

Application of a Biblical Worldview: Arts and Entertainment

We are drawing to the close of a series on worldviews. We have recognised in this series that all of us have a worldview, formed consciously and less consciously. It forms the lens through which we view, understand and make sense of the world and thus ultimately determines how we live.

Today I would like to take a Biblical worldview and apply it to the domain of the arts and entertainment. What I do with this domain, can be done for each domain in life.

You see, God is a King, and Kings have Kingdoms. A King has a realm where His rule applies. Where He is in charge. The domain of a king is the territory over which he exercises authority and dominion. Jesus taught His disciples to pray:

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Mat 6:9-10, NKJV)

God desires for His Kingdom to come on the earth. It should not remain within select Christian groups who keep it to themselves.

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”” (Luk 17:20-21, NKJV)

The Kingdom of God starts within us, with heart change and a choice to submit every aspect of our lives to the one true King. And then our minds must be renewed so that we understand what God's rule and reign looks like in different aspects of our lives. If I don't know what His rule and reign look like, how can I be submitted to His Kingship? And then we need to renew our minds as to what His rule and reign looks like in the various spheres or domains of society. In other words, we form a biblical worldview. His Kingdom then comes in our hearts and lives as we walk in submission to his Lordship in every area of our lives. And then we should be praying for His Kingdom to come in the various domains we work and live in and allow Him to make us the answer to those prayers where He desires (like He did with Nehemiah).

“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” (1Co 4:20, NKJV)

“But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luk 11:20, NKJV)

God doesn't desire for us to keep the Kingdom of God to ourselves, but He desires His Kingdom to come on the earth. The whole earth.

God does not require His followers to be violent and enforce His Kingdom on others externally. Rather it is internal to external.

God desires His Kingdom to come in the various domains or sectors of society.

There are various ways to break up the different sectors of society, but a common way is to separate them into the following domains:

Kingdom Domains

1. Family
2. Education
3. Church
4. Government
5. Business & Economics (including agriculture)
6. Health, Science and Technology
7. Media & Communication
8. Arts, Entertainment & Sports

Today we are going to apply a Biblical Worldview to arts and entertainment. Let's look at this scripture first in 2 translations:

“We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.” (Col 1:15-16, MSG)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (Col 1:15-20, NKJV)

- When we look at Jesus, we see the Father and we see God’s purpose in everything created, including the arts.
- We should see the Father and the Father’s purpose in and through the arts. It started in Him, was created by Him, finds its purpose in Him and is for Him.
- He should have pre-eminence in the arts.

As you are aware, currently the Olympics are taking place, and the Olympic opening ceremony has caused worldwide uproar. The artistic director of the Olympic opening ceremony, who himself is an actor and stage director, Thomas Jolly, put the show together from his worldview, and the ceremony reflected this worldview. The worldview ideas being put on display and celebrated should not surprise us. These are the ideas that are very popularised right now. This is the reality of these domains. If the influencer or leader does not have a biblical worldview, and leads in accordance with an unbiblical worldview, we may be left with an outcome we don’t like. If, however, the leader and influencer has a biblical worldview and can lead and shape in accordance with that, God’s Kingdom can come in that area.

And that, ultimately is how reformation can happen. When we have people who are Kingdom people with a Biblical worldview, shape what happens on the earth in accordance with a biblical worldview.

Thomas Jolly: artistic director of the Olympics opening ceremony, speaking of the opening ceremony said the following:

“I did not intend to be subversive or to mock, or to shock. ... Last night they were republican ideas, inclusive ideas, ideas of kindness, of generosity, ideas of solidarity, which I think we desperately need. In France, we were allowed to love who we want, how we want. In France we can believe, or not believe. In

France we have a lot of rights, and I wanted to convey those values throughout the ceremony. The scene in question intended to promote tolerance of different sexual and gender identities.”

Whether part of his show was intended to be a parody of the Last Supper or not, should we be surprised and shocked by what was portrayed around that table in the presence of small children and broadcasted to the world? (Drag queens, a transgender model, and dancers, who were lined along a table with a semi-naked singer painted in blue). What was that? It was the expression of a worldview and values that are espoused in that nation and in many nations of the earth.

I love what pastor Nigel Desmond said in his commentary on the matter:

“I, like millions of Christians was both horrified and shocked by the mockery offered to our faith. Truth be told I was shocked, but not surprised, the mockery of Christ and the open contempt for our most cherished values and institutions are now so common that statements that would’ve been radical and revolutionary in previous generations are so banal now that they are mainstream.”

