

Raise the Standard

Make a decision to serve God wholly, putting Him first in everything you do.

Living above society's moral decline involves the choices we make regarding our conversations, the way we dress, what we read, and the TV shows and movies we watch. It also has to do with the level of integrity with which we live our personal lives, interact with other people and conduct ourselves in our businesses or professions.

As Christians, we need to encourage one another to live by godly standards and to resist the pull of the world. We need to hold each other accountable for the words, images and information we allow into our minds.

A well-known quote offers some good advice: "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."

You may be thinking, Joyce, the music I hear and the movies I watch are really none of your business. True, but I know that setting high standards and living a godly lifestyle will bring you blessings and set you on a good path toward your future. I don't believe watching excessive violence, listening to filthy language or seeing images of people scantily dressed will help you grow in God.

Romans 14: 22 makes very clear that we should not do things we feel guilty about or try to make others live by our convictions: "Your personal convictions [on such matters]—exercise [them] as in God's presence, keeping them to yourself [striving only to know the truth and obey His will]. Blessed (happy, to be envied) is he who has no reason to judge

himself for what he approves [who does not convict himself by what he chooses to do]" (The Amplified Bible).

God is interested in the influences we allow in our lives. In addition to what we see and hear, we need to be very careful about the people with whom we spend our time. The Bible teaches us not to sit passively and inactively in the pathway of sinners, nor to relax and rest in the presence of the scornful and mockers (see Ps. 1:1).

It is easy to dive into a body of water and float downstream with the current, but it is more difficult to swim upstream. It is often easier just to go along with other people and do what the majority of them want to do, but in the long run doing so can cause us significant heartache and misery.

We must set high standards for what we wear, what we watch on TV, what we listen to, how we use our time, whom we associate with, and how we spend our money.

A lifestyle of obedience to God's Word offers many blessings. If we would commit to higher standards of holiness in our lives, we could eliminate some of the enemy's ammunition and thwart some of his plans against us. Our lifestyle choices would help form shields around us that Satan could not penetrate. The things we see and hear can be tools the enemy uses to wage war on the battlefields of our minds.

When we see or hear something, it is recorded forever in the subconscious mind. Who do you think is behind ungodly scenes, images and words in so much of today's music, television, Internet and printed material? It isn't God; it's the enemy!

Working through the world's system, Satan constantly pours out poison, and often we just sit by passively taking in whatever is being offered. We must decide whether we are going to dedicate ourselves to God or serve the world system.

One of God's great gifts to mankind is the power of choice. If

we want to enjoy the blessings He has for us, we need to make lifestyle choices that align with His Word and are consistent with the values of His Word, not choices reflecting the constantly eroding values of the world.

I urge you to make a decision to serve God wholly, putting Him first in everything you do.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *I Dare You* (all FaithWords). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. To read past columns in *Charisma* by Joyce Meyer, log on at