

# Popular culture challenges Christians to “think outside the box,” scholars insist

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It can be difficult to hear God’s word in today’s media-saturated culture of iPods, YouTube, satellite radio, and DirecTV with over 500 channels and on-demand movies, two culture observers at Houston Baptist University conclude.

“We are shaped by popular culture far more than we think—and not just the young people,” said Louis Markos, professor of English at the university and a C.S. Lewis scholar.

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“Hollywood has taught us what love and marriage mean—or don’t mean—what things we should value and what things we should not value, and what it means to be successful. We are also more influenced than we think by the whole celebrity culture. Still, popular culture can be good when it presses Christians to think outside of the box and to identify those deeper longings that we all yearn for.”

Jon Suter, a professor who teaches American popular culture and science fiction as well as other literature courses in the graduate program at HBU, also commented on the duality of popular culture.

“The popular culture contains much that is bad, even toxic,” Suter said, “but there is also much that is good and worthwhile.”

Suter and Markos agree it can be difficult for Christians to determine what is worth watching or listening to and what is not.

“The challenge for the modern Christian is that it is difficult to recognize which is which,” Suter said.

Good examples are out there, however. “I think one Christian writer and speaker who has done a fine job using popular culture to tell the sacred narrative of the Bible is John Eldredge,” Markos said.

So, is anything good coming up for the summer season?

“The most exciting film of the summer promises to be *Prince Caspian*,” Markos said. “I only hope it will be as faithful to the book as the film version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. If it is faithful, we will discover what it means to live in a post-Christian culture in which the old stories have been turned into mere myths.”

Markos hopes the character of Prince Caspian will become “a positive kind of pop icon for young people who yearn for a revival of true courage, beauty and chivalry.”