

## Guidelines for Entertainment

### 1) What are some biblical principles that should guide my entertainment choices?

A) Beware of anything that makes you calloused to sin or lessens your hatred of evil.

(1) The Bible tells us to “abhor what is evil” and “abstain from every form of evil” (Rom 12:9; 1 Thess 5:22). This is important because the world is filled with all sorts of wickedness and perversion. As humans, our natural tendency is to get used to whatever we consistently encounter in our environment. The enemy knows this and tries to make us as calloused to sin as he can. As Alexander Pope said in his 1732 Essay on Man, “Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace.” It is difficult to hate what you are used to.

(2) It’s easy to tell when a movie or book has too much violence or cursing, but are you also noticing when your entertainment choice is pushing a worldly philosophy or value system? Ungodly attitudes and belief systems can be as damaging to your mind as the more obvious sensual allurements.

B) Beware of anything that bothers your conscience.

(1) In his first letter to Timothy, Paul urged him to hold on to “faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (1 Tim 1:19 NASB). Paul also told the Romans “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23 NASB). The main thrust of Paul’s message is that you shouldn’t do anything that you believe is wrong. This principle applies to those “gray areas” of life which are not specifically mentioned in Scripture. You need to be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and respond in obedience when you feel checked about a certain activity or form of entertainment. Keep your conscience clear!

C) Beware of anything that would make another believer stumble.

(1) Romans 14 is a thought provoking chapter on the impact that your actions have on other believers. Paul said, “Let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother” (Rom 14:13). He also said, “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble” (Rom 14:21). This is an important factor that should be taken into account when you participate in various kinds of entertainment. You need to be sensitive to the concerns and weaknesses of those around you. There are times when it’s necessary to limit your desires in deference to someone else. Don’t be irritated or frustrated—be kind and remember that one day, someone may have to be sensitive to you.

D) Beware of anything that appeals to or affects your areas of weakness.

(1) We all have areas of weakness, and most of us know what they are. Unfortunately, the enemy knows them too, and the temptations we face are always tailored for a perfect fit. James, the Lord’s brother, said, “Each person is

tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14). Entertainment, probably more than anything else, has the ability to appeal to your areas of weakness. Because of this, it is imperative that you filter your activities through the grid of what is spiritually healthy for you. Know your weaknesses and don't let the enemy trap you!

E) Beware of anything that portrays sin as amusing or glorifies evil.

- (1) Paul urged the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2). The world is constantly trying to squeeze you into its mold, and one of its most effective tools is sugarcoated sin. How many of us have read a book or watched a movie where the rebellious attitudes of the hero are presented as funny? Often disrespect for authority is portrayed as cool and immorality is shown as comical. There are even TV shows that glorify witchcraft and homosexuality. It's important to avoid this kind of entertainment because the enemy will use it to influence and shape your perspective of sin. God doesn't think sin is funny—to Him it's deadly serious.

F) Beware of anything that stimulates wrong thoughts or attitudes.

- (1) At first glance this principle seems impossible to put into practice. After all, we're surrounded by the world's pollution everywhere we go. But the fact that the enemy is peddling his perversion in the streets is no reason to invite him into your home. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul told them, “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8). The various ways you choose to entertain yourself should pass the test of this verse. Remember, God isn't trying to prevent you from enjoying life. He's trying to protect you from activities that will stimulate wrong thoughts or attitudes. Sin begins in the mind. Avoid anything that gives it a chance to get started.

G) Beware of loving pleasure more than loving God.

- (1) In his last letter to Timothy, Paul warned him, “In the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Tim 3:1-5). Entertainment, even in its most wholesome form, can be used by the enemy to take God's rightful place of supremacy in your life. A hobby or sport can gradually take up more and more time in your busy schedule until it squeezes out your time with God. Some of your favorite activities can become idols if you allow them to be more important than God. God has given you so much to enjoy. Make sure you don't worship the creation more than the Creator.
- (2) A good test of whether or not a certain entertainment has become too important in your life is to ask yourself this question: If God were to tell you to stop doing that particular activity, would you welcome His guidance with gratitude or resent His command as an intrusion?

H) Beware of the company you keep.

