

Eyes Wide Open

Introduction Discussion Questions

1) Due to my faith, I experience artwork in such a beautiful and open-minded way. I have a new perspective each time I see something or hear something when I come to it with my faith instead of eyes of judgment. I hope to look deeper and put aside my humanness to be able to see things through a set of lenses only God can provide me.

2) It is urgent for people of faith to discern perspectives described in the entertainment world. It is our due diligence to be aware of what is on the surface and the hidden messages and agendas the entertainment world is trying to sell. Because of our faith, it is also our position to allow others their beliefs. Again, I go back to my belief that God is in charge, and I am here to do his will and live a life so others can experience God in the way I do.

3) The entertainment media shapes our society today. The recent trends in our community inform the entertainment world. As the question proposes, it does a bit of both. Shapes and creates. It's straightforward Hollywood is mostly about creating a product that sells. It pays big money to all the stars, sets, costumes, and other expenses. Hollywood has always been big business because we Christians and non-Christians love to be entertained, and we continue to keep it moving toward wealth and power.

4) I love the movie Footloose. My mom, daughter, and I recently watched it for the 100th time. What made it enjoyable was the passion for dance the young man Ren brought to the midwestern town. It was a beautiful story about struggles, transformation, and humility that we all have faced throughout our lives. But what I loved most was how the teens went about helping one another and working to show the other side of dancing and the innocence and fun it stood for and not what the minister claimed it did to be. The minister banned dancing because he couldn't let go of his son's death. After his son's prom, he died in a drunk driving accident. The minister had strong feelings about his daughter's prom and felt his job was to protect her from it happening again. The minister preached the word of God but had difficulty seeing and trusting God. He forgot that God's word is love, compassion, compromise, forgiveness, etc. The movie wasn't marketed as a Christian faith-based film, yet you couldn't help but see God throughout the blockbuster film. I liked the movie in how it addressed many issues our culture faces daily. For example, a person can positively release anger, stand up for their beliefs and learn that all good things take time and work.

My favorite artwork is the Marvels. I am a real fan of superheroes. Although there is much violence that I don't particularly appreciate watching, I give Marvels a pass regarding my principles about watching violent movies. However, there is also so much good in these movies, plus I love a woman who can save the world. In my dream world, that is what I would like to do, but for now, I will continue to be an image of God and not think I can play God.

Chapter 1

1) When I first read about Amy Grant's crossover into the mainstream music market, I thought, "isn't that what most singers do when they get famous." This controversy all began with her new song, "Baby Baby." I read the lyrics, and I found absolutely nothing offensive about her lyrics. I don't believe Grant's music should have offended the CCM community as it did. Even Christians fall in love; I think the reason for the controversy was that the song wasn't about or had any presence of "Jesus" in its lyrics. So, the question was, is Amy Grant still a Christian if she sang innocent love songs? "Yes, yes, yes," she said. Grant, like any other human, was excited to try something new. God is love, so why not sing about love? Ce Ce Winans's comments supported Grant's recent shift to popular art. I loved her response to this upset, "People always try to put gospel music in a box, but God is bigger than that." I feel this says it all.

God is in love songs as much as he is in Christian songs. Grant and Winans brought about the shift in evangelical thinking about popular art and music. A paradigm shift was taking place. As our text explains, this is an accepted model with explanatory power for a community; it answers questions about the nature of problems and acceptable solutions. I believe God had a purpose in using Amy Grant's controversy to open people's eyes to the revelation that God is in everything and everyone; tolerance and love, I believe, came out of this continuing controversy.

2) I don't believe all family movies made today are worth watching. I think some movies marketed for the family are not genuinely family orientated. I like Walls' argument that movies are "a vehicle through which the artist presents his vision." The task of the churchman is then to evaluate that vision in the light of his understanding, informed by Christian faith."

