*? Yes, we do. We haven't got it all together. An empire crumbles from without when it crumbles from within, and when we lose the roots, the essence, the value of who we truly are, then God provides voices to come and remind us even though we may not hear or listen. And it's tough today. There are so many choices.

Coming back to your first question, we live in a supermarket world. Outside of Wheaton, people won't get three meals a day. Certainly not in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Some people are working at

their humanity on one slice of bread, you know? So here, to whom much is given, what's required? And Rookmaaker's saying "wake up." As Bono said, "wake up dead man." And I think we need to wake up. We need to be much more intentional in the creative process, in how we make, what we make, the materials we work with, the care with which we work, everything, really. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all. That's our calling. So I can't just say beautiful things to you and go outside this door and live the lie, live ugly, you know? Good coffee is good news. Make good coffee. Bad coffee is bad news. Whatever you touch, whatever you handle, the clothes you wear, the culture you live in, make it good. And don't get so worked up about the culture. Let the wheat and the tares grow together. Don't spend so much oxygen in the culture wars, battling what you don't like. Work at and invest in the wheat, in the positive. Does that make sense?

Mark: Absolutely. I have never thought about it that way. I have always thought, "there's this that is wrong, I want to fix it." Not, "there is this that is right, let's try to make *that* flourish.

NG: Again, the enemy loves us to think we can fix it, because then he's diverting us from the good songs. America is very analytical in its culture. It's always been analytical. Analysis is okay, but don't let it reduce, reduce, reduce in order to control, in order to dismiss. Analysis helps us to think we understand, but we don't really understand anything until we practice it ourselves, until we take it on board, until we start living it. And then we see that it's much more than a language, it's a whole way of life and it affects the whole person. Again, your spiritual, physical, and mental being. My phrase is "head, heart and gut for the glory of God." God wants the *whole* person. And some are stronger at eyes, some are stronger at ears, but God wants everything to come to the table. So what does the artwork look like? Well it looks like a banquet, a celebration of difference at the table of the Lord. He's making a banquet.

Mark: Well you've devoted your life to helping artists and Christians engage the culture rather than retreat from it, so I was wondering, is that what you plan on continuing to do? What's next? What's waiting in the wings?

NG: Well, while there's breath in the old body, yes, more of the same. It's been a very lonely journey but there's much more happening than there was 30 years ago. There's not *much* happening, but there's much more happening, if that makes sense. When we began the Arts Centre Group in our home, we were all that we knew that was out there. Now there are lots of things out there. I'm glad to think that people have heard and responded.

Practically and personally, I'm a people person, but I have to write. I believe we all do need to leave some kind of legacy. There's no book at the moment helping young people whose major is in the arts to deal with what Francis Schaeffer called the eleven basic questions. What are the basic questions for those in the arts? Questions such as: How do I cope with rejection? I'm a Christian, I'm in the audition queue, 300 are up for the same job, why would God give it to me? What about moral issues, moral pressures? I'm offered a part in a film, it's a great part, it's a well-written script, but the director wants to twist it for his own ends and wants to make himself look good by changing the script. Do I want to be in it under those circumstances? How do I deal with the get-the-proper-job pressure? Do I know what I need to put around me? Why am I listening to a non-artist who doesn't understand the pressures of what it means to be in the arts? So a book dealing with eleven basic questions.

I also want to do a book called *Letters to an Artist*, kind of a modern day epistles of

correspondence I've had round the world with well-known or not known artists and the issues they're grappling with. I *am* getting on with that. I've stopped talking about it. I've actually got two books filled with ink on paper and I'm now in a kind of self-edit process before handing it over to publishers. Very few publishers take risks. They don't want to lose money and most of them want to make money. How many lunches do you have to have with your publisher until they really understand your heart and say "yeah this is exciting, I want to publish it?" So much is relationship-building, and it all takes time. And I've probably got ten years; I'm a fairly healthy 73-year-old teenager. I have one foot in the body of faith and I want to help the body of faith better understand the whole issue of the art gift. But I have another foot out there in the marketplace and I want to help gifted men and women know the author of their gift. So it's almost creating a halfway house, a downtown café, some space where these two groups can engage each other in apologetics and discussion together, and this second group will hopefully come, some of them, to embrace faith, and the first group will learn how to be in, and not of, the real world.