

Could This Be the Dark Reason Behind Mass Shootings?

The unavoidable truth is that many are becoming desensitized by movie sensations that are depicting ungodly themes such as witchcraft, the occult, extreme violence, perverted sex and so on. Violent and perverse video games offer the same destructive pattern. Ironically, this headline appeared in the news in 2013: "Navy Yard Shooter 'Obsessed with Violent Video Games.'"

Our sex-saturated culture will continue to pervert with the ultimate goal of destroying. Ariel Castro, who was exposed in 2013 for kidnapping three women and holding them for 10 years, admitted that a deep addiction to pornography fed his perversion. He eventually committed suicide in prison. His idol promised pleasure but brought death and destruction. For anyone to assume that there isn't a pattern here is either naive, or grossly out of touch with the culture. The greatest battle we will ever fight is within. Even secular psychologists recognize that our mind is where the battle is either won or lost: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Ironically, many of the shooters were on powerful anti-depressant drugs.

I asked my mother for feedback and as one who has studied the breakdown of the culture. She noted, "The older generation has seen the slow digression from standards of excellence in movie-making to movies that distort and destroy, and are far removed from themes of integrity. Fifty years ago, these types of programs were recognized as wrong. Although we might watch them, few of us would dare attempt to justify them."

Some believe that the media reflect society more than it influence it, and that we should strengthen the listener rather than silence the messenger, but this thinking is

flawed. The media both reflects and influences.

There is also very troubling trend toward moral compromise in the evangelical church. I've witnessed soft porn images on Christian websites, questionable movie clips during PowerPoint sermons and youth pastors talk about their favorite sexually charged TV show or movie with the youth, all under the guise of "relating" to the culture. God is in the background while pleasure and self-focus are in the foreground. Granted, we are called to be missional (serving and helping those within our community), but not at the expense of compromising the gospel. God wants us to reach out to our community, but not if we fall when we reach.

Society's negative influence should call us to an uncompromising stand against this influence. In times past, the hero was the father, not rock stars. The greatest influence was the mother, not Hollywood. Kids once quoted Scriptures; now they're casting spells. What a sad commentary on the state of the family and the church today.

My congregation is familiar with a phrase I use routinely: "If you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you need to hear what I'm saying." Conviction is a wonderful gift from God. Without it, we would never change.

Much of the sex and violence today is tied to zombies, witches, vampires and horror movies. But there is no such thing as "good magic" or "good witches" or "nice vampires." These things, by their very nature, are evil—evil is that which God defines as evil, it opposes the character and nature of God—there is nothing good about that. Scripture makes it clear that fascination with the powers of darkness and the occult have no place in the heart or the mind of a Christian. Even more discouraging than the time and money spent on these movies is the young age at which children are exposed to these spiritual perversions. God is not mocked. We only deceive ourselves if we believe that we will not reap what we have

sown.

Our minds are to be fixed on what is noble, pure, excellent and good (Phil. 4:8). There are no scriptural grounds in defense of these types of movies. It is more reasonable for Christians who enjoy these movies to simply admit that they enjoy them rather than try to defend them.

Being selective with what we watch and listen to has nothing to do with legalism; it has everything to do with wisdom. We are to recognize what builds us up and what clearly does not and then choose accordingly. It's not about following rules; it's about spiritual health. We've all watched questionable material and have made wrong choices; don't live with ongoing regret. But don't justify wrong behavior by thinking that God doesn't care about what you watch or listen to, He does. We serve and love God with our mind (Rom. 7:25).

How can we curb this trend? When it comes to drawing a line between healthy entertainment and a destructive influence, we must follow what is good rather than the crowd. We must avoid, remove and influence—avoid viewing sex and violence and replace our viewing habits with what is pure, noble and upright; remove the stumbling blocks that trip us up (excessive media, destructive relationships and so on) and influence the culture in a positive direction. Are you willing to do what it takes to protect your mind, your family and our culture? It's your choice.

Watch the sermon, "This Does Not Go Out Except By Prayer and Fasting."