

Lesson 11: Art, Culture, and Human Expression

A. Example Issues:

1. Since all art is intended to create pleasure in those who experience it, is all art worldly?
2. If artistic expression is intended to praise God, and if it is done sincerely, can it be wrong?
3. Is it wrong to listen to music or read books which have bad words and bad ideas?
4. What about beautiful, creative art-forms (that may even have a good message) that have (incidental) nudity and profanity, because they are reproductions of reality?
5. What about art (incl. dance & some sports) which celebrate the beauty of the human form?
6. To what extent should (could) a Christian keep up-to-date on current trends in art?

B. The Christian's World View

1. Is God's work described in artistic terms? (Ps 19:1; Is 45:9, 18) Does the creation convey a message (Rom 1:19,20)? Does it evoke emotions (Ps 8:3,4)?
2. If man is in God's image, would similar expressions of creativity be expected?
3. Architecture in the Old Testament
 - a. What was the first recorded architecture (Gen. 4:17)? The first music (Gen. 4:21)?
 - b. To what evil purpose was architectural ability applied? (Gen. 11:4)
 - c. Who did the tabernacle craft-work (Ex 35:10)? What help was given? (vs 30-35)
 - d. Who did the metal and wood work for the temple? (I Kings 5:17,18)
4. Sculpture in the Old Testament
 - a. "The simple fact is that the Israelites developed a severely limited number of artistic skills." *ISBE, Revised, 1973, p 302*. Why might that be?
 - b. What purpose did the "molten calf" serve (Ex 32:2ff)?
 - c. What did the Ten Commandments say about making images? (Ex 20:4)
What was the intent of the prohibition (see vs. 5, and Is 30:22; Hos 13:2)?
 - d. What was the nature of the idol's shape (Ps 115:4-7)? Why? (see Rom 1:22-25)
 - e. Was Paul impressed with the art of the Greeks? (Acts 17:16) Why?
5. Music and Dancing
 - a. To what evil uses were music and dancing put?

i. Ex 32:6,18,19,25	iii. I Sam 30:16
ii. Mat 14:6	iv. Amos 6:5,6
 - b. What appropriate examples are there of its use?

i. I Sam 18:6	vi. II Kings 3:15
ii. Ex 15:20	vii. Luke 15:25
iii. I Sam 16:16,23	viii. Ps 107:22
iv. II Sam 6:14, 21	ix. Rev 5:9
v. I Chron 25:6,7	
6. Literature and Philosophy
 - a. One-third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. Why might that be so?
 - b. What useful purposes did poetry, songs, and philosophical prose literature serve?
 - i. Dt 31:19-22
 - ii. I Kings 4:29, 32, 34
 - iii. Eccl 11:9,10
7. What distinguishes the good and bad uses of the cultural expressions above?
8. If art & architecture are intended to affect thoughts and emotions, and/or provide pleasure, what dangers are inherent in them?
 - a. I Kings 22:39
 - b. Hag 1:2-7

Applications

1. Is it appropriate for a Christian to develop creative talents in music, visual arts, architecture, drama, literature, etc.? Explain.
2. Are there some appropriate uses of these kinds of talents in the work of the church? Give examples.
3. Can these talents be developed by means of training or use that is not directly related to the work of the church (evangelism or edification of the saints)? What guidelines would you suggest?
4. Can current art forms (novel, painting, motion picture) be used to carry a spiritual (& scriptural) message?
5. Do art forms frequently carry a philosophical or theological message? Even, for example, symphonies or abstract art? Is there a cause for caution in that fact?
6. Should the level of caution increase as the influence of an ungodly world becomes more pervasive?
7. Is there some level of artistic expression that, because of its beauty, or intensity, or depth of meaning, might excuse immorality, such as nudity or profanity? (Or, asked another way, is nakedness still shameful (as in Hos 2:2,3) when is a part of a "more noble endeavor." If so, what is the "noble endeavor" that most art-forms are pursuing?)
8. Are there limits to involvement in art-forms that a Christian should observe? (For example: dance/sports that glorify the body or drama that carries a worldly message.) Give other examples.
9. What does Phil 4:8 suggest about the criteria & priority for involvement in the arts?
 - a. True
 - b. Honorable
 - c. Just
 - d. Pure
 - e. Lovely
 - f. Commendable
 - g. Excellent/Praiseworthy