

Should Christians Watch 'Suicide Squad'?

Martha Stewart is the best-selling author of more than 85 books and an Emmy-winning television show host. She reaches 100 million consumers each month across her media and merchandising platforms as well as her branded products. Snoop Dogg recently released his 14th album. He is active in music, film, television and his YouTube channel.

The two just announced that they will host "Martha and Snoop's Dinner Party" on VH1 this fall. According to *Yahoo!*, they will "invite celebrity friends over for a half-baked evening of cocktails, cooking, conversation and fun where nothing is off limits."

Their collaboration is an odd pairing, and not just because they're three decades apart in age.

In 2004, Martha Stewart was convicted of felony charges for insider trading and served five months in a federal prison. She then served five months in home confinement as part of a two-year term of supervised release.

Snoop Dogg, born Cordozar Calvin Broadus, Jr., was arrested after high school for possession of cocaine. He has had numerous drug arrests in the years since. He has also been arrested several times for illegal possession of handguns and other weapons. He was banned from Australia in 2007 and Norway in 2012. Last year he was arrested in Sweden for illegal drug use.

My point is not that the two should not be able to host a television show together. It's actually the opposite: There's something in human nature that applauds redemption. When athletes overcome grave challenges to compete in the Olympics, we cheer especially hard for them. When politicians come back

from defeat to achieve success, we often admire them. When celebrities are released from prison, many become even more popular.

Consider *Suicide Squad*, a movie in which supervillains save the world in exchange for more lenient prison sentences. Critics panned the film, but audiences have made it the highest-grossing August movie release in history. Will Smith, one of the actors in the film, explained its success: "There's something about bad guys being given an opportunity at redemption that people can really respond to. ... All of our characters have this slight tether back to our humanity."

Smith is right. Every person you know was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). We retain a "tether back to our humanity" because our humanity is tethered to our Maker. No matter who we are or what we've done, we are still loved by the One who died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Unfortunately, many in our culture forgive sinners without holding them accountable for their sins. This is self-serving. It says, "If I tolerate your failures, perhaps you'll tolerate mine." But it's also unfortunately true that many in the church forgive sinners only when they earn our grace. Grace, by definition, is not earned—or it's not grace.

We resonate with redemption stories because they're our stories. Now let's offer others the redemption of a Father who doesn't tolerate sin but transforms sinners. Every human heart longs for the grace he alone can give.

William Barclay: "The true wonder of human beings is not that we are sinners, but that even in our sin we are haunted by goodness, that even in the mud we can never wholly forget the stars."