That’s the thing, right? Jolly was authentic in his work. I didn’t say I agree with it. But he was authentically expressing his beliefs and opinion and those held by many in France, it seems. Or at least those expressed by himself and others and reflected in the legislation in that country, - as he explained in his rhetoric.

This is the point. We cannot separate our beliefs and worldview from how we live and what we do. Our work will reflect our values. Our expressions of art will reveal our worldview at some point. Whether consciously or less consciously. When we are given platforms of leadership or influence, our worldviews will be evident and will influence others. So today, like I said, I would like to look at a biblical view of the arts and entertainment.

Name, nature and attributes of God to be displayed through this domain:

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether

thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things have been created through him and for him.** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col 1:15-17, NIV)

All things that have been created have been created through Him and for Him. The arts and creativity comes through Him and is ultimately for Him. It should display who He is. His glory and beauty. And should glorify God. It is for Him.

i. God is Creator

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

ii. God is beautiful:

One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. (Ps 27:4)

iii. God is an Artist

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?” (Psa 8:3-4, NKJV)

“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psa 19:1, NKJV)

iv. God is a Potter

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we are the work of Your hand. (Isa. 64:8)

v. God is a writer

“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” (Psa 139:16, NKJV)

vi. God is a poet

Much of the book of Psalms is poetry, along with Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Job and so forth.

vii. God is a song writer

“Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel.” (Deu 31:19, NKJV)

“He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD.” (Psa 40:3, NKJV)

“The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song shall be with me— A prayer to the God of my life.” (Psa 42:8, NKJV)

viii. Jesus was a carpenter

“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.” (Mrk 6:3, NKJV)

These are some of the artistic attributes we can note. The point is that God is creative. God is an artist. We were made in the image of God and have creativity wired into us. Artistic creativity is not the only type of creativity God has given us. Other examples of God's creativity in us may be a creative problem solving ability, or the ability to create wealth. Whilst for my sermon today, I will focus on creativity expressed in the domain of the arts. Some are called into this domain to create and glorify God through the art that He has graced you to create.

Think of who God is. Think of his attributes. These are meant to be communicated through whatever art or creation we are doing.

“The church has shrunk God from the God over every area of life to the God of personal salvation. With this shrinking of God has come our diminished creativity, limited imagination and a superficial understanding of the role of arts in our world”.
Tendai Chitsike

A biblical worldview applies to all of life including the arts. God has an opinion of the arts, He has a purpose for the arts. He has a standard for the arts.

Purpose:

Some of its purposes include to provide rest, relaxation, restoration (of health) to our body, mind and soul. To provide for beauty, recreation, music and enjoyment, edification, refreshment, education and glorification of God.

“Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behaviour today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.” Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Deut. 31:19-22

And so this gives us a clearer picture of the purpose of the arts, and the standard by which to assess it. When we see things portrayed and communicated which are contrary to God's beauty, and portraying perversion. It is clear this is an aberration of what God intended for the arts.

The arts is the context within which many, and many of the next generation are grappling with philosophy, worldviews and understanding life.

“This life's dim windows of the soul, distort the heavens from pole to pole and goad you to believe a lie, when you see with and not through the eye”. - William Blake

We cannot and should not view the arts with our eyes, without a standard to measure and engage with what we are viewing. We need to see through the eye with our consciences activated. Not with the eyes, devoid of a biblical worldview and conscience.

In a speech at the USC Entertainment Law Symposium in 1988, British film producer Baron Puttnam (*Chariots of Fire*, *The Killing Fields*, *The Mission*), reminisced about his own childhood, growing up in the United Kingdom but watching American movies: *“Movies are powerful. Good or bad, they tinker around inside your brain. They steal up on you in the darkness of the cinema to form or confirm social attitudes . . . To an almost alarming degree, our political and emotional responses rest for their health in the quality and integrity of the present and future generation of film and television creators . . . I remain entirely convinced of the law of cause and effect. I also firmly suggest that the images of the filmmaker are responsible, frighteningly responsible, for the attitudes and behaviour of the young and overly impressionable.”* **Whether Christian viewers realize it or not, Hollywood will always influence and shape the values and culture of a generation that is impressionable.**

Today this obviously is expanded from Hollywood to Instagram and Ticktock and other social media platforms.

Sir David Frost, OBE (1939-2013), an English journalist and media personality, once humorously but perceptively remarked that “Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn’t have in your house.” You can see a play in a theatre, on Broadway, turn on the TV to watch a movie or cartoon, or listen to music and “you will find a certain philosophy of life is being endorsed, espoused or questioned”.

