



THE FOUNTAIN

CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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John 7:38

*“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said,
‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”*

CULTURE OR WORLDVIEW, WHICH COMES FIRST?

Sam Sears

I was recently watching a YouTube commentator react to an article in which he was named. This article was discussing which comes first, politics or culture? On his YouTube channel, he mainly discusses news, events, and politics, but also sings in a band. I won't name him, because I sometimes find him to be unnecessarily sensational and we certainly don't agree on many issues; however, I keep watching his channel because I find his unique perspective interesting. He greatly changed his views over the past few years, and he doesn't fit neatly into a box. He also interacts with people from multiple viewpoints, and I find that a great way to learn.

The initial article responded to a belief that most people's political views are "downstream from culture." He and others hold this view. I think it's important to point out that I'm not primarily concerned about politics themselves, but I think the term here is deeply intertwined with what is called a "worldview." A worldview is simply the way in which people see the world, and even believing you don't have a specific worldview is, in itself, a worldview. It's inescapable to have one. It may be inconsistent, it may be well thought out, or it may be inherited and unquestioned. So, with that in mind, is an individual's worldview downstream from culture? By that I mean, in the flow of cause and effect, which comes first, an individual's worldview, or the state of the culture that is comprised of all individuals interacting with one another?

Convinced that individual views come after changing the culture, this commentator, as well as others, has taken a new stance in what has been called "the culture war." Rather than talk about the surface level disagreements, and simply argue back and forth, there has been a pivot to "create culture." The underlying idea is that people primarily learn truth in the context of story or song, so it is better to imbed truth into art or entertainment than to state it bluntly. Even our own President said it was a sitcom, "Will and Grace," that changed his long-held views on same-sex marriage.

The idea that an artist can embed truth in their art is nothing new. It's long been used to persuade or inspire others. *Star Trek* is a famous example of Gene Roddenberry intentionally embedding his own values — humanism — in his creation and hoping it would inspire and influence others. Times have changed since

then, though.

In recent years, it seems that those who formerly focused on giving a message through story, have wanted to be more direct, and so have changed their tone and style. I've attempted to articulate to others what I see as a big difference in older *Star Trek*, vs new *Star Trek*. In the past, there was a more intentional effort to give both sides of an issue a representation, even if there was a clear preference in the story being told. The characters in the story and the overall story itself came first, and the message was included, but more embedded. Now, the message is **loud**, and is more important than either character consistency or past cannon to the story. There is less nuance and subtlety, and it feels like the story is hammering the message into us more than entertaining us.

This youtuber is part of a different movement. Those who have formerly preferred lectures, articles, and sermons, have drifted back towards story. Unfortunately, these two groups, for the most part, do not seem to be meeting in the middle, but are instead on parallel tracks in general, and now heading in opposite directions in terms of preferred delivery. They seem to be reacting to each other more than learning from each other.

Due to the highly political and divisive nature of the original article, I've decided to skip linking it as well, but it pushed back on the idea that someone's views are downstream from the culture. Those who are creating culture in a specific way are usually doing so because of their personal views; therefore, they argue, those views come before their attempt to influence culture. They further argue that, in some cases, outspoken people's content is only consumed by other people who knowingly share their worldview. This leads us back to the question, do people form their worldview based on the culture they live in? Or is culture formed based on individuals' worldviews?

I think the obvious answer is, yes. Both occur. The article and the commentator both had valid points but were oversimplistic in their analysis. It's not a straight line. Our recent study in the Beatitudes revealed an interrelated relationship between the various individual beatitudes, and I think that here we see a similar dynamic. I do appreciate the idea that we should go back up-stream, to address more basic ideas,

CULTURE OR WORLDVIEW, WHICH COMES FIRST?

Sam Sears

rather than simply arguing about our different conclusions. Where we are now both as a culture and as individuals impacts what we consume, and what we consume will impact the culture of tomorrow.

We must recognize that there are intentional voices sharing ideas embedded in the entertainment we consume. They have the power to subtly or not so subtly insert themselves and their views into whatever type of entertainment they are selling, but only to the extent that the individual consumers will tolerate. If they do it at a slow but steady pace, they can carefully move people along to their views slowly. Too fast or too far, the consumer can push back, as we are seeing with current backlashes against companies like Disney.

