

What a \$10,000 Hamburger and 'The Shack' Have In Common

A hamburger has sold for \$10,000 in Dubai. According to *CNN*, "The giant burger contained seven beef patties—one for each of the emirates in the United Arab Emirates—aged cheddar cheese and veal bacon strips in a saffron brioche bun." But its contents don't explain its price. It was sold at an auction; its preparer explains that "all proceeds will go to breast cancer awareness and free detection at an earlier stage."

When we know why people spend their money as they do, we learn something significant about their values and their culture.

Consider popular movies. I go to a lot of films because I believe successful movies are a window into the soul of our society. We see movies because we want to. Going to the theater is not like going to work or even going to church, activities that are required or can become habitual. When we examine why a movie is popular, we learn something about our culture.

The last two movies I've seen are *The Shack* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Both have been enormously successful. According to a *Forbes* reviewer, *The Shack* "got off to a pretty terrific start" when it opened earlier in the month; so far, the movie has made more than \$43 million worldwide. And *Beauty and the Beast* has passed *Batman v Superman* as the highest debut for a March movie in history.

Both have been in the news for nontheatrical reasons: *The Shack* because of its portrayal of God as a woman and other nontraditional theological elements, and *Beauty and the Beast* because it includes a gay character (actually two, if you count the dance scene at the end). My purpose this morning is not to review either film. Rather, it is to see what their

popularity tells us about ourselves.

Without giving away its plot, I can tell you that *The Shack* centers on the greatest loss a parent can experience. At a writers conference, I heard the author, William Paul Young, explain that his novel's tragedy is a symbol of the horrendous suffering he experienced as a child. He later explained that "the shack" is "the house you build out of your own pain."

Beauty and the Beast is perennially popular because its story is so universal and hopeful: Love releases the prince inside the beast and frees us from the prisons of our lives. When the Roman poet Virgil claimed that "love conquers all," he expressed the hope of every heart.

The two movies tell us something simple but profound: We all have a "shack" in our souls, and we all dream of a love that will free us from ourselves. Now comes the best news of all: although both movies are fictional, both stories are true.

God truly has come down to meet us in our "shack," loving us in our beastly fallen lostness with a grace that wipes away the past and is "making all things new" (Rev. 21:5). Now he invites us to tell the story of our redemption so joyfully that those who know us will want to know our Redeemer.

Where is the "shack" in your soul? What part of you is your "beast"? {eoa}