Eyes Wide Open

Chapter 4

1) Can you think of a movie, television program, or musical recording that transported you "elsewhere"? Discuss how and why you think this happened.

The movie "The Greatest Showman" took me to another place in time. I felt like I could be and do anything. The music and dancing lifted my spirits so high that I felt like I was skyrocketing into another dimension. When I heard "A Million Dreams" for the first time, it was like I was young again, and anything was possible. Whenever I have a sad day or feel nothing seems to be going right, I put on the soundtrack, which immediately lifts me. I know this happens because God can speak to us in many ways. Music, for me, is how I feel closest to God other than praying and meditation.

2) What are some of the problems with "a strictly evangelistic understanding of art"?

What happens with strictly evangelistic art is that it becomes rigid and blocks seeing God in everything. God created all the art and artists we listen to, read, and watch. We can choose what we want to experience in any one of these categories of popular art. But if we limit sharing art from a strict evangelistic view, we miss out on what God has created. This is how God speaks to us through others. It is choosing their will and being close to everything instead of staying open-minded to God's offers. If the strict evangelist doesn't enjoy it, then it was an experience they don't have to do again. Lastly, I feel they are missing out on the popular artwork God has created through the individuals God has created.

3) The author suggests, "When someone says, 'That song ministers to me,' I think they are trying to explain an artistic experience as a spiritual one." Discuss this and consider ways Christians might learn to think differently about engaging popular art based on the understanding of culture presented in earlier chapters.

When someone says, "the song ministers to me," this brings me back to my favorite movie, "The Greatest Showman." As soon as I heard the song "A Million Dreams," this song ministered to me. I felt the Holy Spirit was speaking to me when listening to the lyrics. I was going through a bit of a sad time when I first saw the film, and I felt like God was lifting me and giving me what I needed as my sadness began to ease and my perspective on life began to shift. I felt like I finally got that spring back in my step. The beautiful part about being a practicing Christian, as spoken about in other chapters, is that we continue to live in the image and likeness of God no matter what we are going through. Additionally, we stay open to how God will speak to us, whether in a song, a movie, art, or another human in our path. So, when it comes to popular art, whether high or low, God will get the message through to you—being rigid blocks God from one's life.

4) Why are distinctions between high and popular art problematic and unhelpful for approaching popular art and culture?

The problem with the distinctions between high and popular is that they separate us as human beings, where it shouldn't be this way because we are all children of God. Our text mentions that we have much more in common than our differences. The biggest thing is the thinking between the two. The high art society looked down upon low-end and popular art. It was a way to look down upon and think better than another. The cultural elite viewed the symphonic as a God instead of the feeling that our faithful God would fill them with. The aesthetic experiences were referred to as spiritual experiences, but the problem was that they left God out.
Religion was being replaced by the "Mozart's" of that time. The high and popular arts were critical of the other art forms other than theirs. High art was on a search for human perfection. When high skills became less attractive to the world, famous art became more accepting, a place where all could find understanding and love.

5) Discuss ways the division between high and low culture and the "spiritualizing" of art have affected Christian attitudes and also the roles and character of popular art.

The division between the two came full circle. Today we don't have such a separation. The world we live in compared to back in the 19th century has evolved. For instance, Andrea Bocelli, who, back then, would be considered a part of the high culture world. Today everyone loves him from different walks of life and age groups. He, like others, has embraced their differences. They no longer see through those lenses as they did back then. In our art today, I think people feel more spiritual than in that time. Our culture today is all about seeking. It may not be that we are all seeking the same God or denomination, but I feel strongly that the world is more about being a part of each other than separate from how the cultural elite acted and thought in the past.

Chapter 5

1) Communicating Culture

HBO's Euphoria deals with relationships, addiction, sex, and betrayal. The show is about teens growing up online and how our culture communicates with one another today.

The Whale is a movie about relationships, homosexuality, addiction, isolation, and forgiveness. The film communicates redemption and spiritual awakenings, something that happens to all, but not everyone realizes this. When a person finds God or forgiveness for a resentment held for so long towards a loved one, something happens as God intervenes. It's happening all the time. But we don't always know it.

Social and cultural criticism

The Boy Erased is a movie about acceptance, gay rights, and hypocrisy of religious principles that were ignored because their son is gay.

Without a Trace, talk about the issues of homelessness and PTSD. Homelessness is an epidemic we still have no real solution for, and it's getting worse; mental illness is another issue we want to sweep under the rug. Thank God for the arts who keep us aware so that someday the answers will come, and something will be done.

Social unity

In the movie, Miracle is seen by almost everyone. Whether you liked hockey or not, people from all walks of life went to see this all-powerful movie. It was one of the most inspiring movies ever made. It was about teamwork and perseverance. This unimaginable group of men brought the world together during a tough time. They got the American Spirit back to life with their performance and win over the Russians in the most fantastic hockey game ever.

Thirteen Lives brought the world together as we all watched in great anticipation and concern with prayers and hopes that these young boys would be rescued. We all thought of our children. We felt love and compassion for these parents going through such a horrific experience. Empathizing with the families to try and understand what they were going through. Empathy and prayers united us all.

