

## General Topics :: Christians and the Arts

### Christians and the Arts, on: 2012/2/27 10:55

I'm just curious about something. Vocationally there are Christians in nearly every walk of life. Engineering, ditch digging, law enforcement, manufacturing, farming, etc... and we do not question whether whatever someone produces in their chosen vocation is evangelistic or "Christian" (altho we would all agree a Christian should not participate in a vocation or job that would lead them to do or produce something that goes against scripture).

But when it comes to the arts, most Christians today dont allow the same freedom. If you are a Christian and a song writer... and you write a song and it's not a Christian song... some will question your salvation.

The same is true for creative writing, painting, etc. Christians always seem to have the opinion that any creative or artful expression by other Christians has to be focussed on faith.

Where does this come from? Why do we do this?

What has brought this to mind is that I am working on a writing project and someone asked me about it. They were surprised that it is not "Christian" in nature. There is nothing about it that is un-Christian, it's just that this project is not overtly Christian. Not by design, it's just where it is, simple as that. Nothing more nothing less, and the last thing I want to do is force an evangelistic theme onto what I am writing because at that point it loses it's creativitiy... and I am no longer writing because I love to write... make sense?

(and yes, this project is partly why I have not been around much lately...)

Anyone have any thoughts on this subject?

Krispy

### Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/2/27 12:16

Quote:  
----- What has brought this to mind is that I am working on a writing project and someone asked me about it. They were surprised that it is not "Christian" in nature.  
-----

Hi Krispy,

I also write in a secular context -- for the local paper. I write stories about people, businesses, organizations and such. I thankfully don't have to deal with hard-core churchd folk breathing down my back, criticizing me for being too "secular". But still I see a place for our faith.

In our research and preparation we invariably see evidence of human fallenness. We simply can't separate our faith from our work; but we can use our assignments to reveal a positive quality of our faith. Few may remember the details of our projects, but in the long run people do remember something about us -- and that we care about what's important to them. -- "Consider other's interests ahead of your own". The world doesn't just need our God-talk. Society is like a dry sponge craving for some drop of goodness. And our little offerings can go a long way in revealing the reality of God.

Here's another way our projects can be an influence: I just wrote about a bird watcher in my town. He addressed the threat to our birds caused by changed farming habits. I expounded that point without either defending or slandering our local farmers. After all, we are all part of that problem -- the insatiable drive to get ahead. That point, in itself, can heighten the collective conscience to the consequences of our life choices and habits. God can use that too -- even in a local paper.

To me, that same general idea holds true for my "secular" musical involvements. -- Oh -- and church isn't that

far from being secular in itself!

Does that address your thoughts, Krispy?

May God bless your project!

And make sure you do a good job! That goes a long way in being good testimony for God.

Diane

**Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/2/27 12:20**

Some people don't realize there is a wide latitude of freedom in Christ and that if what you are doing is not of true faith then it is sin.

That is the measuring stick. Is it of faith? And I would add (because I am going to be misunderstood), that I am not talking about natural faith (i.e. I know the sun will come up), but Godly faith, generated from the presence of Christ within you and your relationship with Him. Whatever is not of the faith that you presently have with Christ is sin.

No one would deny God is an artist. Some Christians do not even like some of His art as manifested in some living creatures. God allows them freedom to not like some of His art. That is gracious of Him. Some people think that some animals or insects or plants are repugnant while others think they are awesome.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and we should be gracious enough not to be rude.

Now, with that said, "art" that denigrates Christ or anyone else is not art to me.

Just my 2 cents,  
Pilgrim

**Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/27 12:29**

Hi Krispy,

I'm at a small creative company that does visual work for many different brands. A few of our clients are "Christian", but the vast majority are not. Most of our clients are consumer brands...the same consumer brands that the Christians who are questioning you, probably use to brush their teeth or wash their clothes with.

A life long struggle I have had with my own tribe, conservative Christianity, is that we harbor anti-humanity feelings.

MC

**Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/2/27 12:38**

small-mindedness.

God is not small-minded otherwise there would only be a few species of plants, animals and insects.

The expression of the Body of Christ is the expression of the Head (the Creator of all) through His Body and it will manifest as incredible multi-faceted and varied expressions all over the earth.

Our humanity is an expression of God. Our humanity in and of itself is beautiful and should be used by the Holy Spirit and not the unholy spirit. Humans are likened in scripture as containers. We are vessels, cups, temples, tabernacles, etc. We were made to contain God and that will result in limitless expressions of His beauty and glory.

My 3 cents, now.  
Pilgrim

Re: , on: 2012/2/27 13:00

Quote:

-----A life long struggle I have had with my own tribe, conservative Christianity, is that we harbor anti-humanity feelings.  
-----

I see truth in everyones comments. The one I quoted above I think nailed it well too... we forget that we live in humanity.

I'm in the process of writing a novel right now. I dont care for Christian novels... I find them either trite or bizarre, and mostly hard to relate to real life. I do not like Frank Peretti's books, so please dont recommend them.

