

OUR ENTERTAINMENT CULTURE:

Discerning Worldviews in MOVIES

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Romans 12:2 – “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it *without even thinking*. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.” (*The Message*)

POPULAR CULTURE’S INFLUENCE:

Pop culture shapes how we think and feel.

THREE OPTIONS FOR RELATING TO OUR CULTURE:

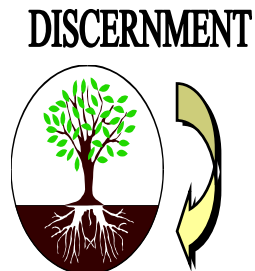
- 1) *Withdraw*, yet, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 says...
- 2) *Assimilate*, yet, 1 John 2:15-16 says...
- 3) *Engage*... see Paul’s approach in Acts 17:16-34...

TO *ENGAGE* THE CULTURE WE MUST DEVELOP DISCERNMENT:

Hebrews 5:12-14 . . . solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to *distinguish good from evil*.

THINK IN WORLDVIEW CATEGORIES:

- Theology: Is there a God, and what is God like?
- Philosophy: What is real, and how do we know?
- Biology: What is the origin of life?
- Psychology: What is human nature?
- Ethics: What is the foundation for morals?
- Sociology: What is the optimum social structure?
- Law: What is the basis for law?
- Politics: What is the best form of government?
- Economics: What produces a sound economy?
- History: How should we interpret human events?



ASSESSING WORLDVIEW MESSAGES IN MOVIES (various movie clips...)

A Biblical View of Engaging the Culture

What do these passages say about how we are to interact with our culture?

Acts 17:16-34

1 Corinthians 5:9-10

Romans 12:1-2

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

How does music fit into God's design and purpose for mankind?

Job 38:4-7

Exodus 15:1-3

Psalms 150

Other verses related to understanding and discernment:

Daniel 1:17

Romans 12:9

Proverbs 2:11

James 5:13

Psalms 26:2-7

Proverbs 20:5

1 Peter 1:12-17

Proverbs 3:21-22

1 Thessalonians 5:21-24

On Being In the World... But Not of It

Acts 17:16-34—Paul's knowledge of Greek philosophy and idolatry gives him an opportunity to share God's truth concerning who God is and God's plan of salvation.

Ezekiel 8:5—God commands the prophet to look at the detestable things of the culture before he can help purge them.

John 8:3-11—Jesus offends the religious establishment for the sake of a redemptive relationship with a sinful woman.

Daniel—was trained in all the knowledge and religion of the Babylonians, yet maintained his relationship with God and knew when to say "no" when asked to go over the line spiritually.

If the shoe fits... exercise!

The Bible admonishes us to keep ourselves pure *and* presents a strong case for engaging the culture. Because both are biblical, we should strive to be excellent at both. Which spiritual muscles do you need to tone?

For further study on understanding popular culture:

- *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment*, Bran Godawa, IV Press, 2002.
- *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, by Neil Postman, Viking, (1985).
- *Shows About Nothing: Nihilism in Popular Culture from the Exorcist to Seinfeld*, by Thomas S. Hibbs, Spence Publishing, (1999).

For movie reviews, check out...

- www.godawa.com (website and movie blog by Christian screenwriter Brian Godawa)
- <http://stevendgreydanus.com> ("Decent Films Guide" from a Christian perspective)
- www.screenit.com (there is a "free" site as well as subscriber edition)
- teachwithmovies.com (ideas and questions for interaction with children or students)

For "one-stop" info on film, TV, music and more...

- www.pluggedinonline.com (Focus on the Family's "Plugged In")
- www.christiananswers.com

OUR ENTERTAINMENT CULTURE:

Discerning Worldviews in MUSIC

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MODERN MINSTRELS:

Song writers are the poets of our day, and their worldview is conveyed in their lyrics.

THE MESSAGE IN THE WORDS:

THE MESSAGE *OF* THE MUSIC:

What Plato knew... (through reason)

- MELODY => MIND
- HARMONY => HEART
- RHYTHM => BODY

What we know... (through research)

- *Moody blues*: Human attitudes of hostility, fatigue, sadness and tension decrease with classical and “designer” music but dramatically increase with “grunge rock.”¹
- *Making mice dumber*:
 - o Mice exposed to 3 weeks of heavy metal music navigated a maze significantly slower than mice exposed to Mozart and mice with no music.²
 - o Rats exposed to repetitive “minimalist” music from before birth to 60 days old were unable to navigate mazes at all whereas rats exposed to Mozart music were able to learn mazes over twice as fast as those with no music.³

- *Making Connections*: Mice exposed to Strauss waltzes showed increased and orderly neuron development while those exposed to "disharmonic" non-synchronized drum beats showed erratic and pathological growth of neurons.⁴
- *Making Children smarter*: Preschool children given six months of keyboard instruction increased spatial-temporal IQ scores by an average of 46% over other supplemental instruction (singing, computer, free play).⁵

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE: KEEP YOUR MIND "TURNED ON!"

Colossians 3:1-17 – "set your heart on things above"

Philippians 1:9-11 – "discern what is best"

Philippians 4:8 – Think about things that are excellent!

1 Peter 1:13-2:3 – Prepare your minds for action!

1 Peter 2:11 – Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul.

Research on the effects of music:

Educational Cyber Playground lists summaries of various research on music and intelligence: <http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Music/musicsmart.html>

For further study on Popular Culture and MUSIC:

- *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes, Christians & Popular Culture*, by Kenneth A. Myers, Crossway Books, (1989).
- *All Shook Up: Music, Passion, and Politics*, Carson Holloway, Spence Publishing (1998).
- *Crisis in Christian Music* by Jack Wheaton (Hearthstone Publishing, 2000) Available from Southwest Radio Church Ministries, 1-800-652-1144.
- *The Mozart Effect* by Don Campbell (William Morrow & Co., October 1997).

Online insights into contemporary pop music and musicians... www.cpyu.org

Online "one-stop" info on film, TV, music and more... www.pluggedinonline.com
(Focus on the Family's "Plugged In") or www.christiananswers.com

ENDNOTES:

¹ "The effects of different types of music on mood, tension and mental clarity" (McCraty, Barrios-Choplin, Atkinson, Tomassino) *Alternative Therapies*, Volume 4, No. 1, January 1998.

² Music, Mice & Mazes: "The Classic/Rock Run" (1996, David Merrell, Virginia State Science Fair). Music, Mice & Mazes: "Changes Through the Ages" (1997, David Merrell, Nansemond River High School, Suffolk, VA).

³ "Improved maze learning through early music exposure in rats" (Rauscher, Robinson, Jens) *Neurological Research*, Volume 20, No. 5, 1998.

⁴ "Neural plasticity of mus musculus in response to disharmonic sound" (Gervasia Schreckenber & Harvey H. Bird) *Bulletin of the New Jersey Academy of Science*, Volume 32, No. 2, pp. 77-86, Fall 1987.

⁵ "Music training causes long-term enhancement of preschool children's spatial-temporal reasoning" (Rauscher, Shaw, Levine, Wright, Dennis, Newcomb) *Neurological Research*, Volume 19, No. 1, February 1997.