

A Healthy Media Diet

Christians must be responsible for their viewing habits.

IN TODAY'S SOCIETY, one of the most important responsibilities we have is deciding what boundaries we will apply in our personal lives to media and entertainment. Is it wrong to watch television or movies? Absolutely not! However, the choices we make while watching TV and movies, surfing the Internet and playing video games have powerful implications for our Christian lives.

Some studies indicate American families interact more than four hours a day with their televisions and computers. One recent report estimated that by the time the average American teenager turns 18, he or she will have seen more than 100,000 beer commercials on television!

Making the right entertainment choices, especially when it involves our families, is vital. It can make a profound difference in the way we raise our kids, live our Christian lives and glorify Jesus Christ. That's why I've created some principles that will help you make better personal choices about how much influence the media should have in your life or in the lives of your family members.

1. Be aware of who's coming into your home. Most of us would never continually allow a guest into our homes who uses profanity, takes God's name in vain, tells off-color stories or makes sexually explicit jokes. Yet prime-time television is filled with those very things.

Be more aware of the content of programs you watch and more careful of crude material. Advertisers spend millions of

dollars on half-minute commercials because they know ads influence behavior. So don't think that watching hours of crude programming doesn't affect you.

2. Keep your TVs and computers in plain view. When our children were growing up, we kept the TVs and computers in public places, so they would know we were aware of what they were seeing. Many parents allow their children to have a TV or computer in their bedrooms. I consider this far too risky, considering the availability of pornographic Web sites and adult programs-even on the major networks.

3. Invest in digital cable to block adult programs. Most communities have digital cable services that can block programming that features explicit sexuality, profanity or other adult situations. This service might be more expensive than what you currently have, but I highly recommend you invest in it if you can't personally supervise your children 24 hours a day. (And who can?)

4. Download Internet filters for your computer. The Internet is an amazing resource for research, shopping, education, ministry and more. It's also a cesspool of depravity. Many Xrated Web sites disguise content so that it comes up with innocent Internet searches-like the ones your kids do for homework assignments.

Excellent filters that will block these sites can be purchased and downloaded directly from the Internet. One of the best is by a Christian company-Integrity Online-and is available at [http://www.integrityonline.com](#).

5. Watch TV and go to movies with your children. Because of the media culture that exists today, we must teach our

children discernment. Take time to research questionable movies and TV programs. If necessary, view them before you allow your children to. Or attend movies with your children then discuss the film's theme and how the story relates to their lives.

At a time when TV and movie violence is at an all-time high, sexually explicit programming is increasing and culture in general has become more crude, Christians must be responsible for their viewing habits and far more spiritually discerning about the media.

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