The book deals with a lot of different aspects of humanity. I decided one day to give it a try and so I started writing an outline and then developing the story... and as it flowed it poured out on paper. My intention is not to make any kind of statement about anything, or anything like that. I just wanted to try something new and creative.

The first question I got when I mentioned it to a Christian friend was "This is going to be a Christian novel, right?"

"ummm... no."

"You need to try use this as a way to reach people for the Lord. Otherwise why do it?"

ugh...

If I HAVE to do anything with this novel I'll lose interest and stop writing it all together. Thats just the way I am when it comes to stuff like that. Why cant we just do what the Lord gifts us to do and in a way in which we are inspired to do it... and enjoy it for the gift that it is?

Christians can be very small minded, Pilgrim... you're right.

Krispy

Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by Lysa (), on: 2012/2/27 13:09

Quote:

-----Krispy wrote:

The first question I got when I mentioned it to a Christian friend was "This is going to be a Christian novel, right?"  
-----

I applaud you!! If we, Christians, only write for Christendom then what good are we?

God bless you and your project,  
Lisa

Re: - posted by philomastix, on: 2012/2/27 15:15

Good on you Krispy. Though I've not posted before, I've lurked for years and feel familiar with your forum presence. It makes me so happy to hear this.

I appreciate Compton's comment that so many Christians have anti-humanity thoughts. Literature falls into the academic discipline of the humanities, being the study of the product of humanity. Though this gets unfortunately mixed with opposition to the philosophical idea of humanism, it shouldn't.

I remember reading this last year and think it's relevant:

[https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?forum=35&topic\\_id=39289&post\\_id=286801&viewmode=thread&order=0](https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?forum=35&topic_id=39289&post_id=286801&viewmode=thread&order=0)

Thanks for sharing, krispy. all the best.

cyril

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/27 18:26**

That was a good link, philomastix.

In every generation we have the benefit of 20-20 hindsight to see how the church spiritualized viewpoints it really had just inherited from the world. One of the most subtle and pernicious was the 20th century notion that a dutiful productive individual person must play their isolated role without question or concern for the big picture. Thankfully such a view has been recognized as untenable for the 21st century, as it limits crucial problem solving, network relationship building, and collaboration which is crucial to innovation. It is also demeaning to the psychological and spiritual parts of humanity.

The conservative Christian suspicion towards creativity and self-expression, does not come from the bible, but from the scientific management theories of the early 20th century industrial economy. Google Frederick W Taylor and see if you recognize the modern conservative Christian ethos towards human activity within the church organization.

MC

**Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/2/27 23:17**

Well....Steve, in your book you going to dismiss common sense as irrelevant? Will evil triumph over God? Is goodness old-fashioned, no trait to be desired, yearned for, or pursued? Is God a mere observer of the cosmos not taking any interest in human affairs?

Or, are you writing something like "Rascal" or "Summer of the Monkeys"? (Yes, I prefer children's fiction - adult fiction has too much stress - I live with enough on a daily basis to allow it to entertain me.)

Have you ever read "The Robe" by Lloyd C. Douglass? I am rereading it again for the first time in many years - it having been a favorite when I was a teen. I am discovering the writer sharing a lot of Christian philosophies through his characters.

Steve, you questioning the will of God in your pursuit? Sounds to me like you are working to justify it, or defend it. Read your post as though someone else wrote it and what would you say?

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/27 23:41**

Ginny,

Speaking for myself, and not for Steve...

First of all, let me say Ginny, there are few friends here at SI, that I respect more than yourself.

However, all my life I've had to quietly endure condescending smiles, polite cynicism, or mistrustful inquiries like the ones you've raised here, from people who needed to know the practical benefit of a thing before they trusted it. Now I understand such well intentioned people...but they do not seem to reciprocate!

As this thread is focused on Steve, now I have an opportunity to learn as an observer. As an observer in this case, help me understand...what in Steve's post causes you to think his book project indicates he is sneaking away from God? What phrase or clue did he give to make you worried he is abandoning integrity towards the scriptures or redefining God in some unbiblical way?

It's funny, but I read his post completely different. I saw a man entering into his middle years with a sense of wanting to reflect on his life thus far. Someone who is done with youthful posturing, and is now interested in growing inwardly, not just in reputation. I might even venture that I see someone who is at so much at peace with his position in Jesus Christ, that

at he is more willing to risk honesty and misunderstanding with people.

Perhaps I am off.

Blessings,

Mike

**Re: , on: 2012/2/28 5:57**

lol... wow.... Mike, did you hack my computer and read what I've written so far in my book??

There is a lot of me in the main character, and thats exactly what one of the themes of the book is... reflecting on my life thus far. Where I've been, where I am going. There is a lot of uncertainty going on with the main character, which is where I am at in life in a practical sense.

