

## “Hooray For Hollywood?”

Exodus 31:1-11; 35:30-35 \* February 25, 2007

### I. How important are the arts for our lives?

#### A. In what ways are the arts thought of as “add-ons”?

When you buy a home, the first things you buy to fill that home are typically kitchen appliances and furniture and bedding and carpeting – only later do you think of paintings for the walls, or nick-knacks for the bookshelves. Those are “fillers”. When a school district looks to trim its budget, the first places it looks to cut are usually in the arts department and athletics. In Maslow’s Pyramid of Needs, we are told that to survive we must first take care of our physiological needs – food, water, sleep; then our need for safety; then our need for belonging and esteem, and only when all those needs are secured, can we devote energy to our soul, to what he called “self-actualization”, which includes the pursuit of creativity.

#### B. Yet in what ways are the arts much more than add-ons?

At the end of a busy day at work, when I’ve been devoting all my energies to levels one and two of Maslow’s pyramid, there’s nothing better than vegging out with a good movie or curling up with a good book – imagine if such things weren’t around. And yes, it’s true, when I go to the grocery store, I’ll make sure I buy food before I buy flowers, but can you imagine a world without flowers, without beauty? There is something deep inside of us as human beings that thirsts for that which art provides, and without it, something within us dies. Man cannot live on bread alone.

### II. Why is art important for us?

#### A. Creating art is proof that we are made in the image of God.

##### 1. How did God make the trees in the Garden of Eden?

The Bible tells us in Genesis 2:9 that God “...made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.”

##### 2. Why did he do it this way?

To put it simply, because he loves us. In making objects of beauty, we learn that he is a God of wisdom and beauty and creativity – and these are things which he wanted to share with us so that we would enjoy them as well – which tells us that he is a God of love.

#### B. Creating art helps us to capture the fullness of human experience.

##### 1. What does Adam do when he first meets Eve?

He composes and recites the first love poem.

##### 2. During the Enlightenment, science began to crowd out art in importance. But can science ever tell us everything about human experience?

Science can only take us so far in describing what it means to be human. Take a kiss for example. Scientifically speaking, here’s how one biologist defined a “kiss”: “A kiss is the anatomical juxtaposition of two orbicularis oris muscles in a state of contraction.” (No wonder I was so grossed out by the thought of kissing a girl when I was little – who wouldn’t be?) But then one day I discovered that a kiss is so much more than this. Yes, it involves my body’s muscles, hormones and chemicals – and without them I could not enjoy a kiss – but to say that a kiss is *nothing but* muscles, hormones and chemicals, now science you have gone too far. There is something more to it, a deeper reality to it, that touches the frontier of the human soul and spirit – a frontier that science cannot explore. For that we need art.

#### C. Creating art deepens our understanding and appreciation of the Beauty and Truth of God.



Is art all subjective, or is there an objective way to measure art?

**“SUBJECTIVE” MEANS YOU THE SUBJECT DETERMINE THE WORTH OR TRUTH OF SOMETHING. “OBJECTIVE” MEANS NOT YOU, BUT THE “OBJECT” DETERMINES ITS WORTH OR TRUTH.**

Examples:

$2+2=4$  is a/an objective statement.

‘Liver and onions tastes good’ is a/an subjective statement.

2. *If we say art is all subjective, what can't we do?*

If you say that there is no such thing as Beauty – capital B – that there is no way to objectively measure art, that it's all subjective – then that means you can have no opinion about the music your teenagers listen to or the movies they watch. When Robert Mapplethorpe drops a crucifix in a bottle of urine and calls it “Piss Christ” you can't speak up. Nor should you be offended, if art is all subjective. When Jackson Pollock drips paint randomly on a canvas, calls it art and it's hung in a museum, you can't question it. When a rap artist writes a song praising the murder of police and the rape of women you have to zip your lip, because he's just artistically expressing his culture. One man's pornography is another man's art, and who are you to judge it. If art is all subjective, then this is where we end up.

3. *So what is our objective measuring stick for art?*

It is God, who embodies for us and defines for us what Beauty – capital B is, and Truth – capital T is. And so art when it functions the way God intended it will deepen in some way our understanding and appreciation of the Beauty and Truth of God.

“Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor.” ~ Exodus 28:2 (In KJV, it reads glory and beauty)

4. *Art the way God intends will do what to us?*

Art which functions the way God intended will give us these things: dignity, honor, glory and beauty. It will ennoble us, will enrich us, will inspire us, will move us closer in some way to Beauty and to Truth.

III. *Some important qualifications:*

- A. *This doesn't mean that art needs to be religious to be good art.*
- B. *This doesn't mean that art needs to be created by a Christian to be good art.*
- C. *This doesn't mean that art needs to always “put on a happy face” to be good art.*

- D. *This doesn't mean that because something is religious it is automatically good art.*
- E. *This does mean that Christians need to get in the game and start bringing their gifts and passions to bear in every artistic field.*

IV. *Through Bezalel we learn that art has power to:*

- A. *...help us worship God.*

And how better to draw closer to that which is true Beauty than to surround yourself with things which are beautiful.

- B. *...teach us.*

Jesus could have just said, “Show compassion to those who are victimized by violence.” But instead, he spun the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus could have said simply, “Forgive one another.” Instead, he told the story of the Prodigal Son. Why did Jesus do that? Jesus could have simply said, “Remember my death on the cross.” Instead he gave us bread and wine as symbols of his death, and said, “Do this to remember me.” The Bible could have been written in just straight narrative, all of it. But instead God uses all types of different literary forms in its pages: history, and letters, and poetry, and songs. Why all this art? Why do I use fruit in my sermons, and show you movie clips? Why tell stories? Why show pictures on the screen? Because art is a tool God uses to reach us and teach us. For centuries during the Middle Ages, most people in Europe were illiterate. They couldn't even read their Bibles. Thank God they could worship in cathedrals and chapels that were designed to lift the worshippers gaze heavenwards. Thank God for stain glass windows, and statues, and paintings which told the story of the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God.

- C. *...weaken or strengthen our character.*

Parents should read lots of good stories to their children. Good stories do what scolding or lecturing can never do. They make us *want* to be good. Chuck Colson points out in his book version of “How Now Shall We Live” that children's moral choices are not based on abstract standards of right and wrong but on the people

**they admire and want to be like. Good stories provide us with models to follow, heroes to admire. All to say, the art you feed your soul with – the movies you watch, the music you listen to, the pictures you look at – will invariably determine the man or woman you will become.**

*V. What prayer requests come to mind as a result of hearing this teaching?*

**Christians – we must get back in the game. God created the arts for humanity, for his people, for us. They belong to you and me. If ever we are to redeem this culture and bring it back to God, it will not happen unless we reclaim the arts for Jesus Christ.**