

Why We Need to Think Seriously About Films

Films are tremendously significant in today's world. Christian communicators in a media-saturated culture increasingly need to learn how to engage seriously with them. In this workshop, we will consider why we should work hard at identifying traces of worldviews within films. We will explore a framework for understanding worldviews and reflect on some practical aspects of engaging with films in our communication.

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1. Theology of Culture

A. God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26–2:25)

B. Culture is wonderful

1. The cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28)

2. People in communities (Genesis 1:28)

D. Culture is terrible

E. The two faces of reality

1. Humans are God's image-bearers *and* humans are rebels against God

2. Culture is fabulous *and* culture is awful

2. Why engage with films?

A. Biblical precedent: Paul (Acts 17:16–34)

1. Learn to be acute observers of culture

2. Recognise that all truth is God's truth

3. Be clear and uncompromising about areas of tension and discontinuity

4. Goal: Christian truth claims to be clearly heard and understood

B. Mission-oriented reasons

C. Pragmatic reasons

3. How to engage with films

A. Double listening

“[We] are called to double listening, listening both to the Word and to the world. . . . We listen to the Word with humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to understand. We listen to the world with critical alertness, anxious to understand it too, and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to sympathise with it and to seek grace to discover how the gospel relates to it.”

John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (pp. 27–29)

B. Five levels of engagement

1. Aesthetic

2. Emotional

3. Worldview

4. Ethical

5. Spiritual

4. A framework for understanding worldview

A. A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant* p. 122)

B. What is the view of reality?

C. What is the view of humanity?

D. What is the view of knowledge?

E. What is the view or morality?

F. What fundamental problem confronts humanity, and what is the solution?

5. Four aspects of worldview analysis

A. Analyse

B. Evaluate

C. Celebrate

D. Challenge

Recommended resources

Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (IVP (USA), 2008).

Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal, *ReViewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2000).

Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (Downers Grove, Il.: IVP, 2002).

Jeffrey Overstreet, *Through a Screen Darkly* (Regal Books, 2007)

Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (IVP, 1997)

William D. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007).

Quentin Schultze, *Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000).

James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (fourth edition) (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004).

James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2004).

Tony Watkins, *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema* (Milton Keynes: Damaris Books, 2007).

Tony Watkins, *Dark Matter: A Thinking Fan's Guide to Philip Pullman* (Milton Keynes: Damaris, 2004).

www.tonywatkins.org – resources relating to *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema*, plus articles and other resources

www.damaris.org – main Damaris site

www.culturewatch.org – looking at the media from a Christian perspective but for secular readers (Damaris)

www.toolsfortalks.com – quotes, videos, illustration finder, passage picker, commentary (Damaris subscription site)

www.deovox.com – audio Bible studies, relating the text to contemporary culture (Damaris)

www.artisaninitiatives.org – site for people working in arts, entertainment, media and fashion

www.artscentregroup.org.uk – the Arts Centre Group supports Christians working professionally in the arts

www.culture-making.com – Andy Crouch's site, related to his book, *Culture Making*

www.hollywoodjesus.com – Christian reflection on film

www.licc.org.uk – London Institute of Contemporary Christianity

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