



Discussion Questions

CULTURAL APOLOGETICS

by Paul M. Gould

Chapter 4: Imagination

1. This chapter begins with the author's description of the way a scene from the movie *La La Land* connected with deep longings and fears in his and his wife's hearts. Can you remember a time when a story in a movie, painting, stage production, book, etc., connected to your own longings or fears?
2. This chapter discusses how beauty has been exiled from the church through anti-intellectualism, pragmatism, and hostility toward art and aesthetic refinement (philistinism). What are some ways you've observed these attitudes and their influences on beauty in the church?
3. (pp.103-105) Gould says that as God's image bearers, we should be creators and cultivators of goodness, truth, and beauty, and that we should resist valuing usefulness over beauty in all the things we make. Does this come naturally for you, or do you struggle to keep beauty in mind when you make things that seem ordinary? What are some practical ways we might value beauty over utility?
4. On p. 112, the author recounts how different stories captivated his imagination and helped him better understand the world. What stories have had this effect on you? How did they enhance how you view and understand reality?

5. (p. 114) Based on the example of Jesus who used a variety of creative methods to engage his listeners, Gould emphasizes the need for us to cultivate “imaginative reasoning” to reach those who are disconnected from biblical narratives. He admits there is difficulty in learning to make thoughtful connections between theology and culture. Do you think developing this skill is worth the time and effort? What are some ways we might improve our ability to do this?

6. What do you think prevents Christian artists from being more actively involved in culture-shaping institutions such as Hollywood, Broadway, famous art museums, and publishing houses?

7. On p. 117, the author discusses how appeals to the universal longing for beauty have proven more effective in evangelism than traditional efforts in Japan. Were you surprised to learn the music of J.S. Bach has played such a valuable role in evangelism? How does this encourage or challenge you?
(Link to the article - <https://firstthings.com/j-s-bach-in-japan/>)

8. Which concepts or quotes were most impactful in this chapter?

9. Was there anything you disagreed with or question?