3) Christians can watch rated R films. The rating of a movie is to make people aware of the content so they can decide whether they want to watch a movie with specific content, especially for the sake of minors. I'm not a fan of some of the vulgarities added to my favorite movie, but as the saying goes, "take what you need and leave the rest." This is a motto I live by today. I would also like to add that, as a culture, we are desensitized to the sex and violence we see on the screen in the movies or television. According to Romanowski, a survey showed that Christians were slightly less likely to see an R-rated movie than non-Christians. I feel we should live and let live and know God is in R-movies too.

4) Removing objectionable content to some degree would be helpful. Some of the content we see in films or television is often over the top and optional. A movie that comes to mind that wasn't a family movie but was most certainly a big hit was "kill Bill." Whether removing content or not, the film is violent and raw. It was about hurting one another and, of course, "killing Bill." If you removed all the objectionable content, there wouldn't be much of a movie. All movies aren't as violent as this, but removing or adding would determine how good the film is if it would make much of a difference. Having a good story and producing it well, I don't feel objectionable content will be as necessary to promote a well-written and well-performed movie.

Another less extreme example might be the Marvel movies. This series most kids today, including myself, are fascinated with. The good guy always helps save the world and its people.

It would not affect the film's content if we omitted some destruction and violence in these kinds of movies. Marvels is an excellent example of an over-the-top Hollywood blockbuster that is required to raise the bar from the films made prior.

5) Famous artwork considered Christian to me is a story or song motivated by a place where the mind and heart are of Christian values. The films moral might help us realize something about our relationship with how we live and act toward one another in Christian ways. Famous artwork from a Christian perspective offers us some meanings to life. For me, a renowned painting does not have to consist of praising Jesus or depicting Biblical stories, but something that has depth and meaning to another's soul. Christianity is about touching another's heart and soul as Jesus Christ did for us in ways only Christians can understand.

6) My Christian faith tremendously influences what I read, watch, and listen to. I cannot watch real violent movies or listen to vulgar music. Regarding reading books, the last thing I want to read about is children being abused, even if it has a good ending or anyone being harmed. As I mentioned, I understand the world is a crazy place, with much violence and sadness around us. I am aware of it, but the last thing I want to do is put more of this inside my soul through some popular art labeled as family entertainment.

7) I also wonder why Christians are attracted to mainstream popular art. Christian culture may be too much with its religious themes and corny messages. Most people today are dealing with the tough stuff. Going to a movie or listening to music is a time to escape what is happening in their world and the world around us. I love Christian music and movies, but they aren't for everyone. People want to be entertained, and some Christian films don't always have that kind of value to them as big blockbusters. This is where the third-person effect may come into play from a Christian perspective.

8) Yes, this is my experience as well. As I have gotten older, this has shifted a bit. I enjoy evangelical movies and Christian music more today than when I was younger. I believe the reason is that people don't want to feel preached to; they want to be entertained. I also think God and the bible are all very personal, and I'm unsure if they should be put on the big screen to sell movies. It takes a particular person to write, direct and produce a story about God without being preachy. Mel Gibson achieved this in "The passion," but few others have come close to a realistic view. So, I think the biggest reason Christians watch movies from secular sources is to escape and be entertained. I believe it's that simple of an answer for me.

Chapter 2

1) Culture is all of God's creation and everything it includes. For example, it is our Arts, music, values, beliefs, attitude, purpose, habits, and behaviors. Our interactions and, most importantly, our relationship with God and others. I think it is essential that we, as Christians, be cultural stewards to all we meet. I feel strongly about always living in this way. To honor our creator by loving others as it has been done to us. As a Christian, it is my job to engage with others and our

culture and be an example to others by living in the image of Christ. As our text explains, “it is our cultural mandate, God’s command at creation, that we humans do culture.”

2) As Christians, the way we think about arts and culture is directed to us in the Bible. The Bible gives us an intricate understanding of culture. Culture is our obligation as Christians as a gift from God. So, it is our religious duty because we are made in the image of God, and it’s our responsibility to share with God the cultivation of creativity. As Christians, we are mandated as humans to do culture. This means living in God's world and engaging in the culture by discerning both positive and negative aspects to study and work to redeem it. In other words, live in pop art culture, so those who don’t know God know God because they know you.

