

# II. E. Movies, TV,

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# BOOKS

This is another controversial issue in Christian circles. I will mention that it didn't used to be as controversial as it is now. Even less than a hundred years ago, faithful Christians were very clear that the world's entertainments were not for them (and they weren't anything like they are now!). They realized these distractions would dry up any rivers of spiritual life that they had. But, we are here and now. Below are some common thoughts going around today about movies/TV. Hopefully, after thinking through the issue with us, you will have an answer for these comments.

- " The movie is not *that* bad."
- " I don't pay attention to the bad language or the immoral scenes"
- " I just try to get the good out of it."
- " We need to learn how the world operates or we'll be out of touch."
- " I am a more mature Christian, so the immorality doesn't affect me like it used to."
- " We'll lose our witness in our culture if we are too 'legalistic' about such things."

## Doing the Word of God

The first point I would like to bring to your attention is the point that we are to be "doers of the word." Some contemporaries argue that watching some

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movies/TV will actually make us more effective Christians because we will be more aware of other worldviews, be more educated and therefore more able to connect with those in the world for purposes of evangelism. This is very deceptive and has trapped many quality believers, but let's look at Jesus' life and an exhortation in James for clarification.

Jesus was a friend to sinners. This is wonderfully true. In our pursuit of holiness, we must not separate ourselves from people who are lost. Jesus ate with them, healed them, taught them (challenged them) and, overall, just loved them. Did Jesus need to go to plays as a young man to prepare himself for this kind of interaction? Did he need to read secular novels to get an idea of what He was "up against"? No, of course not. The very thought of Jesus doing these things is repulsive. Jesus' was taught by the Spirit (John 7:15-17). Most of that, we assume, was studying the Word of God and spending time in prayer. God Himself is the Creator of mankind, and He hasn't lost any knowledge or understanding of human nature since the Fall. If we know Jesus Christ, we know man and his nature. We will know, by the Holy Spirit, exactly how we, individually, should be preparing to reach the lost and take a stand for the truth. The problem comes when we know a form of religion and a false God, then we can't relate to our culture.

We are to be doers amongst sinners. We are not to sit and watch their ways to educate ourselves. This leads me to say that reading or watching things that are documentary in nature is usually a much better education than

reading a historical novel or watching a dramatized movie about the same subject. For example, I would recommend watching "The Last Days," a documentary put together by Spielberg, if someone wanted to learn about

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the Holocaust (though it isn't a pretty picture). There are also scores of books that would be helpful in learning about this time. However, I would not recommend the movie "Schindler's List" or scores of other books or movies about the Holocaust. Why? Isn't it all about something that really happened? The answer is that when we try to dramatize true stories in movies or books, we have to be so careful. "Schindler's List" is based on a true life, but do I have any business going into Schindler's bedroom with him and seeing him having affairs with women? Is this edifying? True, yes, but not edifying. There could be a book or movie that simply states Schindler was promiscuous, and that would be fine, but I don't need those pictures planted in my mind, and I don't need to know all the gory details (nor does the actor need to be acting such things out). This is true of books and movies about any period of history (even some biblical movies). Does that make more sense? It's not wrong to know about evil, and at times, we are forced to view it even firsthand in wars, daily life or ghetto situations, but to see it re-enacted by sensual/macho actors will not do the same thing to our spirit as God placing us in those situations as part of His training process.

### God's Point of View

Let us consider this from God's point of view as seen in James 1:21-25 (AMPLIFIED).

**verse. 21:** " So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls."

This is what Jesus exemplified. Yes, He was in the midst of sinners, but He promoted the Word and Holiness.

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**verse 22:** " But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]."

" Do what it says." (NIV)

How many people go to church and listen to the Word, then go home and switch on the TV? These Christians are deceived. They can talk spiritual things, but they have no clear understanding of a true walk with God. Let's be doers of the Word. Get out there, walk the walk and minister to the lost.

**verses 23-24:** " For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror; For he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like."

When we hear the Word, we are seeing our sin and fallenness as well as God's solution to our problem. Watching fallen human nature on TV is also like looking into the face of human nature and seeing what we look like. How many of us are so hardened that we see it and say, " That's bad" and then we go on and immediately forget what we've really seen in the Spirit?

**verse 25:** " But he who looks carefully into the faultless (perfect) law, the [law] of liberty, and is faithful to it and perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets but an

active doer [who obeys], he shall be blessed in his doing (his life of obedience)."