Grease

Contributing to our collective memory, the movies and the music that are part of my memory have got to be Grease. The world knows the words to their favorite parts of the play and the music—the dancing and singing we all remember and act out at special occasions, especially weddings.

To Kill a Mockingbird is another movie the world continues to discuss and remanence. It continues to be a part of our collective memory for all generations.

Americans see themselves as real-life, everyday heroes, and various cultural, class and racial groups in America how to interact with each other in positive and mostly negative ways. Brave stand against bigotry; America can be a great nation, but only if its citizens are willing to stand up for what is right. A hopeful vision of American culture, even in the face of adversity. The possibility of transcending the hatred and intolerance that often plagues our society. Whether we believe it or not, redemption and forgiveness are possible with help from divine intervention.

2) “By offering a vision, a popular artwork sets up the possibility for our accepting or criticizing that vision, and an insightful and honest Christian response will often mean affirming certain aspects while rejecting others,” the author argues. “Our critical guard sometimes goes down because we expect popular art to entertain us.” How can we learn to balance being entertained with maintaining a critical posture?

We can learn to balance being entertained and maintaining a critical posture by learning the popular artworks' motives and recognizing how they touch us deep within. Acknowledging that

famous artwork connects with people on a deep-seated and direct level can enhance the experience and evaluation of the artwork. This can show how we can enjoy all the arts, including music, movies, and television, and support, challenge, or contradict our faith perspectives.

3) In a conversation, a friend argues that all movies are purely for entertainment reasons. How would you respond?

I would respond by telling her about the four important roles of popular art as maps of reality, and I would list them to her. First, movies are for entertainment, but as they are entertaining, they communicate culture. Another is playing the role of the social and cultural critic. They are also crucial in providing social unity. Finally, I would share with her how they contribute to our collective memory.

4) Why is the distinction between popular art and entertainment important for developing a Christian approach?

The term popular art better represents the purpose of the artwork rather than the term entertainment. As we engage and experience an artwork, we learn to see things from the artist's perspective, whether notions about love and romance, heroic ideals, the purpose of life, the cause and effects of war, or the value of faith, by offering a vision, a popular artwork allows us to accept or criticize that vision. An insightful and honest Christian response often means affirming certain aspects while rejecting others.

Chapter 6

1). Find examples of music, movie, or TV criticism that represent the moralistic, ideological, and theological approaches described in this chapter. Discuss the merits of these reviews.

The book I chose that represents the theological approach was a favorite book of mine, "The Hiding Place," written in 1975. This is a true story of a family's faith. Corrie Ten Boom and her family hid Jews in their family's home, where their clock business was in the Netherlands during WWII. Corrie Ten Boom narrates and vividly captures her family members and friends, the people they helped, and the Germans they encountered during and after the war. Her description of her hiding the Jew and eventually getting caught and sent to one of the concentration camps is a narrative heavily informed by her Christian faith. The reviews were terrific and well-deserved. They mostly all represented the theological review. The most important message from the book is that God's love is always there no matter how dark our situations become, and no one keeps God away or takes Him from us. A study from Goodreads shares, "All readers, including young readers, will learn that every experience we face is the perfect preparation for the future only God can see."
In the ideological approach, I chose the movie "The Banshees of Inisherin." Banshees is about mental health, friendship, war, and love. It is a comedy as well as a drama. One view from rotten tomatoes shares, "The film provides a sort of assurance to those who've experienced the sudden loss of a friend and shows us that even men in their older age can experience the strained heartache of a friend that wants nothing to do with them" Another review from N.Y. Times "It's not necessary to believe what you see — it may, indeed, not be possible — but you can

nonetheless find yourself beguiled by the wayward sincerity of the characters and touched by the sparks of humanity their struggles cast off. The film reviews represent the ideological approach to how the human condition is often ambiguous, sad, and awakening to one's truth.

The movie I chose for the moralistic approach was “Everything Went Fine.” The film is about an 85-year-old man who has a stroke. His daughter hurries to his bedside. Sick and half-paralyzed in his hospital bed, he asks his daughter to help him end his life. The movie takes on an issue of tremendous moral and emotional weight. The daughter is put in a difficult situation with her relationship thorny with her dad, yet she finds it impossible to deny. The review shares the reality many families face when a loved one is no longer living a quality life. They are conflicted morally and placed in a position no one can ever prepare for. The Hollywood Reporter reviews the film's simplicity by the movie laying out something still widely perceived as a radical course of action while not engaging in a distressful display. Instead, it quietly makes the case that everyone should have the right to end a life that has become unendurable. The value of these reviews is a reality to many. The film mirrors society's dilemma with this ongoing issue of euthanasia. Many families deal with this issue with parents living longer today but no longer living a quality life due to strokes or dementia, or other incurable diseases. All families face similar problems, no matter their culture or religion, at some point.