What can we do about this cycle? How can we use this aspect of our culture to glorify Christ? For one, we need to be aware of it when we consume entertainment. Fiction is often intentionally trying to communicate a message about truth. My son is reading through a book at school, *Tiger Rising*. While it is age-appropriate, we have discussed a line from the movie trailer based on the book: “You have to save yourself.” It falls right in line with this idea from *Frozen II*, a favorite of my daughter’s “You are the one you have been waiting for.”

While I do want to call my kids into action, not passivity, can we truly save ourselves? Any Christian should respond with a clear “No.” Yes, we can pull our leg out of a bear trap, but the deeper need for salvation still exists. Are we the answer to all problems? We certainly are an imperfect answer, in even the best situation. Yet our culture often tells us that we are. So Avery Joe and I had a good conversation about leaning on God and realizing that we, in our own power, can’t fix everything, solve all of our problems, and we certainly aren’t always as much of the “good guy” or hero as we want to be. However, if we trust in Christ and allow him to save us and to work through us, we can be a part of His work to change the world.

2 Corinthians 10:5 records Paul’s words, “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,” I think it lines up with active listening to the messages our culture sends, but simply being aware of what the world is telling us through story isn’t enough.

In the past, Christians have intentionally impacted the culture. It was Christians who wrote amazing tales like *Pilgrim’s Progress*, or the classic *Chronicles of Narnia*. These two examples showed differences in how clear the Christian worldview was, but it was very much present in both. Rather than just letting ourselves or our children absorb entertainment made by a secular world, we need to support Christians who create, as well as create ourselves — not just sermons, but stories. There was a reason Jesus Himself used stories to convey truth so often. As much as I love a good academic book or a great apologetic line of evidence, there is a reason that the most-read books in our own library are the fiction books. Most people, even Christians, still consume a lot of stories. Let’s use that. Let’s engage in a way that points them to truth and ultimately to Christ.

I’m not sure what role you will play in that effort — perhaps simply supporting a Christian author or creator — but as I head into my doctorate program starting in the spring, I have an idea that’s been on my heart and in my head for a while. If you weren’t aware, my doctorate program at Talbot is designed for full-time pastors. It will mean some extra reading on my part in the Spring, 2 weeks of classes in the Summer, and a project in the Fall, but they will be improving my ability to serve you, right here at the Fountain, as I’m learning. I’ll begin work on my dissertation early in the process, and just like my master’s thesis, it will be long project, so I’ve already been thinking about it.

I’m a nerd. You all know this. My nerdy hobbies, including design, and reading, and enjoying collectibles, but I’ve always used them as a bridge for something more important to me. These hobbies get me into communities with people who don’t know Jesus. It can be as little as showing atheists that Christians can sit beside them have some food and we can laugh together, to being there for prayer, to full on sharing the gospel with an author I had read for years prior, after we met at a mutual friend’s funeral. Rather than just point out good and bad in the entertainment we consume as a family to my kids I recently did something a little different. I wrote again, for fun. Not a newsletter article, not a sermon, but a story.

Since the pandemic began, I’ve only managed

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Sam Sears

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about 80 pages of content, in a total of three years, so it's not been a distraction to my duties, but it has been a fun occasional recharge for me. I took one of those stories and recently read it to my son. I don't know where it will go from here, but because I set it during the crusades and intentionally included a few creepy elements that he would enjoy, we were able to discuss real spiritual warfare, the crusades, Catholicism, Islam and how people can live together when we disagree. I'm not sure he would have sat through that as a sermon, but after reading a story with words and concepts he was unfamiliar with, he would ask, "Who's that?" or "What are those?" Simply telling the story gave me a chance to bait him into seeking more important information.

I learned in much the same way from a man named Larry Hama, who wrote the G.I. Joe comics I read as a child. I've even had the honor of meeting him sev-

eral times, and yes, I have even talked to him about God. He would also throw words well beyond my reading level into his stories. Some he would explain with a footnote, others he wouldn't, leaving me to hunt for the words meaning or to ask an adult.

