

## BONSAI AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

For Will Jackson, a senior M.Div. student, art is a means of deep self-expression. For him it is a way of articulating thoughts and concepts which cannot be adequately conveyed through words alone. “It is a means to reflect the ways in which God creates and shapes us,” says Will.

Drawing upon Bonsai—a Japanese art form using miniature trees grown in containers—Will believes that this process parallels the way we interact with God. “The Foliage has to be cut back in order to shape the tree in the form that is envisioned by its creator. Sometimes we need God to cut things from our lives that get in the way of the masterpiece that He is creating.” A Bonsai artist uses copper wire to coax the way the tree grows. Over a period of time, the tree bends to the coercion of the artist. Will connects deeply with this rich imagery as he understands how God shapes us through God’s Word ultimately for God’s purposes. Will recognizes the tender and tough care that goes into maintaining a Bonsai tree. He likens this process to the one that followers of Christ face on a daily basis. “We are challenged every day to take steps in being transformed by the power of Christ.”



Will has shared his art with the PTS community. In his first year of seminary, he participated in a contemporary worship service with other students drawing upon their gifts in the arts as faithful worship to God. “I had a blast using my art in worship alongside my good friend Robbie Peterson.” Robbie (Middler, M.Div.) ministered through song as Will airbrushed a painting. Upon his return from the World Mission Initiative-sponsored mission trip to Israel and Palestine in 2010, Will was inspired to share his experiences in a special way. He opened an art exhibit at the Seminary and invited the community to partake in the visual fruits of this labor of love. “To share my art with the PTS community continues to inspire me to explore how I can proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ through this medium.”

During Spring break last year, Will traveled to Israel/Palestine on a World Mission Initiative cross-cultural trip. While there, the group toured the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation to gain a better understanding of the obstacles the Palestinians face daily. Moved and inspired by their hope, Will wants to encourage their hearts with this scroll (pictured) that represents the long-hoped for peace between Israel and Palestine.

Will trusts that art has an intrinsic place in the Body of Christ and is needed in the Church. By connecting art and theology, Will thinks of new ways to spread the Gospel. By rendering redemptive images in place of ones that take our affections away from God, Will faithfully bridges the Word and the world.

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
616 North Highland Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
Phone: 412-362-5610



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