

How Should Christians Respond to So Much Sex on TV?

“Having had the opportunity to sleep with each of the contestants at least once, it was time for Kaitlyn to whittle the pool down to two.” So *The Daily Beast* describes a recent episode of *The Bachelorette*, in which Kaitlyn Bristowe has overnight dates with each of the three men left in the competition and then chooses two finalists.

I’m old enough to remember the days when such a plot would be an R-rated movie at best. Now it’s standard prime-time television fare. Pornography is common on cable television, and is increasingly portrayed on network TV. Premarital sex on television is as common as kissing used to be. Last year we saw gay sex on network TV as well. The sexual revolution’s three-part strategy continues: *normalize* all sexual behavior, then *legalize* it, then *ostracize* anyone who doesn’t endorse it.

Last weekend, my wife and I watched *The Saint*, a 1997 espionage movie starring Val Kilmer and Elisabeth Shue. As their characters were sleeping together on their first date, the thought occurred to me: why am I not bothered by this? Extramarital sex is now so commonly accepted that even those of us who affirm biblical morality no longer object. Think about the last time you saw a movie or television show in which an unmarried couple slept together. How offended were you?

In the 1950s, married couples such as Lucy and Ricky in *I Love Lucy* slept in twin beds, even though they were married in real life. In the 1960s, married characters such as Darrin and Samantha Stevens (*Bewitched*) shared a bed, but were never portrayed in a sexual manner.

Things began changing in the 1970s, when series such as *Charlie's Angels*, *The Love Boat*, and *Three's Company* brought sexual innuendo to TV. The 1980s saw prime time soap operas such as *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, *Falcon Crest* and *Knots Landing*, with ever-more pervasive sexual content. In the 1990s, cable television networks began displaying pornographic content. Network TV adapted by showing explicit sex scenes. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 75 percent of prime-time television shows now contain sexual content. And movies and novels such as *50 Shades of Grey* continue to push the limits even further.

Why does the sexualizing of media matter? Studies show that the more children and teenagers watch sexual content on TV, the more likely they are to engage in risky behavior. And the normalizing of extramarital sex continues to destroy marriages and families, encourage sexual abuse, and dissolve the moral fabric of our culture.

How should Christians respond? Protesting unbiblical morality can warn parents and might affect programming decisions. But we need to do more. Our society desperately needs an alternative, a culture that manifests God's kingdom on earth. A culture populated by those who choose love over lust (Matthew 5:27-30), marriage over divorce (Matt. 5:31-32), truth over lies (Ephesians 4:25), humility over ego (Philippians 2:3-11), service over self (Ephesians 5:21).

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