I'm not sure what's next for my little story, but maybe, just maybe, I have found something that will form the basis of my doctoral research: How to convey important truths in fiction in a "non -preachy" way that Christians can learn from and those who disagree with can still enjoy and maybe get tugged, even just a little, towards the truth. That's how I might contribute to the ongoing conversation we call culture. How will you? I've seen wonderful art here, and we have a few authors, but there are ways each of us can answer the call to be salt and light, and it must involve interacting with those outside of our church walls.

A LOOK INTO OUR LIBRARY

Roma Swanson

This month I would like to introduce you to a book that is very familiar to me.

The title is *More Than Can Be Measured* and I wrote it. On January 13, 2004, my youngest daughter, Rebekah, died in a single car accident. She was 21 years old, driving home from her job at Borders back to her dorm room at Fresno Pacific University.

The news was delivered to my husband Sam and I in the wee hours of the morning of the 14th by a police officer who bore the terrible duty of coming to us with the message.

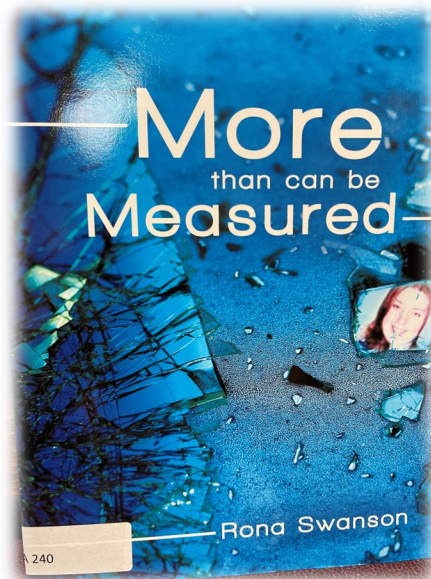
I wrote the book because so many people have asked how in the world we lived through that loss. I described that first year of grief as honestly as I could.

Chuck Romer was so kind to help me put photos to the text and the book contains in each chapter the writings of my daughter Rebekah from her journals.

We learned so many things in the arduous journey of grief that we moved through.

God is an ever-present help in our time of trouble.

The book is my testament to that Help from heaven.



Sheila wished to have me mention that if anyone does not find time to stop by the library on Sunday mornings, she is willing to allow you to browse the library during office hours as well.

We have so many wonderful books available to check out. I hope you will take advantage of the wide selection.

#230 – THERE IS A FOUNTAIN

Chuck Romer

When we changed our church name to “The Fountain”, I looked for hymns and praise songs that used the image of a fountain in the text of the song. One hymn I found is in our church hymnal – “There is a Fountain”. It isn’t a hymn that we sing frequently, but I plan to use it sometime this November.

If you look at #230 in our hymnal, you can see that the text was written in the year 1771 (the author and date of the hymn’s writing is shown on the upper left corner of the page), but it wasn’t set to music until 1830 – nearly 60 years later! (The composer and date for the music’s creation is shown on the upper right.)

But there’s a lot more to the story than just that large gap between the poem being written and Lowell Mason adapting a traditional American melody to fit the text.

The poem was by William Cowper (pronounced “Cooper”) when he was about 40 years old. Born in 1731, he was the fourth child in his family, and his father was a British clergyman. William’s three older siblings all died... and when he was just six years old, his mother died giving birth to a fifth child. He never fully recovered from the pain of those events in his life.



*He gave up his faith,
threw away his Bible
and attempted suicide.*

After some difficult years in a boarding school, he was sent to Westminster School, and developed a love for literature and poetry. His father wanted him to become an attorney, but as he prepared for the bar exam, William experienced very deep anxiety. He gave up his faith, threw away his Bible and attempted suicide.

William was sent to a mental hospital run by Dr. Nathaniel Cotton, a Christian man and a lover of poetry. Over time William slowly recovered, and in 1764 his faith returned after reading in Romans 3. Seven years later, he wrote the poem that became the hymn we have today... and the passage in Romans was part of that process.

Quite a story, isn’t it? Many of the hymns that have survived through the decades have a special story about how they were written.

