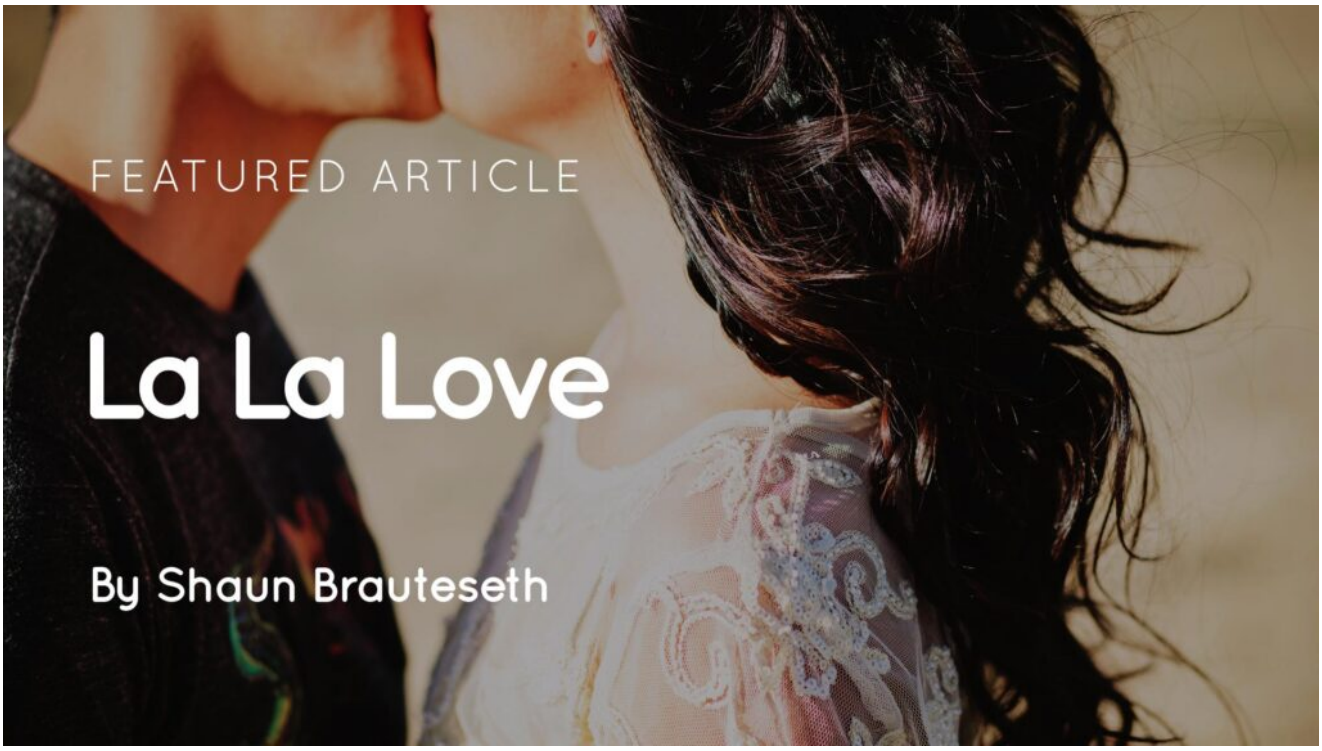
La La Love

Shaun Brauteseth 2 March 2017



‘Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws.’

That insight was expressed by Andrew Fletcher, a Scottish writer and politician. Here’s what he meant: art captivates hearts. Songs shape thoughts. Creativity has the power to reinforce worldviews. Think about our generation: who gets their message out the loudest, quickest and in the most memorable way? Directors. Actors. Singers. Authors. Law legislates how we should behave, but the creative arts influence how we actually do.

Fletcher, by the way, pointed this out in 1703. More than 300 years later, he’s more right than ever.

Romance with a Shelf Life

Every time we watch a movie, relax with a series, or listen to a mainstream pop song, we’re being primed to accept a particular set of views and practices, most of which exist in a world without accountability to God. Sometimes a particular emphasis rises above the pack to stand out and steer a generation’s thinking – like 90s sitcoms that made dysfunctional families with deadbeat

dads seem funny, or rap-metal songs in the early 2000s that made angry violence seem so cool.

