

Barbie, Feminism, and a Gospel that Saves.

This is a deep film.

This is a feminist film.

But...

Feminism: *advocacy of women's rights on the basis of equality of the sexes.*

Patriarchy: *a system of society in which men hold the power and women are mainly excluded from it*

- i. How does feminism save?
- ii. What is a woman?

What does the gospel say to all this?

We can commend the points of contact between feminism and the gospel – yay to women; and also push back on the basis for their strongly held convictions. We DO have basis for our convictions:

- i. We can affirm the goodness of male and female
- ii. We can celebrate the mutual complementarity of the sexes
- iii. We can offer hope and real good news:
 - a. In the good news of Jesus you are of worth before you do anything.
 - b. God came for women in a radically inclusive way.
 - c. Sex in Christian teaching is radically better for women. [admittedly this sentence needs some context.]

Discussion Questions:

1. What message(s) did you 'hear' about women in the Barbie film?
2. To what extent do you agree with 'THE Speech'?
3. If you were talking to someone who currently doesn't believe in Jesus, but is concerned for women's rights, how might you share something of the good news of Jesus with them?
4. What stories from your own life can you share to testify to the goodness of Jesus in this area?

Barbie, Identity and a Relationship which Saves.

How to conceive of a sense of identity?

Traditional: outside – in – validated by others

Contemporary: inside – out – validated by self (though it turns out this is tricky).

Barbie to Ken: *you have to figure out who you are without me: you're not your girlfriend...maybe all the things that made you you aren't really you.*

Ken: *I am Ken. Ken is me. I am 'Kenough'.*

In most of our stories (TV, Film, literature, adverts) the story is one of **Expressive Individualism**: a journey of self-discovery as the shackles of family, or tradition, or culture, or religion, are thrown off so that the authentic self can be expressed. This is not argued for but assumed as the definition for identity.

What does the Gospel have to say about this?

- i. We can be honest about what's really inside. Our 'authentic self' is not usually consistent, coherent, clear, or classy, but rather, it is conflicted.
- ii. We can relax. We are defined by a relationship which rests squarely on Jesus not us. This is a GREAT place from which to start sorting out the icky bits of us which we'd rather weren't there.

In Jesus we have a relationship which saves us from BOTH the imposition of a traditional view of self/identity – “you ARE mother; you ARE a banker”; AND it saves us from the incoherence and insecurity of the contemporary view of self, seen in expressive individualism.

Discussion Questions:

1. What examples of 'expressive individualism' have you seen in other contemporary TV or Film?
2. Why/How is the Gospel of Jesus good news to someone who is struggling with their sense of identity (like Ken in the film)?
3. Are there any examples from your own life where the gospel has transformed your sense of identity? How could you use those to engage others with Jesus?

Barbie, Death, and a Life which lasts.

'Do you guys ever think about dying?'

Barbie Dream Land mirrors our culture in the way in which it is full of pink, fluffy distraction but talk of death is an unwanted interruption.

Secularism (loosely defined as a view of the world which is entirely material as opposed to spiritual; within an 'immanent frame' rather than transcendent) presents death as inevitable and normal. Death may be an uncomfortable fact of reality but there are no 'answers' so it's better to forget about it.

What does the Gospel have to say about this?

There is a point of contact with our culture: it is RIGHT that we feel troubled by death. Irrepressible thoughts of death are a thing.

Some Gospel distinctives:

- i. We can weep with those who weep because we believe death is bad.
- ii. We can cling to the resurrection – the hope which can be 'rubbed into' our sorrow and anger. Our distinctive grief may be a good witness (1 Thess 4:13)
- iii. We can use 'art' to point to the eternity which is placed in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Discussion Questions:

1. What views on death have you encountered with your non-Christian friends/family?
2. How can we show people that our 'view' on death isn't in the same camp as 'wishful thinking', but is solid hope?
3. When is a good time to talk about death?

Books to recommend – 1776, The Air We Breathe, Making Faith Magnetic, Biblical Critical Theory, Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self, Making Sense of God, Dominion, The Case Against the Sexual Revolution.