“Let me write the songs of a nation - I don’t care who writes its laws.” Andrew Fletcher, Scottish political activist (1655-1716).

“The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” - Johan Sebastian Bach

Church leader Chris Wienand wrote: “The demise of the arts in the hearts, minds and lives of the church is surely an indicator that revival has been reduced to a charismatic experience and not the full embodiment of the faith as portrayed by the reformation and its artistic voices”.

Isn’t it fascinating that the first mention of someone being “Spirit-filled” was a craftsman by the name of Bezalel, not a prophet or preacher?

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. (Ex. 31:1-5)

The Expositor's Bible Commentary challenges us concerning this passage: "The Lord announces that He has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, and has filled him with the Spirit of God. To what sacred office, then, is he called? Simply to be a supreme craftsman, the rarest of artisans. This also is a divine gift...So then it appears that the Holy Spirit of God is to be recognized in the work of the carpenter and the jeweller, the apothecary and the tailor. Probably we object to such a statement, so baldly put. But inspiration does not object...It is quite clear that we must cease to think of the Divine Spirit as inspiring only prayers and hymns and sermons. All that is good and beautiful and wise in human art is the gift of God. We feel that the supreme Artist is audible in the wind among the pines; but is man left to himself when he marshals into more sublime significance the voices of the wind among the organ tubes? At sunrise and sunset, we feel that "On the beautiful mountains the pictures of God are hung"; but is there no revelation of glory and of freshness in other pictures? Once the assertion that a great masterpiece was "inspired" was a clear recognition of the central fire at which all genius lights its lamp: now, alas! It has become little more than a sceptical assumption that Isaiah and Milton are much upon a level."

D James Kennedy notes: "Living in a post-Christian culture, we see the effects of man's rejection of God even in art... Art reflects life, and if life to the artist is meaningless, so will art be meaningless."

Fyodor Dostoevsky took this idea a step further and prophetically proclaimed: "First art will imitate life, then life will imitate art, then life will find its very meaning from the arts..."

2 Samuel 12 records an account of a King, King David committing terrible acts. He had taken another man's wife, slept with her, impregnated her, and to cover for this had sent her husband Uriah to a sure death on the battlefield. This was a turning

point in David's life, a shocking fall from grace. Now, it is one thing to confront a man who is hardened and unrepentant after adultery and murder. It is quite another together, when the man in question is the king who could order another execution. And a king whom up to this moment had led extremely well. God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, so as to bring about repentance. Even for a prophet of Nathan's stature, this was no small endeavour. The prophet Nathan chooses to do it with a story. Nathan's story was well told and relevant, and it aroused within David powerful emotions. It was so provocative that David, upon hearing of the rich man's greed declared: "That man deserves to die". The king's emotions were caught up in the story-line. Nathan then reveals to David that the villain in the story is in fact David himself. This provides a mirror for David and he sees things as they really are. This, then begins the process of David's repentance, a repentance that arrested a situation that would have only gotten more destructive.

What does the account in 2 Samuel have do with the arts? Everything. We live in a world hardened by sin's deceitfulness, and often centred on doing "whatever is right in my own eyes" and whatever feels good. In the same way that God used a prophet to engage with David at multiple levels, we need a prophetic generation of competent artists in all manner of arts to arrest our attention, touch us deeply and bring us back to our senses for good. The sad reality is that in the last century, the arts have often been a forerunner to changing the culture for the worse in the Western world. Movies, music and other media are powerfully influencing the generations, transforming cultural norms and worldviews. There are many examples of this, but one obvious one would be sexual ethics.

When we relegate truth to subjectivity and art and beauty to the eye of the beholder, art will become the mirror and educator amplifying and popularising unbiblical values and beliefs.

The problem of course is not with the medium of the arts, but rather with the predominant worldview that shapes much of modern art, and with it the hearts and minds of billions.

We need the Nathans to rise up and influence in this domain. We need art and entertainment to reflect the beauty and creativity of our God, to bring refreshment and restoration on multiple levels, rather than defilement and unbiblical ideology.

What about the arts and entertainment?

God never says, “Thou shalt not have fun, nor shalt thou smile in all thy days.” Relaxing and enjoying leisure activities whilst having fun is not sin. However, when we engage in leisure activities for entertainment we should remember Godly principles:

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Col 3:17, NKJV)

When we are relaxing and having fun or when we are seeking entertainment, we should always make sure these activities are pleasing God.