2. What are the benefits of these approaches to criticism? What are the limitations?
The benefits of these approaches

The benefits of these approaches are likely to bring into play popular art of some educational goal. The services may include teaching moral values, affirming social or political positions, or advancing theological discussions. Another benefit is that our reaction to the artwork is better understood regarding moral values. Finally, these approaches reinforce our belief systems because we are conscious of our perspectives in criticizing and engaging with popular arts.
The limitation of these approaches is that the critics will treat artwork as an isolated text and only interpret it along moral, ideological, or theological lines. They limit the widespread art phenomenon as this only aspect is unrelated to other dimensions. This will cause certain groups to dismiss work, being close-minded to only their approach. Another is to emphasize the aesthetic. This will devalue talks and reflections of social, moral, or theological aspects as insignificant. The limitations may be that an artwork affirms an audience's moral or ideological position but could be more effective artistically. Setting aside our old beliefs is the most challenging part of being a fair critic in all approaches. Our old beliefs, values, and attitudes are essential to be aware of before fairly critiquing any famous artwork.

3. “A Christian critique of popular art will criticize the gratuitous inclusion of profanity, sex, or violence,” the author asserts, asking, “But are there not appropriate uses of these elements in popular art?” Respond to this question.

I find famous artwork that renders the truth in the story they are trying to portray is justified when they are depicted appropriately. A Christian critique of such movies as the Holocaust, as mentioned in our text, is unfair because it bases its criticisms on their beliefs and values instead of honestly reviewing the film from the actual events of what happened during these horrific

times. In popular art, when directed and produced responsibly, including profanity, sex, or violence, the movie, book, or song must be truthfully expressed for the viewer to get the whole experience of how the creator wants them to receive it. Some of these vulgarities are unnecessary, but everyone has a choice because of the rating system. The reviews are another excellent resource for the individual to choose to engage in a popular artwork or not.

4. Where do you get your information about popular art? How do these sources typically evaluate art?

I get information from friends, word of mouth, the internet, and newspapers. Each of these sources has an opinion or a review. I determine the ones I choose by their thoughts and credible resources. Several critics explain how all the elements of the film work together. They will interpret the meaning, compare it to other popular art, analysis of its structure and style, and how it will affect its viewers.

Chapter 7

1. Name and discuss elements crucial to Christian criticism of the popular arts.

Understanding how a famous artwork communicates and the perspective expressed is central to good criticism because it is through artistic elements that popular artworks transform the external world in ways that engage our reason, memory, emotions, and imagination—and understanding it in its context. Moreover, popular art is animated in various interactive contexts—social, cultural, religious, aesthetic, industrial, and technological. Therefore, Christians should devote their energies to critiquing the value and perspective that artists give to the issues of life, the significance and quality of their endeavors, and how various popular artworks can be used to deepen our understanding of God's world.

2. The author shows that "it is through artistic elements that popular artworks transform the external world in ways that engage our reason, memory, emotions, and imagination." Consider ways that you can become more "media literate."

I can become more media literate by engaging in the artworks and noticing and being mindful of how they appear in my real-life experiences. I appreciate how much a part and meaningful they are in my life. I see when I'm more attentive to the arts—reflecting, contemplating the skills, and staying awake to the multifaceted factors in my experiences. I will remember to be mindful of the contextual and functional approach to the popular arts and not avoid the many ways that popular skills serve my life. To be open-minded to popular art as art, as explained in our text.

3. Give a repeat viewing of a favorite film or television episode and pay attention to one artistic aspect (e.g., story, characterization, dialogue, cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, costuming, use of rhetoric, and narrative structure). Or listen to the songs on a CD while paying attention to vocal style, instrumentation, metaphors and symbols, and the relationship between musical style and lyrical content. Does this change your appreciation of the work? If so, in what ways?

One of my favorite movies is “The Greatest Showman.” I’ve seen it about ten times. Whenever I need a boost in my mood or outlook on life, I put the soundtrack on or watch a movie.

For this assignment, I rewatched it, and as always, I loved it again as if I had seen it for the first time. The music is as invigorating as if I heard the songs for the first time. The song “A Million Dreams” gives me the feeling that I can turn anything into reality. I love all the symbols throughout the movies. For example, he used a lamp and a cut-out to light up the roof and display a magical scene for his daughter's birthday. This was simple, but it was so spectacular. The lyrical content gives a feeling that you can do anything. I feel a spirit fill me each time I hear the music. The costumes were also what made the movie so good. The fast-paced musical style and narrative structure kept my heart racing kept me entertained, and never bored.

The film has many positive messages. There are messages about acceptance, courage, family, and perseverance. The film is a biographical musical of the life of P.T. Barnum. Some of the facts aren’t as accurate. But for entertainment purposes, it was brilliant. I feel it does enhance the way I appreciate film this time watching it. The lighting, the symbols, and even the way I was more in tune with the acting and they interacted with one another. My experience was different this time watching it. I also read many of the viewer reviews and the critic reviews, and they helped with more insight into how I perceived the movie this time—a whole new perspective and experience.