

In Living Color

By Cloyce Sutton II

One of my favorite books is Jim Krause's *Color Index*. Krause is a professional graphic designer who has authored several "indexes" relating to graphic design, each of which is a collection of ideas on how to create visually appealing graphics. While meandering through a used bookstore, I found his *Color Index*, *Idea Index*, and *Layout Index*.

The book on color shows 1100 possible color combinations arranged into several categories, depending on the designer's desired effect. There is page after page of color samples, palettes, logos, blocks and patterns, covering the full spectrum of color.

Color makes life interesting. Imagine a world of nothing but black, white and gray: how depressing and boring. Color cheers, excites, comforts, and motivates us. Color stirs our imagination and makes us look at mundane things in special ways.

Color has some interesting uses in the Bible:

- ❖ God used the colorful rainbow to assure Noah that the world would never again be destroyed by flood: *Genesis 9.8-17*.
- ❖ Jacob showed his favoritism for Joseph by a multi-colored robe or tunic: *Genesis 37.1-4*.
- ❖ David prepared for the construction of the temple by amassing colorful rocks and stones: *1 Chronicles 29.1-3*.
- ❖ The lavish banquet of King Ahasuerus was marked by elaborate and colorful decorations: *Esther 1.1-9*.
- ❖ God himself sat upon a throne in John's vision, surrounded by a rainbow: *Revelation 4.3*.
- ❖ God described the foundations of the heavenly city by means of colorful gemstones: *Revelation 21.15-21*.

The New Testament uses two related words that may convey the idea of color. The Greek word *poikilo*, originally meant "multi-colored," but normally meant "varied" or "various." Jesus cured "various diseases" (Matthew 4.24); we are tempted by "various lusts" (2 Timothy 3.6); we endure "various trials" (James 1.2; 1 Peter 1.6). A stronger version of the first word is *polupoikilos*, meaning "multivariate," "much varied," or "manifold," used only at Ephesians 3.10.

In two places these words may suggest the idea of color in a fascinating way. In 1 Peter 4.10, the apostle refers to the "manifold grace of God." He is describing God's gifts to us, which are tokens of his grace. Peter says God's grace is "manifold" (*poikilos*): varied, multi-faceted, and multi-colored. Genesis 37.3 (LXX) uses the same word for Joseph's "multi-colored" coat.

In Ephesians 3.10, Paul uses the other word (*polupoikilos*) to describe "the manifold wisdom of God". When God wanted to demonstrate his variegated, richly-nuanced wisdom to spiritual rulers and powers, he pointed to the church, the colorful manifestation of God's wisdom. It is popular to bash the church; to scold her for her past failures; to shake the head and roll the eyes at her collective ignorance; to take her to task and remind her of her flaws. Many view the church as little more than the sum of her faults. God has a different view: she is the bride of his son (Ephesians 5.22-33); the vivid, vibrant, and kaleidoscopic manifestation of his eternal plan.

In our drab human existence; in our black-white-and-gray world of sin and despair, God has shown us the rainbow of his grace and wisdom. It appears as a matched set of stained glass windows hung from the balcony of heaven through which the divine light streams, illuminating our otherwise dark hovels of life.

Are you tired of living in despair; tired of living in a world gone mad? God's grace and God's church bring us into a realm of living color.