

Lesson 4: Movie Ratings & Our Moral Compass

2 Timothy 2:22, 3:1-7: So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart....¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Primary Objectives:

- 1. Consider Entertainment Time and Trade-offs**
- 2. Explore When & What Explicit Material is Improper.**

1. Consider Entertainment Time and Trade-offs

1.1. Study the “Time in Life” diagram by Dino Ambrosi in his TEDx Talk, The Battle for Your Time: Exposing the Costs of Social Media. What grabs your attention most?

1.2. Calculate your social media ROI (Return on Investment).

Dino states in his talk that “Social media isn’t free because you pay for it with your time.”

How much is your time worth: \$ _____ per hour

How many hours weekly: X _____ # of hours

Cost:

What is the Return on Investment you get for your investment in social media?

1.3. Reflect on the Ephesians 5:15-16. How do you determine what is a healthy percentage of “Free Time” directed at social media and entertainment?

Ephesians 5:15-16: Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

1.4. With Ephesians 2:10 in view, what are some potential “opportunity costs” for time invested in entertainment?

Ephesians 2:10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Marshall Segal, The Blissful and Trivial Life: How Entertainment Deprives a Soul

If the way we're using entertainment erodes our ability to reflect, reason, and savor truth, it erodes our ability to know and enjoy Jesus. "Blessed is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1–2). If we lose the ability to think, we lose the ability to meditate. And if we lose the ability to meditate, we lose our path to meaningful happiness. The life of the mind, and heart, is a pivotal battleground in the pursuit of real and abundant life.

What, if any, of your entertainment habits need to be curbed or redirected for the sake of your soul? What are ways you are seeking to cultivate the spiritual gift of your mind — slower Bible study or memorization, reading substantive books, meaningful conversation with friends, more time in unhurried reflection and meditation?

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-blissful-and-trivial-life>

2. Explore When & What Explicit Material is Improper

2.1. Consider how the following biblical passages might contribute to our understanding of what is and isn't appropriate material for Christians to engage?

Judges 4:21: Jael's Killing of Sisera

But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.

Judges 19:1-30: The Levite & His Concubine

19:25: So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.

19:28–29: Then he put her on the donkey, and the man rose up and went away to his home.²⁹ And when he entered his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.

Song of Solomon: The King & His Lover

7:7–8: Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters.⁸ I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples.

2.2. Select which type of content you think is allowed in MPA rating categories.

Rated G: _____ Rated PG-13: _____

Rated PG: _____ Rated R: _____

Rated NC-17: _____

- A.** Smoking / Alcohol **B.** Drug Use **C.** Profanity **D.** Violence
E. Sexual Innuendo **F.** Nudity **G.** Sexual Scenes

2.3. Review the statement below from the Motion Pictures Association's official document on how ratings are determined. What is the standard by which ratings are determined?

The Classification and Rating Administration: *It is not CARA's purpose to prescribe socially-appropriate values or to suggest any evolution of the values held by American parents, but instead to reflect the current values of the majority of American parents.*

https://www.filmratings.com/Content/Downloads/rating_rules.pdf

2.4. Based on the following verses, what might be problematic about basing entertainment choices primarily on an MPA Rating?

Ephesians 4:17–19: Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Ephesians 5:3-4: But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

2.5. Imagine a situation where a friend or coworker asks WHY nudity or explicit sexual acts in public are wrong. What biblically-aligned reasons would you offer?

2.6. Evaluate common rationale for choosing entertainment that depicts nudity, sex, intense violence, obscene gestures, profanity and other elements that we would not otherwise condone in public. How might these justifications be misused or abused?

Brief Exposure: Some Christians may state that occasional exposure to inappropriate content in a movie is minimal and inconsequential, especially if it constitutes only a small portion of the overall film.

Not Influenced by It: Individuals might assert that watching a movie with inappropriate content does not impact their beliefs or behaviors, as they are able to maintain their Christian values and convictions regardless of the content they consume.

Educational Value: Some Christians may argue that certain movies with inappropriate content have educational or historical or artistic value, providing insights into different cultures, time periods, or social issues.

Fictional Depictions: Some Christians may reason that movies, by their nature, are fictional representations of reality and therefore should not be held to the same moral standards as real-life situations.

Realism & Authenticity: Certain individuals might contend that explicit or profane content is sometimes necessary for portraying realistic depictions of human experiences, relationships, or societal issues.

Pervasiveness: Christians may point to the prevalent presence of inappropriate content in mainstream media and argue that it is unrealistic or impractical to completely avoid movies with such content.

Cultural Engagement: There may be a belief that Christians should actively engage with culture, including its entertainment, in order to better understand and positively influence society.

Redemptive Themes: In some cases, individuals might justify engaging with entertainment containing explicit or profane content because even though the content itself may be objectionable, the overarching themes or messages align with Christian values and can be edifying or uplifting.

2.7. Underline what Piper says is the main issue in answer to the question of whether it is sinful to watch sin on a screen? What does he imply it reveals?

The short answer to the question is that it is not a sin to hear God's name taken in vain. God hears it a billion times a day and sees every sin committed on the planet, the most outrageous, gross, unjust, wicked, defiled — he sees them all. And God never sins in seeing them...That's not the issue. That's just not the issue.

The enjoyment of being entertained by sin is the issue. I'll say it again: the enjoyment of being entertained by sin is the issue. Whether it's the sin of taking the Lord's name in vain; or the sin of cocky, self-exalting arrogance, which seems to permeate everything; or the sin of lust and fornication and adultery and indecency and immodesty, which is virtually ubiquitous; or the sin of distortions of womanhood and manhood; or the sins of disrespecting parents; or the sins of drunkenness; or the sins of desiring to be rich, which Paul said we ought not to do; or the sins of dishonesty; or the sins of slandering with stereotypes; or the sins of simply, profoundly, ubiquitously ignoring and thus not glorifying or thanking God — whatever the sins, the issue is, What does it say about our souls that we enjoy being entertained by them?

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-it-sinful-to-watch-sin-on-a-screen>

Homework: Pay attention to things you choose to watch this week. Honestly assess which enactments of sin are not treated as wrong or immoral. Ask God to show you what your reaction to them says about the state of your soul.

Next Week: Entertainment Choices Toolbox