Not uncertainty with God, I am very certain and secure in His hands. But with all thats gone on since my heart attack 18 months ago, and then a job loss 9 months ago (even tho He blessed me with a job 3 weeks later and has supplied all our needs beyond comprehension!), I'm just uncertain about where God is taking me and my family. Ya know? I certainly have faith that He is in control... but there is a human aspect to all of this too.

I dont want to give away what the book is about because someday down the road I want people to read it.

Ginny, I'm not trying to justify anything. I am very comfortable with the direction I'm going with this.

To be honest with you, I think one of the reasons I started writing the novel and taking it in the direction I'm going is because over the last 10 years I have read and written so much about God, doctrine, the Bible, my faith, my personal struggles... I needed a break. I wanted to do something completely different and off the wall. Something I've never done before.

And basically because of the response of a couple friends concerning "why isnt this going to be evangelistic" it got me wondering why many Christians view "art" as something to be avoided if it isnt overtly evangelistic. As if art galleries might be something to avoid because there isnt an altar call before you enter the gift shop.

Why cant some Christians just enjoy photography, or art, or a good book, or... dare I say... music, without it being about the "Romans Road"?

I think we may be surprised at what we can find God in if we would just take a moment and look.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by jochbaptist (), on: 2012/2/28 6:06**

When I discovered surfing(a looong time ago), I became so enraptured by it, that it infiltrated every sphere of my life. When I had to write an essay for school, no matter what the subject was, I would bend/force/adapt it to feature my obsession. When I was scribbling in my homework book it would be a picture of me doing an "off the lip" from an insanely huge wave, or strolling down a beach with an idyllic sunset and girl, with my surfboard under my arm.

After my salvation, my Father sent me to go and complete a Diploma Course in Graphic Design. My poor lecturers had a hard time to keep me focused on any project without Jesus featuring in it somewhere.

The point is that whatever the heart is filled with, will overflow into whatever you do. I once heard Bruce Springsteen quote someone else who described an artist as "someone who makes people care about his obsession". Being married to an artist, I have noticed that art that "speaks" the loudest is the art that comes straight from the heart. No matter how refined your skill, or artistic language and style may be, without passion it is empty. And our Passion should be Jesus and His Kingdom.

Blessings

Joch

**Re: , on: 2012/2/28 7:00**

Thats a good word, Joch.

I have attempted to read Christian fiction, and I think in this arena particularly, having to make certain points has stifled the creativity.

Say I was an artist... if I could paint... painting a beautiful picture of the North Shore of Oahu would bring glory to God without having the text from a Chic Tract tacked onto the bottom of it. Not trying to hide God... but to bring Him out in creative ways. See what I mean?

In my mind art should make people think. Paint a landscape picture that makes it very clear to the viewer that there is no way the North Shore happened by accident.

I guess what I am saying is that not every song or piece of artistic expression has to say Jesus 6 times, or have scripture quotes stenciled on it. Sometimes that can be VERY beautiful, but if we make that a rule or a law then there is no creativity in it anymore.

Who is more creative than God?

We need to find subtle yet real ways of making God known, whether it be through nature or art or our work... and all pointing back to scripture!

By the way, I'm certainly NOT endorsing foolishness like what I have termed "stealth evangelism". Believe me, I have not lost my edge, and I will speak boldly and plainly about the Lord and the Word... and I will continue to offend people (not intentionally).

I'm trying to find my voice in other ways, and expressing creativity in other ways. Not everything has to be a freight train.

GOD is the greatest artist of all. Look around you. The scenery, the faces of your children... God's artwork. It screams His glory in a subtle way.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/2/28 8:30**

Krispy you wrote: There is a lot of me in the main character, and that's exactly what one of the themes of the book is... reflecting on my life thus far. Where I've been, where I am going. There is a lot of uncertainty going on with the main character, which is where I am at in life in a practical sense.

---

since you have said there is a lot of the main character that is like "you", then I am sure that the Lord would be central in your book. I say that Steve because I have read so many of your posts here on SI that Jesus is Lord of your life and I know you believe as we all do that JESUS is in every single aspect of our life, there is no area that we separate or keep away from HIM so I am sure that your book will reflect that. I wish you good luck with your project and that you find joy in HIM as you continue this process of working on this story. GOD takes us on so many journeys in our life and sometimes it is really amazing what we have learned once we get to the end...keep your eyes fixed on JESUS as you weave the lives of your characters together and I am sure it will be a blessing to read for many.

God Bless  
mj

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/2/28 9:54**

Mike, I think your question deserves an answer.

First off, I read only Steve's lead post, did not read the response of others - I do that sometimes for a couple reasons, one being that it will divert me away from my gut reaction.

Steve said he did not want to write Christian fiction. So does this mean that attributes of truth, honesty, justice, purity love are to be sacrificed in the name of art? (Phil. 4:8) Most art defies these principles. This is what raised the question in my mind. When the Holy Spirit dwells within, he will help us to create works of beauty because God is a God of beauty. This indwelling will be reflected in our music, writings, farming, marketing because it is an extension of who and what we are and what empowers us.

