

{ Questions to Ask }

The following questions may be helpful in determining whether what we watch and listen to is beneficial.

- **Is the material violent?** Movies and video games filled with gratuitous violence are often detrimental, especially to young, impressionable viewers.
- **Is the material exploitative?** Websites, magazines and books that demean women and other marginalized groups are never acceptable. Pornography, both hard and soft, is especially prevalent today and is exploitive of both men and women and damaging to God's design for male/female relationships.
- **Does the material use crude humor?** Comedy that relies on offensive, obscene or inappropriate humor runs counter to the Christian lifestyle.
- **Is the material addictive?** Social media and video games often lead to addictions that disrupt normal patterns of life and human relationships.
- **Does the material encourage harmful behavior?** Any form of media that glorifies violence, substance abuse and profanity can lead to risky activity, particularly in children and teens.
- **How much time is spent with the material?** Balance is critical in all areas of life. Too much time spent playing video games, engaging in social media or watching movies will take time from other priorities.
- **Does the material create a barrier between us and our brothers and sisters?** Mennonite Brethren believe strongly that our faith family can help us discern appropriate standards of belief and conduct. Living as an accountable community with one another keeps us from becoming isolated and making decisions in a relational vacuum.

Scripture references: Prov. 23:7; Matt. 5:29-30; Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 6:13-16, 10:31; Gal. 5:8-10, 25; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-17; 1 Thess. 4:1-8

{ Whatever You Do }

Our Confession of Faith says, "To be a disciple means to be true to Jesus in everyday life" (Article 10). As we use social media, as in all other areas of life, our behavior should bear witness to the Spirit who lives within us: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). Do our posts kindly build up? Do our comments show patience? Let's remember Paul's final instruction to the Corinthians: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). We might do well to post this verse on every bookshelf, game system, computer screen, television and mobile device we own.

Published under the sponsorship of the USMB Board of Faith and Life, 2013.

A full copy of our Confession of Faith is available at our website

www.usmb.org

Contact USMB

1-800-257-0515

offices@usmb.org

USMB West Coast Office
11000 River Run Blvd, Suite 200
Bakersfield, CA 93311

USMB Midwest Office
7348 W 21st Suite 115
Wichita, KS 67205



Faith & Life
Pamphlet Series

Christians and Media

ONE A Publication of USMB

“**W**hatever is pure — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”
Phil.4:8

{ Our World }

How are Jesus followers to maintain a pure lifestyle in the midst of a complicated barrage of 21st-century media and entertainment? Fifty years ago choices were simpler. We listened to radio, watched television and read books, magazines and newspapers. Today, even young children are exposed to types of media that leave an older generation confused and anxious.

Now media sources include on-demand TV, streaming movies, digital music, ebooks, websites, video games and social media. Much of our viewing and listening is interactive, Internet-based and easily accessible through digital devices. These “new media” create opportunities for both good and bad uses. What is OK for Jesus followers and what’s not?



{ Paul's World }

Shortly after Christ’s resurrection, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to Christians in the city of Corinth where many believers thought eating meat sacrificed to idols in pagan temples was evil. Paul, however, advocated an attitude of freedom and instructed the believers to “eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it’” (1 Cor. 10:25). Paul supported a broad sense of personal liberty with one exception: “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Cor. 10:24).

Paul teaches that believers have great freedom, but that restraint should be exercised if the freedom causes another person to stumble (1 Cor. 8:9; 10:28). One of the most important things a follower of Christ must do is examine how his or her action will impact others in the faith family.

Elsewhere, Paul says to believers, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8). Paul’s teaching clearly directs us to those things that are wholesome and good for our relationship with God. Both our own spirit and the Bible tell us that certain things break our fellowship with God, just like some behaviors and ways of living break our relationship with the people we love here on earth.

{ Good Or Bad? }

Can the Internet be used for evil? Certainly. Can cable, satellite and fiber-optic signals provide us with good and wholesome content? Absolutely. It’s tempting to think that various forms of media are evil, but like meat in Paul’s day, television, websites,



social media and the like are not good or bad. Media are neutral. It’s what we do with them that serves a good or bad function.

So if media are neutral, does the Bible give us any guidelines regarding what we should or should not watch or listen to? In another letter to Christians who were struggling in their walk with God, Paul encourages them to “walk as children of the light—for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth—trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:8-10). Pleasing God should be the standard for how we choose to live, including what we watch and to what we listen.

In Psalm 101, King David proclaims his desire to live a blameless life. How will this happen? He vows, “I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.” He continues, “I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it. The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil.... My eyes will be on the faithful in the land....”

“ Set your hearts on things above, not on earthly things. ”

Colossians 3:2