

## **XIII. Media Choices**

### **A. Introduction**

There is a tendency to over-generalize on certain subjects. As a result of that, we sometimes condemn things that should not be condemned. And when that happens, those who support what we unintentionally condemn react by rejecting the whole message.

This lesson seeks to balance that danger. For example, all popular music is not bad or immoral; all movies are not sinful, neither are all television shows. This lesson will try to warn us about the problems in these things, but we have no scriptural basis for placing a blanket condemnation on all of these activities.

This lesson will largely become a review of our past study topics in morality with an emphasis on everyday application. The topics we have considered include the following:

- Honesty And Lying
- Gambling
- Prejudice
- Bad Language
- Smoking
- Drinking And Drug Abuse
- Pre-marital Sex
- Abortion
- Homosexuality
- Immodest Appearance And Indecent Dress
- Inappropriate Dancing

The children's Sunday school song goes, "Be careful little eyes what you see,... be careful little ears what you hear." What we learn from that song when we were children comes into direct application as we enter adulthood. The simple truths we might have learned as children should not be disregarded as we mature. We will never out-grow this instruction.

### **B. The Power Of Suggestion**

The effect that others can have over our minds is incredible. Things we hear and things we watch play an important part in our lives. We hear of murder and rape, crime and corruption, sin and unrighteousness. Seldom do we hear good news. That is one reason that each Christian should spend more time with God in study of His word.

The faithful Christian works to live a life which is morally pure. However, we are constantly bombarded by the media today through books, radio, television, movies, and the Internet with things not consistent with a life of purity. Much of what is published today either contains or glorifies ungodly living. These things have an influence on us, whether or not we are aware of it. We should ask whether a can Christian fill his mind with ungodly messages and examples and not be affected.

Examine these passages which warn of the dangers of evil influences:

*Exodus 34:12*

*Numbers 33:55*

*Psalms 1:1*

Let's consider two examples of men weakened by evil associations:

## 1. The example of Lot

- Lot chose to live in a wicked city (Genesis 13:12, 13).
- Lot and his family were immersed in a sexually immoral society (Genesis 19: 5-7).
- Lot eventually fell victim to sexual immorality, no doubt through the influence of living in Sodom (Genesis 19:30-36).

## 2. The example of Peter

- Peter removed himself from Jesus and associated himself with unbelievers (Luke 22:54, 55).
- There, he was comfortable denying Christ (Luke 22:56-60).
- To keep up his act among them, he even began cursing and swearing (Mark 14:71).

It is doubtful that Peter would have done those things if he had been in the company of other disciples or with Christ.

## C. A Matter Of Principles

### 1. Think On These Things

In Philippians 4:8, the apostle Paul says to "meditate on these things."

- Whatever things are **True**
- Whatever things are **Honest**
- Whatever things are **Just**
- Whatever things are **Pure**
- Whatever things are **Lovely**
- Whatever things are **Reputable**

The original word here translated "meditate" in NKJV is of the same root form as our English word "logic." The meditation implied here is not unconscious mind wanderings but, as J. H. Thayer would describe it, a computing or calculating, as an accountant would do, or a taking the weight of all the reasons.

### 2. Keep Your Mind Pure

We are admonished to expel immoral thoughts from our hearts and maintain pure ones.

*Proverbs 4:23*

*Proverbs 23:7*

*Matthew 5:8*

Let's note some ways that our minds can become polluted with filth and the violation of God's will rather than being of pure mind as the Lord desires.

## D. The Media and Morality

### 1. Music

Since the 1960's, broadcasting regulations have become relaxed regarding the content of popular music. Much of popular music today is not in harmony with a life of godliness. In particular, the lyrics of many popular songs have off-color references to sexual activity and drunkenness.

Through the years, some preachers have railed on modern American and British rock-and-roll music as being immoral in general. Actually, there is immoral content in the lyrics of almost all music types, not just rock music. Modern American country music, for example, contains frequent glorification of adultery and drunkenness and the trivialization of divorce.

Through the years as popular music has become more diverse, there's hardly any style of music today that does not have some immoral content.