A person can take beautiful lessons from nature that teach us much about God's artistry. God is the master artist, no one can be his equal, but we do work to reflect it in all of life, including art.

I saw Steve respond to my question and he cleared up my questions. Thanks, Steve.

A rabbit trail:

I agree that a lot of Christian fiction written today is at best cheesy, but it sells. One writer said that if you want to write a book that will sell, write about the Amish, never mind whether it reflects Amish culture. Or, take one popular painter whose works are everywhere. I used to love it until I learned that his personal lifestyle leaves much to be desired. I just learned recently that one of my favorite singers from childhood was an alcoholic. Oh, he had a wonderful voice - my husband suggested he may have been a smoker because he had a deep bass voice. Why am I saying this? I find it tragic when one uses Jesus to market their work but that there is a serious disconnect between their work and lifestyle. I find this sad. And then you have those who say they have FAITH in Jesus but produce works that do not reflect God's beauty. I do not know which artist is the most tragic...

I do wish Steve well in his pursuit...

**Re: , on: 2012/2/28 10:25**

Quote:

-----One writer said that if you want to write a book that will sell, write about the Amish, never mind whether it reflects Amish culture.  
-----

That's good to know because Amish culture plays a VERY miniscule part in the novel... lol. They say "write what you know", and so this novel has elements of where I grew up and part of that is the Amish, although this is not a book involving Amish. They are just part of the mosaic of the book because that's "what I know".

Kinda funny that you said that. I'm starting to think several of you have somehow read what I've written so far! lol...

MJ... you are absolutely correct that elements of faith are present in the book so far. I'm only on chapter nine and the plot is still developing. The more I write the more ideas explode in my mind. I'm not intentionally leaving an overt Christian message out, I'm just letting the story develop as it develops.

And it's kinda cool to see where it's gone so far. I am nowhere near where I set out to go. The thing has taken on a life of its own. It's like a baby... you bring it home from the hospital and you have all these dreams of what kind of life it will live... and just like a child it doesn't do quite what you thought it would do... but you're just as pleased.

Anyway, I don't really want the conversation to be about me and what I am doing. I am addressing a broader issue here which is this:

Since one of God's attributes is His creativity and His artistry.... and since we are made in His image, which means that we can be creative and artistic (or at least enjoy and appreciate the creative and artistic)... then why don't we?



Why are Christians afraid of self expression, art, music, writing, poetry, photography, etc? Why does most Christian art, music, writing, etc have to be so cheesy (as Ginny pointed out)?

Christians should be the most creative and artistic people in the world.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/2/28 11:16**

Krispy,

So your work is autobiographical at heart but wrapped in fiction? Could be interesting. You going to use "Period" in your work! LOL Couldn't resist saying that! True or false? I had to say it! {{smile}}

Hmmm...so the Amish will factor in it? I know you used to make hay with them...You going to use any PA German in it? You better get it right if you do. Literal translation will not do...

As my relationship grows with the LORD I am finding myself being able to be more creative - using what I have and making objects of beauty. Would I win any prizes for any of my work? No. This is not my goal. My goal is to express delight with the works of my hands. As we see the world around us promoting ugliness it becomes paramount that Christians be creators of beauty in the midst of this ugliness.

Anyhow...got a target date set for publishing?

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/28 11:32**

Thanks Ginny for your thoughtful answer. And I will offer here that I recognize that much of what represents "art" is shocking in both form and ideology. This association alone could very well lead to the conclusion that the arts are reprobate.

"Why are Christians afraid of self expression"

Steve, I agree with you that this is a broader issue. It really has little to do with the arts.

To avoid needing paragraphs of abstract philosophizing here let me connect Steve's question with some others::

Why do many Christians view their employment as a kind of necessary evil, and a distraction from their more important calling? Why do many Christians feel their spouses are holding them back from serving God? Why do many Christians feel the need to alter their behavior when at Church? Why do Christians withhold mercy from happy people, but are quick to lavish it upon miserable people? Why do people in general feel empty when things are going well, but find a sense of purpose when they or their friends are facing crisis? Why does a dog know how to be content in all circumstances more than a Christian? Why is my cat more honest with me about what she wants than most of my friends?

I think the answer to these questions can help explain why Christians, and people in general, are afraid of self expression.

MC



Re: , on: 2012/2/28 12:31

Quote:  
-----Hmmm...so the Amish will factor in it? I know you used to make hay with them...You going to use any PA German in it? You better get it right if you do. Literal translation will not do...  
-----

It's quasi-auto-biographical. Yes and no. As for the Amish, they are just part of the back drop of the setting of the story, but no more than that.

Like you said, it's a bit cliché to write about the Amish anyway.