A few of our modern praise songs also have stories about how they were written. But sadly, many new worship songs are written under contract – with the hope that their new song will get millions of views on Youtube and make it to the CCLI list of Top 100 Songs. A deeper discussion of the dynamics in contemporary Christian music will have to wait for another time.

Can I give you an assignment?

Please choose a song that expresses your thanks and praise to God for His grace and goodness. Then let that song be part of your life each day this month... after all, we’ll celebrate Thanksgiving in just a few days!

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

November 2022

Laura Ray	6
Barbara Stowers	6
Judy Jameson	7
Daniel Parker	14
Melina Reynaga	22
Donna Southard	29
ReNelle Stemkoski	29

Happy Anniversary!

Bob & Lisa Brooks	10
Jacob & Laura Gunning	12
Les & Bev Coffman	22

ATTENDANCE & GIVING

October 2022

Average In Person Attendance

80

Total Giving

\$ 29,026.00

PRAYER CONCERNS

November 2022

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith! Our Nation and Leaders. Teachers & Students in Visalia. Our Brothers & Sisters at Elim.

Health: Ana Morales, Bonnie Henson, Donna Eastin, Heather Smith, Jason McKaughan, Jean Lamb, JoAnne Jordan, Kevin Guy, Kevin Ray (DHF pastor), Marilee Douglass, Pam Shattuck, Fred Wilder

Cancer: Bill Morland, David Thomas, David Welch, Janet Hagan, Joe Grant, Keith Moore, Mike Gunning, Olly Ajluni, Sandra Campbell, Shannan Ajluni

Other Needs: Nina Suttles (Vision)

Military: Brett Boland – Virginia, Michael Reid – San Diego, CA, Preston Correa – Marine, Tyler Richwine – Marine

Missionaries: some of our missionaries cannot be listed for their safety.

Nationally Based Global Mission Organizations: Adolfo Ibarra, Crosslink Development International, Central Missionary Clearinghouse, Soaring for Christ, Radical Truth, Maven, Gideons International, Our Daily Bread Ministries, Jews for Jesus, Pioneers, Team Expansion

Local Ministries: Care Pregnancy Center, Good News Jail Ministry, Hands in the Community, Love In the Name of Christ, Stephen Ministries, Tulare Kings Right to Life, Turning Point, Visalia Rescue Mission, Visalia Senior Housing

Ukrainian Individuals in danger: Valentyna, Michael, Andrew, Alex, and Angela. (Last names withheld for safety.)

Thank You to all who helped with Fall Festival! It was a success 😊





Thank you again to our sponsors who helped make the evening possible!

The Auto Shop
Dr. Vincent Cheng

The Little Valencia Trees daycare
Carlos and Yvette Rojas

November 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10:00 Staff	2 6:00 Family Night	3 10:00 Berean Watchmen	4 6:30 Men's Group <div>Women's Retreat — — — ></div>	5 Daylight Savings time ends 
6 10:30 Worship <div>Women's Retreat</div>	7 10:40 Prayer Warriors 12:00 Women's Bible Study	8 10:00 Staff	9 6:00 Family Night	10 10:00 Berean Watchmen	11 6:30 Men's Group	12 8:00 Prayer Walk
13 10:30 Worship 11:45 Connect Desk Training	14 10:40 Prayer Warriors	15 10:00 Staff	16 6:00 Family Night	17 10:00 Berean Watchmen	18 6:30 Men's Group	19
20 10:30 Worship	21 10:40 Prayer Warriors	22 10:00 Staff	23	24 Office Closed Thanksgiving 	25	26
27 10:30 Worship 12:00 Elder Council	28 10:40 Prayer Warriors	29 10:00 Staff	30 6:00 Family Night	<div> *Family Night <div> Awana Youth Group Men's Bible Study Women's Bible Study </div> </div>		



The Fountain
1023 N Chinowth St
Visalia, CA 93291



Coming Events

November 4th - 6th - Women's Retreat

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November 24th - Thanksgiving Day - Office Closed

Stop by our website for more information on Bible Studies
and coming events at www.thefountaincc.org