3) The fact that all things are intended for service in God’s world is essential in how I symbolize. Symbols can be both hurtful and informative. As a Christian serving God, I must remember how I tell. It’s vital to see things and others through the eyes of love. Seeing the world from a Christian perspective and living in this manner dramatically makes a difference in how we interact within our culture. The cultural mandate is the belief that Christians are called to have dominion over the earth and to cultivate and redeem the world for the glory of God. Our culture today is communicated through texts. Like symbols, they are familiar and widely shared to make up a culture. These activities are part of our human existence and how we serve God. It was mentioned many times that God is everything; therefore, when we engage in culture or symbolizing anything, I think it’s important to ask ourselves, “is this the way Jesus would speak or act.”

4) As a Christian, it is my purpose and honor to live as an image bearer of Christ. It is my joy to help others, whether in my family or community. I can fulfill the cultural mandate by caring for the earth and showing compassion and care when needed for all of God’s creatures. I volunteer at our local jail to give women hope and inspiration for a better life through Christ. Each day the Holy Spirit fills me in ways I can live so I am awake to what my cultural mandate might be for the day ahead.

Chapter 3

1) The thing that has shaped my cultural orientation is my Irish Catholic upbringing. The different rituals, recipes, and old Irish tales past down have formed a better part of my culture. Another is the parish I am a part of and the community I interact with daily. I also belong to some other programs which have shaped my cultural orientation. Finally, volunteer work is a big part of our cultural orientation in my family.

2) People of common faith have different views on social, political, economic, or aesthetic issues because of the myriad factors that form people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Factors like upbringing and culture play a big part in a person’s views that differ from people's common faith. I also believe it has to do with each person's experiences that they go through in their lifetime. Their views may differ, but the belief is similar due to a traumatic incident. Lastly, we

are so much more alike than different; we can't accept this fact. I believe it is simply because of our human condition.

3) I like the movie *My Fair Lady*, and I can see the resemblances in the themes of each of these movies. I can see certain similarities between the characters, especially in *Rocky*. They were all down on their luck until someone showed them a different way to better their lives or inspired them to reach their God-given potential and become the people they were intended to be. The characters are different in many distinct ways, but the beautiful part they all share is their willingness to change and succeed, which transmuted into helping others. The moral that all the films had in common was their perseverance and that anything is possible. All films shared the common factor that each person needed another to be whom they turned out to be. Each of them was transformed into a successful person with the help of another. The differences were the times the movies were made—especially *My Fair Lady*. The film was created in 1956, *Rocky* was made 20 years later, and almost 20 years later, *Erin Brockovich* was made. Eliza and Erin came from different worlds, but their spunk was similar. They were both struggling, Eliza on the streets and Erin in lower-class suburbia without a job. The places the movies were made were also very different. *Rocky* in the ring, *Erin* in the courtroom, and *Eliza* in the study.

4) As a Christian who believes that God is everything or nothing, I feel that when I engage in the arts, I think a much deeper sense of the movie's moral or the portrayal of the art. I am firm about tolerance and understanding the whole picture before criticizing or judging something. My old perspective of the arts could have been more impulsive and shallower. Today it's also because I am older. God comes through in the arts, movies, and primarily through the people who have created it all. Of course, there are movies I choose not to see, but that is the beauty of it all. I have that choice. Live and let live and allow others to produce and create what they believe is essential to them and their relationship with their God.

5) Our American ideals are that people are created equal and that we all have fundamental rights, which include freedom of speech, self-government, liberty, and freedom of religion. We all share the due process of the law. I believe, as a Christian, that we are all Children of God, regardless of race, religion, or color. We all have opportunities in this world to achieve. Some of us must persevere more than others, but if you continue to believe in God, He will place the right people in your path to help you succeed. My values are family, my God, and, most of all, helping others.