Krispy

Re: , on: 2012/2/28 12:35

Quote:  
-----Why do many Christians view their employment as a kind of necessary evil, and a distraction from their more important calling?  
-----

Wow... that's bigger than you think! I know several guys at church that are like that. Now granted, maybe God has called them into full time ministry, but also maybe their full time ministry IS their employment.

I know mine is.

And there is always that one guy who encourages everyone to "put your hand to the plow" and quit your job and go into full time ministry. And if you don't, well, you're just not that serious about the Lord.

Kinda like street preachers. I have a deep abiding love for street preachers... but most of them think that EVERYONE is called to street preach. No, not everyone is. (that's why not everyone was preaching in the streets in the Bible!)

God has given different callings to different people. What Christians need to do is stop looking at everyone else and pay attention to their own calling.

Krispy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/28 22:44

Quote:  
----- that's bigger than you think  
-----

I think it is. I hope my questions didn't seem silly. Nor were they supposed to be condemning. In many ways I was just relating to everyone, including myself.

The point I was trying to make is that human beings tend to need reassurance in one form or another. If not from God, then certainly from one other person. Why do we think God gave us the ability to express ourselves even with language, rather than to simply live and feed ourselves like animals?

Well, obviously we want to reach out and make connections with other people, and ultimately the Lord. And when this affirmation is not reciprocated, we can be tempted to think who we are and what we are doing is worthless. Even if what we are doing is what God wants us to do, we still often seek the affirmation of others we respect. In Christian circles this very human affirmation is sometimes only reserved for those who are doing overtly "Christian" activities.

When only "Christian" ministries are validated, you might just find a Christian man who feels that working for a salary, or

a wife who is raising a family, that they never quite bring joy to God.

In this way, the artist, the salary worker, and the homemaker can be, and often are, in the same boat...left wondering quietly if somehow they have missed God's will for their lives.

MC

**Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2012/2/28 23:01**

Compton, Krispy, and others involved. I think you guys would enjoy reading "Heaven" by Randy Alcorn. He shows how much our revulsion toward natural human expression is more a result of what he calls "Christoplatonism." Which is a Greek philosophy that sort of attached itself to Christianity a number of years ago.

He will affirm many of your concerns. I tend to agree with him a great deal.

Whether you eat or drink...do it all to the glory of God. God takes pleasure in our enjoying his good gifts.

This book is a much needed calibration of many false notions we hold as Christians. Though he does speculate in the book, he always makes you aware that he is speculating, and does not take dogmatic positions on things the Bible only glances at.

**Re: - posted by carters (), on: 2012/2/29 2:18**

well this is sort of related to the question "arts"...

I cannot recall where it was that I read this but fairly recently in my study of the early church I read about a man, in that era, who became a Christian, his vocation was in acting (whatever they called it on those days) and apparently he wrote or his elders wrote to the leaders of the church/early church fathers about whether it was "right" to continue in this vocation as a Christian. The leaders of the church made the decision, no.

Interesting and food for thought.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/29 4:52**

Hi carters,

The early letters on the theater are interesting!

I remember reading the particular letter you reference. As I recall, this actor had repented of being on stage, but was trying to find a way to make a living without being on stage by giving acting lessons. The judgement against him continuing in his profession, was because the theater was notorious for "giving instructions in fornication."

It is also worth noting that the leader who wrote the letter did not just forbid the man from making a living as an actor, but offered to give him a place to live and provide food for him if he could not find a new career.

I also would like to reiterate that I do not feel the fine arts can be held to a different standard than the mechanical arts, publishing arts, or industrial arts, or any other design field. As an act of creativity and ingenuity, there is really no moral or spiritual difference between painting, composing, sculpting, and say, writing software code for a mobile application, designing a toaster using CAD software, or drawing blueprints for a house.

MC

**Re: , on: 2012/2/29 5:13**

After reading carter's post I was thinking there must have been a reason behind the church fathers' decisions other than just no... thanx for expounding on that, Mike. Thank the Lord for actors like the folks down in Albany GA that are putting out movies like Facing the Giants, Courageous, etc. Finally, QUALITY Christian movies (albeit a bit fad-ish)

Quote:  
-----It is also worth noting that the leader who wrote the letter did not just forbid the man from making a living as an actor, but offered to give him a place to live and provide food for him if he could not find a new career.  
-----

That is HUGE right there. That's leadership, compassion and love wrapped up in one. I think more new Christians would walk in obedience sooner if more mature Christians would have their back like this man did.

Quote:  
-----As an act of creativity and ingenuity, there is really no moral or spiritual difference between painting, composing, sculpting, and say, writing software code for a mobile application, designing a toaster using CAD software, or drawing blueprints for a house.  
-----

I've always thought so too... especially since I have used AutoCAD for years in my profession... to design and draw machinery, houses, schools, churches, etc. That is until the economy tanked.

Now I make a little more than half what I was before... and I am doing "document control". I hate document control, but I love the God who provided the job for me so my family can eat. He is a good God.

