

INTRODUCTION

Last week I announced to you that we are in a series on the subject of "Worldliness."

And it's taken from the book "Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World," edited by C.J. Mahaney.

We have already considered 1 John 2:15-17 which is the foundation to this study.

And now we're looking at worldliness as it relates to "God, My Heart, and Media."

Craig Cabaniss asks us to "CONSIDER A DAY IN THE LIFE of a typical American adult. The waking moments begin with the radio alarm reporting weather, traffic, and headlines. Breakfast is gulped down with a side of business news and features from the morning newspaper.

Then the commute to work, where the companion for the drive is a radio talk show host lathered into a

political frenzy or a shock jock whose tongue releases a barrage of crude humor.

At the office, checking e-mail presents opportunities throughout the morning for a bit of extracurricular websurfing to shop for a birthday gift, check out a favorite blog, and catch up on the latest celebrity news. Lunch in the breakroom is spent connecting with a favorite sports magazine while a TV talk show blares overhead, showcasing the latest claimants to fleeting fame. Back in the cubicle's afternoon boredom, virtual adventure can be found on an Internet video game offering a quest for world domination.

When the work grind ceases, the drive home provides a reprieve from thinking and a nostalgic unwinding as the oldies stream in on satellite radio. The trip down memory lane is interrupted by a stop at soccer practice to pick up a young daughter who eagerly buckles up and warmly greets the Disney character coming to life on the DVD screen that descends in the backseat.

After a welcome-home kiss from the wife—and a friendlier kiss from the dog—comes the irresistible

beckoning to collapse into the La-Z-Boy, grab the remote, and scan all three hundred digital cable channels to take the edge off the workday weariness.

Following dinner, the TV illuminates the family room as all gather to enjoy the hottest sitcoms, reality shows, and crime dramas.

The day concludes with a drift into slumber to the soothing voice of a newscaster recapping headlines on the bedroom TV" (Worldiness, 36-7).

For many people, Craig Cabaniss described them to a "T" because media is the omnipresent backdrop of life.

Everywhere you go today, you're surrounded by media.

Whether at home, in the car, at the store, or in the restaurant, or even at the gas station.

We're so engulfed that media seems like a second atmosphere.

We give no more thought to it than we do the air we breathe.

But this morning and hopefully thereafter I want us to give thought to it.

I want us to take a good look at it and ask ourselves how should we respond to it.

Should we be unconcerned or concerned?

In light of 1 John 2:15-17 we should be concerned.

Why? Because worldliness is a temptation for every believer.

And if John had to say to the believers in Asia Minor to "Stop loving the world," then he's identifying it as a potential problem for us too.

So we cannot afford to take lightly the media's pervasive presence in our lives.

And if there's a time when Scripture must be inserted in our minds and mediated on it's now.

Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

This is what should occupy our minds.

Like to passage in Psalm 1 that we're memorizing.

We're not to "walk in the counsel of the wicked" or "stand in the path of sinners" or "sit in the seat of scoffers."

But our delight is to be "in the law of the Lord" whereby we "mediate day and night."

So when we evaluate media, we must make sure we're evaluating the content of the message as well as the consequences of their influence.

Why is that so important?

There are many reasons but the first is because many of us...

Watch Unwatchingly

We don't think about actively filtering our viewing.

All too often, we think about neither what we watch nor how much.

Our watching is just inevitable.

We watch by habit.

We watch because we're bored.

We unwatchingly watch as the TV stays on for background noise.

If you think for a moment how and when we watch TV, you would be surprised to learn that we watch for many reasons.

One of which is due to influence.

Whether we realize it or not, we watch because others watch.

We're like little "ducks."

If one drinks all the others drink.

If one wanders off, he's not alone.

If one stretches his wings or takes a bath in a small pond, the others don't stand around and watch or wander off and play, they do the same thing.

The same is true for us.

When everyone is talking about a popular movie or TV show, what do we do?

We set our clocks and make sure we watch.

And many times we engage in such activity without ever researching its content or thinking about its effects on our hearts.

A lifestyle of careless view should concern us.

At best, careless viewing reveals an ignorance of the media's power of temptation and reveals a degree of laziness on our part.

Just consider the allurements of this temptation.

1 John 2:16 talks about "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life."

Which one do you think this appeals to?

If we're talking about watching, then we're talking about the lust of the eyes.

But for sure it appeals to all three.

In dealing with the lust of the flesh, it appeals to our baser drives.

It addressing the lust of the eyes, its images are channeled through the eye gate straight to the heart.

Craig Cabaniss asks a very important question.

He asks, "In this conflict, how many Christians are waving the white flag of surrender by disengaging their discernment when it comes to media?"

We're called to live purposefully.

Therefore we must watch on purpose and resist the lifestyle of passive viewing.

Unlike those who watch thoughtlessly, many recognize the tempting influence of media yet assume they're immune from danger.

They end up watching just like everyone else.
They're...

Watching with Immunity

They say, "I don't watch a murder on TV and then go out and murder someone."

This misses the point.

Just because we don't instantly mimic all we see doesn't mean our hearts are negatively affected by the programs or films we watch.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

The word "heart" "refers not to the physical organ but to the mind and even the whole personality of the individual."

It is the "springs of life" "in that the capacity to live with joy and vigor ultimately comes from within and not from circumstances.