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Yes, God's law addresses the sin problem and how to deal with it. The Bible is frank about sin, but it doesn't give unnecessary details. The solutions to sin found in the Word bring freedom and blessings in all we do, and are timeless in their application.

God, Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit are the purest beings that could ever be or ever have been. Anything that is impure is completely contrary to their character. In fact, it is repulsive to their very nature. As we grow in Christ, and therefore become more like Him, what will our response be toward bad jokes, twisted language or immoral scenes? Psalm 101 says, "I will walk within my house with a perfect (blameless) heart. I will set no wicked thing before my eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aside" (vv. 2-3). David is speaking here of how he hates the deeds of faithless men. A true child of God will do the same— not hating the people, but hating their acts. So, not noticing things that are evil in movies/TV or just not being bothered by them is a sign of spiritual *immaturity*— not spiritual maturity. If we are mature, these acts will be so irritating to us that it ruins the enjoyment of the whole movie. It will no longer be *entertainment*, nor will we find the "good parts" edifying enough to justify enduring the bad.

### What's Really Going On Here?

Practically speaking, are the husband and wife kissing on the screen actually married? Are they telling jokes about boy/girl relationships that God intended to be holy and reserved for marriage? Are women the leaders of the home, despising the men, rather than the fathers holding a place of respect that deserves honor? Is the motive of the story to

lose their own reputation for the sake of the kingdom, or are they trying to build a reputation in appearance, prestige and wit in order to gain

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the world? Are souls brutally killed and wasted as though they are of no value? Does it cause you to delight in violence or evil? Of course the list could go on and on...

What about the argument, "There's a Christian movie at the theater, and I want to go see it because I want to support theaters having Christian movies"? I don't think this really makes much sense now that we have decided to be doers of the Word. I have a lot of questions about this reasoning. Is this the most effective way to use your time? What if you spent the night "doing" something— like having a prayer meeting or Bible study or ministering in the inner city? "But," you say, "what if people get saved by going to the movie?" That is wonderful when that happens, and maybe you should bring an unsaved friend; but, again, I think our logic is not thorough here. Do you think God wants to evangelize through movies instead of men of strength and prayer? Who will disciple these people after they are saved— another movie— and then another movie...? In the best case scenario, let's say revival breaks out because of a movie (which is possible); what is going to maintain the revival and keep people fired up for the Lord— more movies?? What I am getting at is that prayer, and doing the Word of God, are the ways to build our faith and make an impact on the world. Media does have it's place, but we, as Christians, are in danger of using it as a crutch. And it isn't a very good crutch at that. It's best we took care of our handicaps so we don't need a crutch, and can then use the media as a tool.

Shutting off movies and TV and putting away the books can seem like a daunting task if it consumes much of your time. But, let me

challenge you to do it! There is a drag on your spiritual life that you may not even realize is there. I don't know how many times I have heard Church

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people say, " I just don't understand why pastor teaches this" or " I don't see anything wrong with that," not realizing that they have dulled their spiritual sensitivities by all the media they take in. Once you begin " doing" things and also reading pure material instead of the worldly, you will begin to feel yourself taking off spiritually. It will even become easier to apply Philippians 4:8-9:

" Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do (put it into practice): and the God of peace shall be with you."



☆☆☆ Check Yourself ☆☆☆

- 1. If there are some things you may need to change in your movie/TV watching, list them

here: \_\_\_\_\_

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- 2. Has the Spirit opened your eyes to anything about your book/magazine reading choices through this article?

\_\_\_\_\_ If so, list your thoughts:

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Here are some ideas for things to DO instead of being a couch potato via TV or books:

- Play ball and witness with some neighbor children.
Clean up something in your house.
Call your pastor and have prayer for him.
Call a new Christian and have prayer and Scripture.
Read the Word of God.
Memorize the Word of God.
Make a snack or meal for a busy mom, a pastor, a widow or a lonely neighbor.
Start a Bible study or prayer meeting (under your parent's or pastor's blessing).
If you like to write/draw, begin to write/draw for God's glory!
Start attending a prayer meeting at church.
Make a prayer list (family, church, town, nation, world...) and begin to pray over it regularly.
Get an old hymnal and start reading and memorizing old hymns.
Learn to play an instrument.
Talk to your pastor about raising money for a mission's need your church is connected with.
Get a list of spiritual classics and begin to read!
More ideas? List them here:

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The next time you want to read or watch something that isn't profitable, have a couple things in mind you have a desire to do. What will you start by doing?

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