The job is feeding us while I write. That's how I am looking at it.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/2/29 8:23**

That's a great attitude, Krispy.

Good things come out of adversity if we let adversity drive us to God and not away from Him.

Pilgrim

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/2/29 8:58**

Quote:  
----- I think the answer to these questions can help explain why Christians, and people in general, are afraid of self expression.  
-----

This discussion seems to be exposing a theological deficiency in evangelicalism: a difficulty in accepting God's mercy and grace for ourselves in our entirety—our entire personhood. At the core, it is a level of unbelief. However, we don't see that. Instead we baptize this shade of unbelief behind a thin veneer—our own version of ASCETICISM which denies us our freedom in Christ and imprisons us from who we really are. It splits us apart.

The tragedy is that we can never be fully alive—enjoying the abundant all-encompassing life Christ has given us as a gift. We become repulsed by our own personhood; and we are also repulsed by the self-expressions of others. So we condemn it as unspiritual. Truthful self-expression is too frightening—too exposing. And so we attempt to imprison

each other in our own restrictive boxes. Then we can stave off the anxiety that may arise from any "uncontrollable" exposure of truthfulness. (Churches are notorious for such restrictiveness!)

Our contemporary forms of asceticism may very well feel spiritual, and they may "help" us to feel more deserving of God. Yet this is a distorted kind of self-denial. And it merely baptizes guilt, treating self-condemnation as a virtue: If I can I oathe myself, I will never have to face myself – and love myself as God's creation.

Perhaps this explains why even the suggestion that we must "love ourselves" is so repulsive in evangelicalism. We are quick to gloss over the third part of that great commandment: Love God, love your neighbor as yourself. And so our asceticism becomes a higher virtue than God's commandment itself.

What I see Krispy doing through his writing is coming to terms with his own theology. He is using language creatively to respect and value himself – and all aspects of a life journey. Surely we can acknowledge such a project as a precious gift to himself. It is, after all a bold gesture - of be truly alive, fully human – allowing all the aspects of his being and experience to find expression.

Someone said: Many people die without having ever lived. What a tragedy! From that perspective, I think it would be most appropriate to celebrate with Krispy in his project.

Diane

**Re: ir - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/29 9:43**

Quote:  
----- This discussion seems to be exposing a theological deficiency in evangelicalism: a difficulty in accepting God's mercy and grace for ourselves in our entirety.  
-----

You and I see eye to eye on this matter, Diane:)

Deeply imbedded in the software code of our Evangelical firmware, beneath all of the software programs of this theological issue or that social protest, is this nagging sense that we just don't bring the Lord any joy or pleasure. He has a cosmic policy of love, but personally speaking, he really doesn't like us.

And so we never quite shake this sense of insecurity, even as we are promoted in the ranks of our Christian communities. Like a house built around a tree stump that can't be removed we build our spiritual identity around this central premise that God is perpetually unhappy with us personally. Some express this by affecting the office of a prophet who is called to the ministry of legalistic critique of other people, while others feel a calling to proclaim a humanist manifesto and universalist compassion for the human condition. Others seek approval from lesser gods, devoting themselves to getting approval from spiritual leaders by playing the expected roles invented for them. They know to fit in, they must never mention they secretly hide a quiet despair that has no name. And still there are others who have left our camps, through a hardening of a heart that winces every time some Christian talks about the love of God.

In such a state of mind, it is no wonder "art" (said best with a French accent) rubs us the wrong way.

MC

**Re: , on: 2012/2/29 10:48**

...just had to bring the French into this, didnt you.

lol

Krispy

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/2/29 11:06**

Quote:

----- In such a state of mind,  
-----

It's been said that the church keeps the psychiatrists in business. That may very well be related to our theology – not in creed of course, but in our subliminal practice.

It never occurred to me that society's artists, novelists, composers, etc might help us understand ourselves better – when our theologians can't get us there.

Diane

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/2/29 11:14**

greetings

I have been considering this topic and still have some linger doubts on a personal level. For a while I use to write, my area was fictional romantic. I belonged to a rather large community of other writers and we shared our work with each other for editing, feedback, and help in getting published. Several of the ladies from my group have gone on to do very well and are published now. I really enjoyed writing and was greatly encouraged by other authors to pursue the story I was working on at the time. The struggle came in as I grew closer in my walk with the LORD. I felt a desire to express my love for the LORD through my characters as well as pull back on some of the more worldly themes in most modern romances. My peers in the group took notice and while they understood eventually it came down to the point if I was not willing to "add" certain elements into my story to give it a broader reading base then it would not sell. My story was not a christian romance but because I was unwilling to add worldly elements into the plot those in the business of publishing were not interested. I understood their point of view they were in the business of publishing books and making money. IT was a real struggle for me, I really love writing but in the end I just realized that for myself the temptation of "selling" books was too great and I would have to compromise in my walk in order to accomplish that. Of course there is always the possibility that I was not that great a writer to begin with sense I could not find a way of writing my story to please the world at large and still walk in what I knew was right before the LORD....)

