

Television: Help or Hindrance?

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Imagine the horrid filth that reigns within the confines of the average sewer. The very thought of the stench that reeks throughout this waste-filled domain is overwhelmingly nauseating. What would you do if your sewer suddenly backed up into your living room? Surely you would immediately remove this putrid refuse that contaminates life. Fortunately, such rank sewage does not pollute most homes. However, numerous families allow a far more destructive type of sewage into their lives through a small electronic box we call the television. Are we filling our hearts with the foul stench of sinful waste? If so, we must remove it at once! We must reconsider what we allow into our hearts and pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa. 51:10). Is television a help or a hindrance?

Benefits

The purpose of this article is not to condemn all uses of television. Television does a tremendous amount to inform, motivate and protect society. This electronic medium is also a wonderful vehicle for entertainment. All entertainment is not inherently sinful. To entertain simply means, "to hold the attention of, amuse." God wants us to "rejoice always" (1 Thess. 5:16). One way we can do this is through wholesome entertainment. Despite the benefits we receive from television, we must beware of its numerous dangers.

Influence

Many foolishly minimize the awesome power television wields to influence millions of people. Consider these startling statistics. 98% of American homes have at least one television. The average family watches television 49.5 hours a week (7 hours every day). Most children visually absorb 32 hours of television each week. These impressionable minds will spend a third of their waking hours engrossed in television. By the time a child graduates from high school he will have spent almost twice as much time in front of a television than in the classroom. These statistics prove the silver screen is a force we must reckon with.

Hindrances

Is this dominant exposure to electronic media harmful? Entertainment networks broadcast several perils over the airwaves. For example, television frequently promotes filthy language. It is common to hear profanity (Eph. 4:29), lying (Rev. 21:8) and God's name taken in vain (Ex. 20:7). What words are you absorbing into your heart (Mt. 12:34-37)? Television often promotes sexual immorality. It encourages viewers to approve of immodesty, fornication, divorce, homosexuality, etc. Such deceptive messages contaminate our moral purity. "The works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness ... those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). We also must avoid violent entertainment. 81% of all television shows broadcast violence. The average program contains 5.2 acts of violence per hour. A typical child will see more than 500,000 murders by the age of 18. These statistics are significant because studies prove violent entertainment influences behavior. God hates violence (Prov. 6:16-19). We must not find amusement in something God hates.

Excuses

Despite these hindrances, many Christians foolishly continue to watch worldly programming. Do you make these excuses?

"I'm not actually doing those things." We must not allow sin to entertain us. If we allow error into our homes we share in that error (2 Jn. 9-11). If we laugh at sin we accept sin. We must never find amusement in the very sins Christ died to forgive.

"It doesn't affect me." Sin calluses the heart (1 Tim. 4:2). God condemned Israel for being hardened by sin (Jer. 6:15). Can you no longer blush at sin? Our thoughts will influence our actions. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7; 4:23).

"It's only violence." God destroyed sinful man with the flood because "the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). We must not find entertainment in that which God detests.

"It's just adult-oriented subject matter." God desires us to be innocent and pure as children. "Unless you are converted and become as little children you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3,4). "It only had a few bad scenes." What percentage of bad scenes makes a program unacceptable? Is it 10%, 20% or 50%? No amount of sin is acceptable. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us" (Heb. 12:1).

Guidelines

Here are some guidelines to remember when watching television. Is this going to edify or weaken me (1 Cor. 14:26)? Will this bring glory or shame to God (1 Cor. 10:31)? Is this encouraging me to do right or wrong (Mt. 5:29)? Would Jesus watch this program (1 Pet. 2:21)? Free your heart from the rank sewage of the world. Determine to be pure and pledge, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes" (Ps. 101:3).