Video technology introduced a new media for music in the 1980's: music videos. Many popular videos include nudity, murder, blood, sex, adultery, rebellion, violence, and other similar immoralities. Video technology also gave rise to a new music form that came to the mainstream in the early 1990's: rap music, a musical form characterized by lyrics rhythmically spoken rather than sung. Though some rap music is of wholesome content, much of it is not.

The mature Christian will regulate the music he chooses to listen to. Do not think you can expose yourself to ungodliness in the music you listen to without restraint and not be affected by its influence.

## **2. Movies**

A prominent theme of modern movies seems to be illicit sex and murder. There are few movies anymore which even worldly standards would not recommend at least parental guidance for children to watch.

## **3. Television**

The little screen is just as bad or worse than the big screen. The most popular shows are those which expose the most skin. Situation comedies are often designed to desensitize viewers to homosexuality. People with religious convictions in television shows are almost always portrayed as being ignorant. We need to learn to shut off the television when worthless shows are presented.

The televised halftime show during the 2004 Super Bowl football game generated a lot of controversy when a female performer exposed her breast. Before this occurred, the show was filled with lewd dancing and indecent behavior. A Christian sensitive to his needless exposure to immorality would have turned off that program well before the incident.

## **4. Pornography**

Magazines, books, and even some newspapers become best-sellers depending on how unrighteous, sinful, and sexually explicit they may be. A Christian should never read or look at this type of literature.

*Psalm 119:37*

*Psalm 101:3*

*Ephesians 5:3-12*

## **5. The Internet**

Trade in pornographic materials on the Internet is a booming business. Note the following facts (taken from an article which appeared in USA Today, 1/29/99):

- There are 16 million Internet users in the USA under the age of 17.
- There are upwards of 20,000 to 30,000 pornographic sites in the USA, grossing \$700 million to \$1 billion/year (Forrester Research, Mark Hardie, senior analyst).
- Of the 56.8 million individuals on the Web as of December, 1998, 32.3% visited pornographic sites (according to Media Metrix, an organization which tracks consumer traffic on the World Wide Web).
- While it is a crime to provide pornographic materials to a minor, many of these Internet sites have pornographic images on their opening screens.

There is also much concern today in certain locations about the ill effects associated with the legalization of gambling, but it is already here - in the form of virtual casinos on the Internet open 24 hours a day! Many people today are hooked on the gambling addiction, robbing themselves, their families, and the Lord of resources that could be spent on worthwhile things. Now, the Internet puts this temptation right in the convenience of your own home, outside the jurisdiction of local gaming ordinances.

*1 Thessalonians 4:11,12*

Consider the dangers of gossiping. The Internet permits rapid dissemination of information: accurate or inaccurate, beneficial or hurtful. Gossip works in much the same fashion as a nuclear explosion or the transfer of disease. The spread of malicious tales is aided by the tendency of people to believe almost anything they read. Some people find it

easier to lie about others if they can write it in an e-mail or say it into a telephone receiver rather than say it to someone's face.

*1 Timothy 5:13*

Convenience has always been one of Satan's most useful tools. He is an opportunist, always looking for ways to make it easier for us to sin.

*1 Corinthians 2:11*

## **E. Getting Practical**

The truth is, we who try to live in a godly manner live in a sinful world. There is a little bit of bad in almost everything good in the world. For a Christian to remove from his life all exposure to the sinful behavior of others, he would have to effectively live a life in seclusion, surrounded perhaps by only his family and Christian friends. Then, how could we ever take the gospel to others, or how could the world ever see Christ living in us?

*Philippians 2:15*

*Romans 12:1, 2*

Living in the world but not of the world will require us to make some choices. Sometimes exposure to the sinful behavior of others is unavoidable; sometimes it is necessary in order for the world to see the difference Christ has made in our lives. However, sometimes we need to walk away from and completely avoid that which is unclean in this world.

*1 John 2:15-17*

*2 Corinthians 6:17*

It may be difficult to always know when enough is enough, but by increasing our knowledge of God's word and making a point to take notice of our situations, we will be more likely to do the right thing.