Of course this is just my personal experience and not meant to be a reflection on anyone else pursuits in these areas. I thank GOD for all the gifts and talents HE gives us.

IT is a good topic Krispy thank you for bring here has given me much to think about to be sure.

God Bless  
mj

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/29 12:10**

MJ, I very much appreciate the experiences and perspective you bring to this conversation.

Quote:  
----- My peers in the group took notice and while they understood eventually it came down to the point if I was not willing to "add" certain elements into my story to give it a broader reading base then it would not sell.  
-----

All my life, I've had the mixed blessing of blending my professional pursuits and personal passions up into one tangled ball:) Something I am continually surprised by, is that not even "artists" can agree on what "art" is. What we call art is really a bundle of many things.

Over the years I've developed some simple language for helping myself, and my company, untangle the issues that make up creativity and design in constructive ways that do not demean either the personal nor the commercial aspects of art.

To begin with, when we are creating anything, whether it be a novel or a website, we are engaging three separate concerns.

- 1) Materials (or media)
- 2) Audience (or market)
- 3) Ideas (or meaning)

Now we may see that a certain artist is engaged in an idea that would sorely compromise our faith, and come to the conclusion that art compromises faith....but this is an unnecessary conclusion. This is why I have a great deal of grace towards Christians who are critical of the arts...most of the time they are not critical of paint, pens, or pianos. Most of the time they are critical of the horrendous ideas those materials have been used to express. (Although there are some sensible people, who honestly do not see any value in anything as impractical as a painting or a poem for any purpose.)

Quote:  
----- I really love writing but in the end I just realized that for myself the temptation of "selling" books was too great and I would have to compromise in my walk in order to accomplish that.  
-----

In your case, you are committed to an idea that does not compromise your faith. I'll tell you plainly Mary Jane, you were more of an artist the day you decided not to write anything, rather than seek to become a commercially successful craftsman engaging your materials and your audience, but disengaging your conscience.

Blessings,

MC

**Re: , on: 2012/2/29 12:11**

I can certainly understand where you are coming from MJ. To be sure, anything I write would never contain elements that you would find in a Steven King novel or many other popular novelists. We can't go there as Christians, nor do I have any desire to go there. If a story is good enough it can be told without lurid imagery or vulgar language. In fact, if it is well written that stuff can be absent and the reader will never notice.

As for publishing, the rules have turned upside down on their heads now-a-days since the invention of the Kindle and Nook. Some of the biggest sellers today are not being "published" or even printed by the big publishing companies. People are now "self-publishing" by uploading their novels and books to Amazon and/or Barnes & Noble.

Some authors are actually making much more money that way than if they got a publishing contract because generally first time authors are lucky if they get 6% from the publishers. Self publishing for Kindle and Nook you can get close to 50%. Granted, the price is much much lower in those venues... but many are still doing quite well with that set up.

It's also been a stepping stone for some authors to land contracts with regular publishers. Sell enough books for Kindle and Nook and publishers will take notice.

You should look into that, MJ.

Krispy

PS: I am a realist, I do not anticipate becoming a famous author. Writing is something that I love and enjoy. I want to write something people will want to read... but for me, right now, it's fun.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/2/29 15:02**

Quote:  
-----It never occurred to me that society's artists, novelists, composers, etc might help us understand ourselves better -- when our theologians can't get us there.  
-----

I couldn't agree more.

Human beings were created to live within conceptual frameworks of words and images. We are self reflective in ways that are singularly unique in all of creation.

The highest good of influence, whether the person be an artist or a theologian, is to help form conceptual frameworks in people's minds that resemble the truth. We interpret what we experience through frameworks and narratives that we sometimes aren't even aware of consciously. This is one reason I believe Jesus used parables and symbols...to help us understand reality better.

At the end of the day, both the theologian and the artist are really just two names for the same objective...to influence and shape people's perception of the world. Perhaps that's why so many theologians are quick to rail against artists...they feel their toes are being stepped on.

And then again, perhaps this is also why still many more theologians affirm artists. They don't see artists as rivals, but co-laborers.

Because it seems to me that more of the language in the bible resembles the earnest expression of the artist, more than it does the scientific descriptive expressions of the theologian. Perhaps theologians are good at deconstructing, describing, and systemizing...but maybe we need a more whole brained expression in all its local congregational forms to balance the equation. Perhaps we need a way of looking that doesn't only want to see the various parts of our faith, but also a way that also seeks to embrace the whole.

