

The Christian and the Entertainment World
Stark Road Gospel Hall Bimonthly Bible Reading (1/25/97)
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Readings: Mark 6:30-31; 1 Cor 10:31; Phil 1:9-11; 4:8; Col 1:9-14; Titus 1:15

1. The Definition of Entertainment: *An activity outside one's profession, engaged in for pleasure*

- Includes active participation as artist, athlete, actor, etc.
- Includes passive involvement as a spectator, tourist, etc.

2. The Benefits of Recreation and Diversion

- Mental and physical rejuvenation (Mark 6:30-31)
- Contemplation of the good, the true, and the beautiful (Phil 4:8)
- Expression of artistic ability (Exod 35:30-32)

3. The Need to Maintain Spiritual Priorities

- Leisure should be spent for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31)
- We need to discern what is excellent (Phil 1:9-11)
- Our goal is not to please ourselves, but to please the Lord (Col 1:9-14)
- We cannot expect to know God's will apart from personal holiness (Titus 1:15)

4. We can fit recreation and diversion into the pleasing whole of a balanced life, but we must never compromise the concerns of God, the family, and the assembly.

5. The Christian and the World

- Scripture uses "the world" for humanity as a whole, fallen into sin and moral disorder, and radically opposed to God. The world is characterized by:
 - Lack of concern for God and eternity (Luke 12:13-21)
 - The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-7)
 - Satanic orchestration and influence (1 John 5:19)
- The Bible approves neither monastic withdrawal from this world (John 17:15) nor worldliness (Titus 2:12). Christians are to be different from those around them, observing God's moral absolutes and not losing their dignity as bearers of God's image (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:17-24; Col 3:5-11).

6. God reveals His will both by clear universal mandates (e.g. the Ten Commandment) and by clear universal principles (e.g. love, self-control, contentment, humility). When Scripture does not speak plainly on a question of conduct, we must seek for a biblical principle to guide us:

- 1) Is it for the Lord (1 Cor 10:31; Rom 14:6-8)
- 2) Can I do it in God's name (on His authority)? Can I thank Him for it? (Col 3:17)
- 3) Can I take the Lord Jesus with me? (Psa 139:7; Mat 28:19-20; John 14:16-17,23; Gal 2:20; 1 Pet 2:21)
- 4) Does it belong in the home of the Holy Spirit? (1 Cor 6:19-20; Eph 4:30)
- 5) Is it of faith? Do I have misgivings? (Rom 14:23; 1 John 3:21)
- 6) Does it bring benefit and build up? Will it develop a Christian mind? (*Not* Is it harmless?) (Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 10:8; 14:26; Ep 4:12-16)
- 7) Does it spring from or lead to love of this world and its value system? (1 John 2:15; Mark 9:47; 11:14-5)
- 8) Does it involve partnership with unbelievers? (2 Cor 6:14)

- 9) Does it come from or lead to bondage? (1 Cor 10:23)
- 10) Is the motive pride or love? (1 Cor 8:1-2)

7. Music

- Sanctioned in Scripture (Exod 15:1-2; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)
- Associated both with true worship (1 Chron 15:16) and pagan worship (Dan 3:5)
- Characteristics of good music (and bad music):
 - Comports with God's standards of beauty (rather than flouting them) (Phil 4:8)
 - Soothes (rather than agitating) the mind, or inspires the heart (rather than exciting the flesh), or fosters wholesome meditation (rather than evil thoughts) (1 Sam 16:16; 1 Cor 14:7)
 - Lyrics, if not overtly spiritual, are at least honorable (rather than immoral)
 - Artist is worthy of support (not living in open sin)
- Lyrics must be judged at least as strictly as the music itself:
 - Good music, good lyrics: Hymns, patriotic music
 - Good music, bad lyrics: Beatles, country music
 - Bad music, good lyrics: "Christian" rock, "Christian" rap.
 - Bad music, bad lyrics: Hard rock, rap

8. Drama and Novels

- Legitimacy of the story to make a point or teach a lesson: parables, allegories, role-playing in the Bible
- Growing number of media: theater, TV (network, video, cable), internet
- Illegitimate stories are designed to titillate and to encourage immoral fantasies (Rom 1:32)
- Superiority of reading over TV / video images

9. Sports

- Frequent positive NT allusions to running races, wrestling, boxing, etc.
- Participatory sports
 - Profitable for body, teaches teamwork, discipline
 - Includes non-competitive activities like fishing, hunting, sailing, etc.
 - Pitfalls: time commitment, children's leagues
- Spectator sports
 - Enjoyment of action, athletic prowess, "home team"
 - Pitfalls: time commitment, poor role models, betting

10. Case studies: Apply the principles above to the following situations:

1. A friend invites you to attend a performance of Handel's Messiah. Should you attend? What if your friend instead asked you to attend a Twila Paris concert?
2. You are married and have two children under age ten. Friends at work ask you to join a golf league, which meets every Thursday after work in the summer. In addition, they want to recruit you for the bowling league, which meets on Thursdays in the winter. The local assembly's prayer meeting/Bible study is on Wednesday. Should you join one or both of these leagues?
3. A friend has season tickets for two to attend the local football team's home games. He asks you to go with him to a Saturday afternoon game. What would you tell him?
4. You are thinking of going "on line" with your home computer. Should you do it? If so, how would you propose keeping yourself and your children from accessing sinful material? Should you set limits to avoid wasting time?

5. You have rented a cottage for a week in the summer. A TV and video player are included. Your children ask you to rent some videos. What would you tell them?