Food, wine, money, and so forth are morally neutral according to scripture. It is what we do with them that gives rise to sin.

Paul instructs the Corinthian church regarding food offered to idols:

“But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.” (1Co 8:8-9, NKJV)

“But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1Co 8:8-9, NIV)

The principle in verse 9 is an important one for us to bear in mind as believers. “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak”. Our freedom to relax and enjoy our lives should never cause others to stumble in their faith.

We should follow Paul’s lead, *“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible*

means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19, 22).

God also does not want us to be under the influence of unbelievers. We may associate with them, as Christ did when He sat at dinner with sinners and tax collectors, but we should not allow ourselves to be influenced by them.

Paul writes, *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).*

According to Colossians,

"And whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in [dependence upon] His Person, giving praise to God the Father through Him." (Col 3:17, AMP)

we should also give thanks to God through Jesus Christ for the fun and entertainment He provides. Someone once pointed out that "recreation" means to "re-create" or "renew." God allows us this time to be renewed and to grow in our faith.

James tells us,

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (Jas 1:17, NIV)

Fun and entertainment are gifts of God, given so that we might come closer to Him. We should remember this when we are planning our recreation and remember to thank God for such a good and perfect gift.

Conclusion

Today we have seen that the Kingdom of God starts within us with heart change and a choice to submit every aspect of our lives to the one true King. And then our minds must be renewed so that we understand what God's rule and reign looks like in different aspects of our lives and the various domains of society. In other words, we

form a biblical worldview. His Kingdom then comes in our hearts and lives and the world around us.

We have also seen that the arts are from God. He has a standard for them, a purpose for them and He is the ultimate artist. As we create art and view art, let's apply a biblical worldview to this important domain. As we engage with the arts and entertainment around us, let's do so with a biblical worldview.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How does your current involvement in arts and entertainment reflect your personal worldview?**
- 2. In what ways can you intentionally incorporate a Biblical worldview into your artistic endeavours?**
- 3. What attributes of God, as seen in the Scriptures, inspire you in your creative processes?**
- 4. How can the arts and entertainment sector be used to glorify God and reflect His beauty and creativity?**
- 5. In what ways do current popular arts and entertainment reflect or contradict a Biblical worldview?**
- 6. How can Christian artists influence the culture and values within the arts and entertainment industry?**
- 7. What challenges do you face in maintaining a Biblical perspective in your creative work?**
- 8. How can you use your talents in arts and entertainment to bring about positive change in society?**
- 9. What steps can you take to ensure that your artistic work is both excellent and reflective of God's glory?**
- 10. How does the story of Nathan confronting King David through a narrative inspire you to use storytelling in your creative endeavours?**

Assignments

Assignment 1: Personal Artistic Expression

Objective: Create a piece of art (e.g., painting, music, dance, film, poetry) that reflects a Biblical worldview and attributes of God.

Instructions:

1. Choose an attribute of God (e.g., Creator, Beauty, Artist, Potter).
2. Create a piece of art that communicates this attribute.
3. Write a short reflection (300-500 words) on how your artwork represents this attribute and how it aligns with a Biblical worldview.
4. Present your artwork and reflection to a small group for feedback and discussion.

Assignment 2: Cultural Analysis and Critique

Objective: Analyse a piece of popular art or entertainment (e.g., film, music, TV show, theatre production) and critique it from a Biblical worldview perspective.

Instructions:

1. Select a piece of popular art or entertainment.
2. Watch or engage with the piece thoroughly.
3. Write a 1,000-word critique discussing:
 - o The worldview presented in the piece.
 - o How the piece aligns or conflicts with Biblical principles.
 - o The potential impact of this piece on its audience.
 - o How you would reimagine this piece to reflect a Biblical worldview.
4. Share your critique with a group and lead a discussion on your findings.

Assignment 3: Biblical Worldview Workshop

Objective: Develop and conduct a workshop to educate others on applying a Biblical worldview to the arts and entertainment sector.

Instructions:

1. Prepare a workshop outline (2-3 hours) that includes:
 - o An introduction to the concept of a worldview.
 - o The importance of a Biblical worldview.
 - o Key attributes of God related to creativity and the arts.
 - o Case studies of Biblical figures who were artists (e.g., Bezalel, David).
 - o Practical steps for integrating a Biblical worldview into artistic endeavours.
2. Create handouts or a presentation to accompany your workshop.
3. Conduct the workshop with a group of peers, collecting feedback for improvement.
4. Write a summary report (500-1,000 words) on the workshop's effectiveness and any insights gained from the experience.