Blessings,

MC

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/2/29 17:27**

Quote:  
----- The highest good of influence, whether the person be an artist or a theologian, is to help form conceptual frameworks in people's minds that resemble the truth. We interpret what we experience through frameworks and narratives that we sometimes aren't even aware of consciously. This is one reason I believe Jesus used parables and symbols...to help us understand reality better.  
-----

Compton, you have a keen eye! Besides you artists, perhaps some of those best able to form such conceptual frameworks and narratives in people's minds are our therapists and counselors. These people understand their enormous



benefits for healing among the distraught and troubled individuals of our society. Human experience, to be sure, is intensely artistic – shaped by narratives and unspoken realities. Here’s where science – which is “solely” concerned about reality, actually loses its grip on reality. From this perspective, the Bible is far more in touch with reality than given credit.

Quote:  
----- Because it seems to me that more of the language in the bible resembles the earnest expression of the artist, more than it does the scientific descriptive expressions of the theologian.  
-----

We would do well then to revive scripture’s narrative dimension and the experiential expressions of its characters.

Thankfully there are theologians today who acknowledge the narrative value of scripture – and also the full expression of human experience. We now have the theology of the oppressed, whereas once it was primarily a theology of the dominant – those who held the reigns and the power.

Today the theology of sin includes not merely assertive deliberate acts, but also passivity, lethargy, slide-into-powerlessness, and self-hatred. Even here in the theology of sin – artistic expression has a vital place. I recall seeing a composite drawing by a teen who throughout her childhood was repetitively assaulted sexually by her babysitter. During therapy she drew simple symbols to depict her life story as seen through her eyes. In the first frame she drew “Me” represented as a circle beside “Him” drawn as a same-sized circle. In each subsequent frame, she drew “Me” smaller and “Him” bigger. Even after he had moved far away and was out of her narrative, her drawings revealed an ever-decreasing size of “Me” and an increasing the size of “Him” – till “Me” was a dot barely visible, and “Him” encompassed the entire frame. That’s how she saw herself – worthless and nothing – even though he was long gone. Had she been required to use words only, or the language of social science, she would never have made this self-discovery – so essential in her journey to forgiveness and new vibrant life in Christ.

Krispy’s thread theme, in itself, is serving to remind us that art, literature, fiction, or any artistic expression is essential for our wellbeing – even in all its rugged and agonizing portrayals.

Krispy and Mary Jane – this reminds me that your writing gifts will always have an honorable place in your Christian life.

Diane

#### Re: Christians and the Arts - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/3/1 10:25

Ok, Krispy, I want to present to you a challenge – and I am serious about this one! {{Smile}}

Have you ever read Lloyd C. Douglas' writings, his novels? "The Robe" is likely his most famous one. His novels used to be a favorite one of mine when I was reading novels – to me they were second to none (Thomas B. Costain ran a close second as did Lew Wallace.). His novels taught one a lot, all wrapped up in an edifying story.

One of his books, "Home for Christmas", is a favorite of mine, one I have read so many times I have lost count. It is a fun book to read, one that I read ever so slowly, savoring each adverb, adjective...internalizing the story. I can feel it as though I am right there as a participant. The book is a delightful story. How many books are out there like this one? Most moderns today think you need strife to make a story. Is this necessary? Is this not a mere commentary on how far down modern society has sunk? Is there no fun in life apart from sports?

Years ago when I interviewed the old people for a genealogy book, I heard so many stories, had me laughing a lot. Those people knew how to have fun! The end results were sometimes unexpected and thereby lies the humor. I concluded one could have a radio program after the manner of Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion" focusing on life growing up in rural America in an Amish – Mennonite community.

Krispy, there are other fun books to read like "Rascal", "The Wolfing", "Incident at Hawk's Hill" beside Mark Twain's books. You have humor, can you not use it and make a read that is uplifting?

OK, I do not know the gist of your novel, these are just some ideas that have sprung up in my mind when I consider the modern novel and compare it with the ones written many years ago.

Wishing you well...

**Re: , on: 2012/3/1 11:38**

Because I usually find humor in just about everything, and because my humor tends to be a little irreverent, that does leak into anything I do.

This novel does have strife. Why? Because some of the events that are central to the plot actually took place in my hometown. I've changed the names and dates to protect the innocent... well, to keep from getting sued. lol

I'm all for uplifting stories so long as they are not sappy. Like those chick flicks on Lifetime or some of those channels for women. To be honest, as good as Facing The Giants was, it was sappy. What kind of football coach cries in every other scene? I wouldn't play for a man who did that. If football had not been the focus of the movie I never would have watched it.

I also had an issue with the whole "surrender your life to Christ and you will win the state championship, get a brand new red pickup truck to replace the clunker you were cursed with, your job will be saved, and your wife will get pregnant after years of not being able to" theme. (Christianity as life enhancement)

The Christian life can be full of strife and trouble.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/3/1 13:33**

Greetings Krispy

you wrote:PS: I am a realist, I do not anticipate becoming a famous author. Writing is something that I love and enjoy. I want to write something people will want to read... but for me, right now, it's fun.

---

I am sure your book will be intriguing and very captivating :) I wish you all the best with this endeavor.

God Bless  
mj