- (1) How you entertain yourself is often determined by the friends you keep. Paul said, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (1 Cor 15:33). Spend your time with other believers and friends who will edify you and build you up in the faith.

**2) What is the role of the man/husband when it comes to entertainment?**

- A) The man/husband sets the direction in the home (or relationship) when it comes to entertainment. This is an important responsibility and should not be taken lightly.
- B) The husband sets the example for his wife and children. They are watching how you entertain yourself. Remember that what you allow in moderation, your children will often excuse in excess.
- C) Children should not be allowed to make their own choices when it comes to entertainment. They do not have the experience or discernment to make godly decisions. You, as the parent, should control how they entertain themselves. My advice is that you do not allow your children to have their own TVs, radios, iPods, cell-phones or computers. You should supervise and filter what they watch and listen to.

**3) What is the role of the woman/wife when it comes to entertainment?**

- A) The wife is not to lay down the law to her husband when it comes to entertainment. If you find that your husband is engaging in entertainment that you are not comfortable with, go to him and share your concern without accusing or nagging. If he continues to pursue an activity you dislike, make it a matter of prayer and ask God to change his heart. God will change your husband's mind, or He may change your mind. Be willing to accept either possibility.
- B) As wife and mother, you have control over most of your children's entertainment choices. Be aware of the books they read, the music they listen to and the movies they watch. My advice is that you preview whatever they have access to in the way of entertainment. Make sure it supports your values and promotes godliness.

**4) You've talked a lot about what I should avoid when it comes to entertainment. What are some things that I should pursue?**

- A) Fellowship with other believers. Getting together with other Christians and playing games is a great way to have fun in an edifying environment.
- B) Christian movies. There are lots of movies that are made by and for Christians. *Facing the Giants* and *Courageous* are two such movies that I have recently enjoyed.
- C) Christian books. When you get tired of reading non-fiction and want to relax with something else, pick out a Christian novel. There are many good choices available at Christian bookstores.

- D) Christian websites. Seek out God-centered websites. I have a list of recommended sites available under [Links](#) (surfing the web can be fun but it's also dangerous; consider installing a filter to prevent bad sites from popping up.)
- E) Christian radio and music stations. Find a Christian radio station in your listening area and keep it tuned in as you drive around town.

## 5) What about music?

A) The apostle Paul mentions music in his letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians:

- (1) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16).
- (2) "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:18-20).

B) Here are some principles from these verses:

- (1) Music and singing are associated with an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude toward God. Are you paying attention to the attitudes the music you listen to is encouraging you to have?
- (2) Music is an activity that you are encouraged to do with other believers. It has the unique ability to unite a group of individuals into a single unit (the essence of harmony).
- (3) Music and lyrics are closely connected. Some music, like rap, has lyrics that are obviously vulgar and ungodly, but other kinds of music can have more subtle lyric issues: bad values, beliefs, attitudes, etc. If you are listening to Christian music, do the lyrics exalt God or focus on self? If you are listening to secular music, do the values glorify God? Even music that is not about God or Christian living should be in harmony with what is right and true.
- (4) Music can exert a controlling influence over your mind. The music you listen to should be in harmony with the truth. If not, you risk giving yourself over to something that is not of the Holy Spirit. You can listen to music that creates a desire for romance, passion and sex. Does the music you listen to cause you to have godly or ungodly desires?
- (5) Music is associated with edification and the uplifting of the heart and mind. Does the music you listen to encourage you or depress you? Does it create a spirit of discontent or a spirit of hope and joy?
- (6) Music prompts a physical response in the listener. Some music can put you to sleep, and other music can make you want to sing and dance. Be sensitive to what the music you listen to is prompting you to do with your body.

- (7) Music expresses emotion. Certain kinds of music are designed to convey anger and frustration. Other kinds of music express peace and happiness. Be aware of the kinds of emotions that the music you listen to is creating.
  - (8) Music is always associated with the artist. How many teenager's rooms have posters on the wall of their favorite music groups? People naturally admire the artists of the music styles they enjoy. Are the performers you listen to living godly lives? Are their lifestyles worth imitating or would they lead you astray?
- C) My advice to new converts is to avoid any music that reminds you of what you used to listen to as sinner. Music often goes hand-in-hand with drinking and partying. I have found that music can lead people back into their old habits and lifestyles.