The Bible, though, says that we should have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. I believe there's a particular trend reflected in movies and music today that needs to be called out, and it's this: temporary love. Romance with a shelf life. Intimacy between two people that doesn't last, and isn't even meant to. Relationships that end with a shrug, as if to say, 'Hey, nothing lasts forever.' It's a subtle message, but the talented, good-looking, articulate people that are putting it out there are doing so because it's how they live, and they want to reflect it and justify it in their art. And when we let the message shape us, we find out that our lives don't exist in a three-minute song or a movie script; we get divorced, we break up our families, we hurt ourselves and each other.

> Hey, that's the way love goes – it starts, it ends, we move on. Thanks for the memories.

Take a look at the lyrics of John Legend's massive recent hit 'Love Me Now':

I don't know who's gonna kiss you when I'm gone
So I'm gonna love you now, like it's all I have
I know it'll kill me when it's over
I don't wanna think about it, I want you to love me now

It's a brilliant song – catchy as the flu and beautifully written. But read those lyrics carefully. When he says he'll be gone, he's not speaking about death; he's simply speaking about the relationship ending. It's inevitable, he says, so let's just love each other now before it's over. It's a great pop song, but a pretty disastrous way to conduct a relationship.

One of the most universally lauded movies in recent memory is the Ryan Gosling-Emma Stone singathon 'La La Land', which sorta-kinda-almost won Best Picture at the 89th Academy Awards. By all accounts, it's a completely enchanting, brilliantly performed throwback to the golden age of Hollywood, where beautiful people danced in the streets and fell in love. The difference here (spoiler alert!) is that they don't stay that way. After being in love and living together, they go their separate ways, smiling at each other as she leaves with her husband. It should be a heartbreaking ending, because they gave themselves to each other, but it's portrayed with a sense of inevitability. Hey, that's the way love goes – it starts, it ends, we move on. Thanks for the memories.

God's Love

But this is not God's way. In the beginning, it was Adam and Eve – one man and one woman, for life. Many people today smugly point to the multiple wives of the patriarchs and Israel's kings, but ignore the heartache it caused, and that it almost always led to trouble. God conceded and allowed it, but it was never in His original plan. No, when the human race was created, there was a pattern, and after the human race got a second chance (the opportunity to be born again through Jesus), the pattern was upheld. An elder, said Paul, should be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). Everything in Scripture presupposes a husband and a wife committing to each other for life.

> He's committed, faithful and forgiving, and He's in it for the long run.

But more than any instruction humanity receives, we have an example outside of ourselves, and that's of the God who commits; who makes covenant. The God who says, 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.' (Deuteronomy 31:6) And He doesn't just say it – He follows through. We leave Him, He pursues us. We prostitute ourselves, He comes to find us and bring us back. We go off to a foreign land and squander everything, He scans the horizon waiting for us. We glance His way when it's convenient, He puts His whole heart out on His sleeve for us. We may live our whole lives ignoring Him, but He will be there at the very end, ready to receive us if we call out to Him. He's committed, faithful and forgiving, and He's in it for the long run. And that's how He designed love and romance to be.

So I see you, you cheapened portrayals of love, and I'm calling you out. You look fun and good and free, but you are not the benchmark of true love – you are a contradiction of it. True love doesn't take what it can get; it gives everything it has, and keeps on giving. True love does not move on to better, more exciting things; it is satisfied with what it has been given. And true love is not inspired by the fantasy narratives of a selfish generation's songs and movies; it's been shown once and for all by the true God of history – the One who loves freely and faithfully.

> ...but we must let all other depictions of love be silenced by the passionate and steadfast love our God gives.

The songs of our generation will keep being written, and movies will keep being made, but we must let all other depictions of love be silenced by the passionate and steadfast love our God gives. On His example we will build our relationships and our lives, and on His example we will set

our course.