



KEY SCRIPTURES: Matthew 13:34 (ESV), Matthew 13:24-30 (ESV), Luke 18:10-14 (ESV)

BIG IDEA: Jesus was **COUNTER**-culture, not necessarily **ANTI**-culture.

INTRO:

For probably the last 15 years or so, before I ever go to see a movie, I generally do two things:

First, I avoid spoilers at all costs. If I'm seeing a movie on opening weekend, I might even go so far as to completely avoid the internet for 24-48 hours before I get to the theater. The last thing I want is to find out that a main character dies at the end. [Author note: only you know your audience, but if you think you can get away with it, you might throw in a minor spoiler here. Instead of "a main character dies at the end" you could say "Dumbledore dies" or "Darth Vader is really Luke's father," but tread lightly!]

And second, I always check the critic score and the audience score on Rotten Tomatoes. Look, I don't want to know how the movie ends, but I do want to know what other people thought of the movie. Because (for me at least) nothing's worse than thinking "this movie's going to be awesome!" only for it to be the worst movie ever. Yeah, I'm looking at you *Antman & The Wasp: Quantumania*. I mean seriously, what was the deal with M.O.D.O.K.'s face??? [Author note: insert any movie that should have been good but wasn't. Here are a few other suggestions: *Artemis Fowl* (straight to Disney+ during the pandemic), *Spider-Man 3* (the one with Tobey Maguire), or *Morbius* (with Jared Leto; be sure to make a joke about "it's Morbin' time").]

And sometimes, when I check Rotten Tomatoes, I find something super weird. The critic score will be really low, but the audience score will be really high. For example, *Antman and the Wasp: Quantumania* has a critic score of 48%, but the audience score is 83%. [Author note: these scores can change over time, so you may want to check to make sure you're

accurate:

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ant_man_and_the_wasp_quantumania

When the scores are that different, I honestly get excited, because I'm most likely either going to love it, or I'm going to hate it, but there's very little chance that I'm going to think it was just okay.

But this got me thinking. People can feel strongly about almost anything. Each of us in this room has thousands of opinions that we feel strongly about, and there's a good chance that none of us feels precisely the same way about everything. And honestly, I think that's part of what makes Chapel Students [\[Author note: insert the name of your student ministry\]](#) so awesome. We don't have to agree on everything to get along. We're just here because we're trying to figure how to be more like Jesus!

But that begs a question: are there things that Jesus hates? I think there definitely are but I think that list is probably shorter than we think it is.

TENSION:

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at a few things that some Christians might say that Jesus hates, but I think they all deserve a second look. And tonight, we're going to talk about **CULTURE**.

Culture isn't as easy to define as you'd think. But it's the thing that brought us Mr. Beast and the Kardashians. It's every five-hour YouTube rabbit trail you've ever gone down. It's every shoe that celebrities wear while sitting in their floor seats at a Lakers game. It's every Super Bowl halftime show. It's commercials. It's product placement. It's fast food. It's blue bubbles vs. green bubbles. It's the movies we watch and the music we listen to. Culture is all around us.

It's bigger than that, though. It's not just what we wear or what we do; in a weird way, it's also who we are. [\[Author note: I'm about to talk about my upbringing. You'll need to change this to more accurately reflect your own story.\]](#) And when I was growing up, I was taught to avoid culture, especially popular culture at all costs. Why? Because, as I was told, it was evil. And I wish I was kidding about this, but my grandparents used to pray for my brother, my sister, and me because we had committed an unthinkable sin.

What had we done? We went to a movie. And now you might be asking yourself, what horrible, awful movie did they go see? We went to go see *The Lion King*, the original cartoon version. I was 9 years old.

But my grandparents grew up in a church that honestly thought and taught that movies (as a whole) were evil because they were a part of “the culture,” and as Christians, we should go out of our way to avoid such things.

Now, my goal here is not to make fun of my grandparents. And it's not to say that every movie is God-honoring, because they absolutely aren't. But even as a 9-year-old, I found myself saying to myself, “Really? There's no way that Jesus cares whether I watch *The Lion King*. Right?”

Now, fast forward to when I was in high school. I went to a church that taught us that listening to “secular” music was evil (“secular” basically means anything that isn't specifically “Christian”), and one night at youth group, they told us to bring all our “secular” CDs (yeah, we listened to music on CDs) so that we could throw them on a bonfire!

Can I come clean about something? I skipped that night. Why? Because I had spent a surprising amount of money on those CDs, and it was a lot of 90s music, which is arguably the best decade of music ever created. I just couldn't make sense of the idea that Jesus hated 90s music so much that He wanted me to throw it all on a bonfire.

But that brings us to a question that we probably should wrestle with: if culture is made up of stuff like Disney animated classics and 90s alternative music, **does Jesus HATE culture?**

TRUTH:

Here's a spoiler alert: Jesus never said, “I love culture” or “I hate culture.” But He did talk about culture in a lot of indirect ways. And He talked about **a lot** of things in really indirect ways. Instead of saying, “I think *this*,” or, “I think *that*,” Jesus would most often challenge the people He was talking to by telling them a story, and then He would leave them to try to figure out what He meant by the story. We call those stories **parables**.



KEY SCRIPTURES: Romans 13:1 (ESV), Matthew 22:29 (ESV), Matthew 24:45-51 (ESV)

BIG IDEA: You have more **RESPONSIBILITY** than you think.

SURFACE

- For each of the following, how interested in politics would you say these people are:
 - You
 - Your friends
 - Your parents / family
 - Your teachers
 - Your neighbors
- Why do you think it's different for each of these groups?

SERIOUS

- What are some of the biggest political issues that you think your generation is facing or will face in the near future? Would you say that these issues are more important to you than they are to your parents' generation? Why do you think that is?
- Tonight, we talked about being “responsible for more than just ourselves.” How difficult is it for you to make decisions based on how those decisions will impact others? Can you think of anything that might help us get better at this?

SPIRITUAL

- What role do you think a person's faith should play in how they vote?
- Do you think it's possible for two people who both love and follow Jesus to vote differently on an issue? Explain.
- How can we, as Christ-followers, make a difference in our world politically even if we can't vote yet?

PRAYER

- How can we, as a group, pray for each other this week?

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