The corrupt heart draws one down to the grave, but wisdom protects the heart from that corruption" (Duane A. Garrett, *The New American Commentary: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*).

That is why verse 23 begins with "Watch over your heart with all diligence."

So, in other words, "guard your thoughts" (William Reyburn, A Handbook on Proverbs).

And as you do this, do it "with all diligence" or as Brown, Driver, and Biggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon says, "Above all guarding," that is, "More than all else, keep watch over your heart."

We are to keep our hearts with all diligence.

What we hear is important.

What we study is important.

What we see is important.

We should recognize that out of that heart will come all of the great issues of our lives (J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible: Proverbs).

Understand that "whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Skillful*).

And "If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread; before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame."

The Bible warns us to avoid a double heart (Ps.12:2), a hard heart (Prov.28:14), a proud heart (21:4), an unbelieving heart (Heb.3:12), a cold heart (Mat.24:12), and an unclean heart (Ps.51:10).

The drift toward worldliness is subtle, gradual, and internal.

And if we assume we're immune to it, that's a sure sign the drift has begun.

The media has great power to influence but most people presuppose that their worldview, desires, and opinions are safe from media sway.

Many are convinced they're beyond reach.

Why then do advertisers spend \$215 billion annually just on television commercials?

These marketing dollars are not charity gifts.

Our thinking is influenced by what we watch, and advertisers know it.

Remember Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer.17:9).

We're more easily tempted than we know or are willing to admit.

The Bible teaches that the battle is not "out there."

The real monster isn't Hollywood or a beast residing in a plasma screen.

He's not lurking behind the curtain in the movie theater.

He's much closer.

He's us.

Our battle is with the flesh.

If we watch, we must watch with this in mind: our hearts are deceitful, and our flesh will be tempted.

We're commanded to "not be conformed to this world" (Rom.12:2).

But such conformity is the inevitable pathway for those who watch freely with the delusion of immunity.

Before we go any further, we need to discuss...

The L Word

Someone is probably crying "legalism" at this point.

Any teaching that advocates some level of viewing standards will be stereotyped in some quarters as a compromising of Christian liberty.

We probably should ask at this point, "Am I free to live and do as I please?"

Given the verses we have already considered the answer is "No."

If we're warned against loving the world, then there is a standard God has given by which we're to live.

We're not to walk in the counsel of the wicked or in the power of the flesh.

We're to "walk by the Spirit," Galatians 5:16 says.

Not only because that is God's standard for His children but also because it's the only means for overcoming the lusts of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 continues by saying, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

If we can live however we please then Paul's exhortations mean nothing.

Now back to the L word.

How does Scripture define legalism?

By behaving as if you can earn God's approval and forgiveness through personal performance.

This was not only the problem with those of the circumcision who were seeking to earn salvation through some external act.

But it's also a heart condition.

The risk of any standard is our motivation behind it.

Legalism can taint our Bible reading, praying, witnessing, eating, sleeping---we can be legalistic about anything!

The Pharisees were classic legalists.

They dressed a certain way.

They gave a certain way.

They fasted for everyone to see.

They observed man-made rules and placed them above God's Word.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:8-9, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."

In Matthew 23 He warned them for their hypocrisy when He said in verse 25, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence."

He says in verses 27-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." Jesus see's right through our legalism.

He calls it hypocrisy!

So it important that we have viewing standards that are (1) based on the Word of God and (2) carried out with the right motivation.

And what should that motivation be?

Craig Cabaniss calls it...

Living Coram Deo

Coram Deo is a short Latin phrase that means, "before the face of God."

All aspects of our existence---from private thoughts to public words and actions---are lived out before His face.

If you think about it, living coram deo should arouse our fear of God.

The person who's aware that God is seated front-and-center and watching everything will fear the Lord.

That's good because Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate."

How does this affect our use of media?

Put bluntly, it means we surf the Internet, listen to the radio, watch television, or rent a DVD in God's presence.

We make our choices—all our choices—with God's holy face in view.

It's not the gaze of our pastor, parent, fellow small group member, or unbelieving neighbor that matters most.

We're accountable to God in all things, including our entertainment.

God is holy, and we are not.

Coram Deo, we realize we're in trouble---our eyes have lusted, our imaginations have trespassed, our time has been squandered.

How are you responding to the media around you?

Does it have your heart?

Are you aware of it or are you like the average person who wakes and falls asleep to it?

In Ephesians 4:31 we're told to "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

If we're to do this, then it would be very helpful not to allow this kind of stuff in our heart.

If we're engaging ourselves in media of this type, we're allowing it to be nothing more than a breeding ground for the flesh.

Romans 6:6 says "our old self was crucified with Him."

Why then would we want to feed a dead corpse?

We are not to "let sin reign in [our] mortal body so that [we] obey its lusts" (Rom.6:12).

Since that is the case then why do we watch shows that advocate sin?

We have to as I said earlier do what Paul says in Philippians 4:8.

We have to think on things that are "true...honorabile...right...pure...lovely...whatever is of good repute...excellence [and] worthy of praise."

Paul concludes in verse 9 by saying, "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

Guard your heart!

CONCLUSION

How are you doing with this?

Winning the battle or giving in?

Remember *Corem Deo!*

Everything is *before the face* of God.

Pursue those things that brings Him glory.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22 to "flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

That's my prayer for you today.

Pray with me.

[Gospel]