

Should Christians Watch 'Game of Thrones'?

Amazingly, one youth leader said this years ago, "I don't worry about what I watch or listen to as long as my heart is right. Plus, I need to watch what everyone else is watching so I can relate to them." This is a very dangerous view. Most will admit, however, that this statement is really just an excuse to cross the line when it comes to entertainment. Let's be honest: Many rationalize watching and listening to very questionable material, not because they want to relate to others, but because they enjoy it.

What we watch and listen to affects the heart; it's impossible to separate the two. Does a pastor really think he can watch garbage and then speak boldly from the pulpit? (Listen to more [here](#).) If a pastor fills his mind with the world all week and expects the Spirit of God to speak boldly through him from the pulpit, he will be gravely mistaken. "The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher." —E.M. Bounds. Who he is all week is who he will be when he steps to the pulpit. We are called to the separated life, guided by the Holy Spirit, not Hollywood.

What goes in the heart ultimately comes out in actions. The Scriptures are crystal-clear on the issue of entertainment; there's really no debate. Philippians 4:8 says to fix our thoughts on what is true and honorable and right, and to think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable and worthy of praise, not violence, nudity and debauchery.

Ephesians 5:1-20 also addresses this issue, and enough is said in 2 Timothy alone to silence any debate: Everyone who names the name of Christ should depart from anything that goes

against His standard of holiness. Do we really think that movies featuring nudity, violence, wizards, the occult and so on are not going to affect us or our children? Do we really believe these are simply fun, entertaining shows with no spiritual ramifications? God's Word says otherwise. For example, 2 Chronicles 33:6 says that those who use enchantments and witchcraft, and who deal with familiar spirits and wizards, provoke the Lord to anger. There is no gray area here. If enchantments, witchcraft, familiar spirits and wizards are entertaining, something is clearly wrong. Darkness should not entertain. We must be pure vessels that God can use (2 Tim. 2:19-21.) A pure vessel cannot come from a polluted mind. Years of feeding the flesh will leave us spiritually weak.

This message is not a small recommendation, it's a call to a life-changing decision—what goes in the mind ultimately comes out in our actions. Of course, watching these programs now and then may not lead someone astray, but how can a child of God truly enjoy them? Why walk willingly into the enemy's camp? Why quench and grieve the Spirit of God? It's impossible to develop a deep respect and desire for God if we repeatedly fill our mind with things that oppose Him. Find more here.

It's not about following rules. Let your freedom in Christ, and a relationship with Him, guide you. 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, because He does; we serve and love God with our mind. (See Rom. 7:25.) What we view and listen to clearly affects our relationship with Him. If we find dozens of hours a week to watch movies and television programs but have little time for God, our relationship with Him will suffer—period.

When it comes to drawing a line between healthy entertainment and a destructive influence, follow Christ rather than the crowd. Would Jesus really enjoy watching these movies? I think

we all know better. Oswald Chambers offers this perspective, "Jesus never pleaded, He never entrapped; He made discipleship intensely narrow, and pointed out certain things which could never be in those who followed Him." Chambers also said, "The words of the Lord hurt and offend until there is nothing left to hurt and offend. Jesus Christ has no tenderness whatever toward anything that is ultimately going to ruin a man in the service of God."

Don't get me wrong; legalism, spiritual arrogance and religious bondage turn as many people off to Christianity as does lukewarm living, but it's risky to show people one side of Christianity and not the other. Although salvation is a free gift from God, discipleship requires responsibility on our part.

In our zeal to lead people to Christ, we often paint a false picture of discipleship or water it down altogether. I don't want to make this issue with entertainment bigger than it is, but I also don't want to minimize it. Jesus didn't say, "Follow me and you won't have to change anything"; He said to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Me (see Matt. 16:24). Jesus wants us to understand what's involved when we follow Him.

To suggest that what we view and listen to is not important to God is to alter His Word. We should be selective when it comes to entertainment—once others see an authentic, committed relationship with Christ (although they may not admit it), they may begin to desire one as well.

Let me leave you with this thought: if you are a young adult, are you willing to do what it takes to protect your mind and your relationship with the Lord? If you are a parent, are you willing to do what it takes to protect your family? It's your choice. Drawing a line can be out of step with the mainstream, but, like Joshua, we too must say, "Choose today whom you will serve ... as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Josh.

24:15) .