Entertainment and the Eye Gate

What You Watch Is Watching You Back

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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Entertainment and the Eye Gate
What You Watch Is Watching You Back

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Pastor Paul Tackett
Author and Bible Teacher

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Introduction — Entertainment and the Eye Gate: What You Watch Is Watching You Back

There was a time when a Christian father would have thrown a stranger out of his house for teaching his children to fornicate, mock the Bible, curse the name of Jesus Christ, despise their parents, ridicule marriage, and celebrate drunkenness. He would not have needed a committee meeting, a denominational resolution, or six weeks of counseling to decide what to do. He would have opened the front door and informed the visitor that his services were no longer required. Yet somewhere along the way, the same wickedness learned how to travel through electricity, arrive on a screen, accompany a catchy tune, and entertain the entire family while everybody sat comfortably eating popcorn. Suddenly, the moral outrage disappeared. The father who would never permit a blasphemer to preach from his church's pulpit now pays a monthly subscription to hear the same blasphemy in his living room. The mother who teaches her children to honor marriage laughs through a comedy built around adultery. The teenager who has been instructed to respect authority spends hours cheering for fictional characters whose principal accomplishment is rebelling against everything decent. And when somebody opens a King James Bible and questions the arrangement, the defenders of entertainment suddenly discover a remarkable enthusiasm for Christian liberty. Apparently, the devil has learned that a sermon condemning righteousness is much easier to sell when the congregation does not realize it is attending church.

The question confronting modern Christianity is not whether entertainment exists, whether technology is inherently wicked, or whether believers must abandon every form of recreation and sit in darkened rooms waiting for the Rapture. Such nonsense deserves no serious consideration. God never commanded Christians to become miserable, joyless creatures who regard every pleasant experience as a threat to spirituality. Scripture recognizes laughter, music, physical activity, wholesome fellowship, rest, and the legitimate enjoyment of God's blessings. But Scripture also recognizes something the modern entertainment industry would prefer Christians to forget: the eyes, ears, mind, heart, affections, and conduct of a believer belong under the authority of Almighty God. Proverbs 4:23 declares, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” That command was not suspended when television arrived, when motion pictures became popular, when music became portable, or when somebody invented a telephone capable of carrying more filth than an entire warehouse of yesterday's pornography. Technology changes the method of delivery. It does not change the moral character of what is being delivered. A sewer pipe manufactured from polished gold still carries sewage, and a beautifully illuminated screen does not transform wickedness into righteousness merely because the picture is clear.

David declared in Psalm 101:3, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” That is a remarkable statement from a man who understood both the responsibilities of leadership and the terrible consequences of personal failure. The psalm concerns David's determination to conduct himself wisely and maintain righteousness within his household and administration. Verse 2 declares, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” Notice that expression. David was not content to perform righteousness before a public audience while allowing wickedness unrestricted access to his private life. He understood that the home was not a territory exempt from God's authority. The immediate passage belongs to Israel's historical setting, and David's royal responsibilities must not be confused with the position of a Christian under grace. Nevertheless, the practical principle is unmistakable. A man cannot determine every wicked thing he will encounter while living in a fallen world, but he can exercise considerable authority over what he deliberately places before his eyes. David did not say he would tolerate wickedness provided it was entertaining, popular, expensive, or artistically impressive. He said he would not set it before his eyes. And then he added something particularly important: “It shall not cleave to me.” He understood that what a man repeatedly welcomes can eventually become something he is unwilling to release.

The Lord Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 6:22–23, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” The immediate context concerns heavenly treasures, earthly affections, spiritual perception, and divided loyalties. Christ was not delivering a lecture about television, and anyone pretending otherwise has already demonstrated the need for better Bible study. Nevertheless, the Lord established a searching connection between the eye, the inner life, and the direction of a person's affections. What a man values influences what commands his attention. What commands his attention can influence what he desires. And what he deliberately cultivates in his heart may eventually appear in his conduct. The television industry understands the commercial importance of capturing attention. Advertisers understand it. Social-media companies understand it. Entertainment producers understand it. They invest enormous effort in persuading people to continue watching, listening, clicking, purchasing, and returning. Yet the average Christian sometimes acts as though guarding his attention is an unnecessary concern invented by overly serious preachers. He will install an alarm system to protect his furniture while leaving the instruction of his mind to whatever appears next on the screen. **He has secured the windows against thieves while allowing the world's philosophy to enter through the television without knocking.**

The first concern of this series is television itself, because television has become one of the most familiar instructors in the modern home. A family can sit together for hours receiving

lessons about relationships, marriage, authority, morality, religion, and personal happiness without anybody announcing that instruction is taking place. The characters become familiar. Their conduct becomes ordinary. Their jokes become memorable. Their philosophies become part of everyday conversation. A program that consistently portrays adultery as amusing, fornication as normal, drunkenness as charming, and biblical conviction as foolish is doing more than filling an hour with harmless activity. It is communicating moral judgments. That does not mean every viewer will adopt those judgments or that every fictional portrayal of wickedness constitutes an endorsement of it. Scripture itself records terrible sins without approving them. But there is a fundamental difference between honestly portraying wickedness and deliberately presenting wickedness as admirable. Isaiah 5:20 declares, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” The entertainment industry's ability to make an audience sympathize with a sinner does not confer authority to change God's verdict concerning the sin. A man may understand why a fictional character committed adultery without deciding that adultery has become righteousness. **The camera can change the lighting, but it cannot change the commandments.**

Hollywood presents another difficulty because motion pictures can persuade audiences through storytelling, attractive characters, emotional manipulation, and carefully arranged conclusions. A villain receives a tragic background, a charming personality, and enough sympathetic dialogue to make the audience forget that his conduct remains wicked. A criminal becomes courageous because he rebels against someone portrayed as unpleasant. A dishonest man becomes clever because his deception succeeds. An adulterous relationship becomes a beautiful romance because the injured spouse has been deliberately written as an obstacle to happiness. Meanwhile, the Bible-believing character is frequently portrayed as ignorant, cruel, hypocritical, or incapable of understanding ordinary human experience. The audience is invited to applaud the sinner and despise the person representing righteousness. This is not an argument that every film must contain flawless heroes or that every story involving moral failure should be condemned. The Bible records the failures of David, Solomon, Peter, and numerous others without concealing their sins. The difference is that Scripture does not require the reader to abandon God's moral judgment in order to appreciate the historical account. Modern entertainment often does exactly that. It asks the audience to surrender the verdict of Scripture because the music is moving and the characters are attractive. **Hollywood cannot preach another gospel that saves anybody, but it can certainly teach another morality that corrupts somebody.**

Music presents a particularly searching examination because it accompanies people through so much of their daily lives. A song can remain in the memory for decades, and its

words may be repeated hundreds of times without serious consideration. A Christian who would immediately recognize a sermon encouraging fornication may sing along enthusiastically when the same message is accompanied by an enjoyable melody. Another who condemns drunkenness may have memorized entire collections of songs celebrating intoxication. Still another may insist upon reverence in church while casually enjoying music that uses the name of Jesus Christ as profanity. Ephesians 5:19 instructs believers concerning "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," while Colossians 3:16 connects singing with the word of Christ dwelling richly within the saints. Those passages establish positive instruction concerning Christian worship and spiritual encouragement. They do not authorize the invention of commandments against every modern instrument, rhythm, or musical style. A piano can accompany sound doctrine or foolishness. A guitar can accompany wholesome music or filthy lyrics. The instrument is not the principal moral issue. The message deserves examination. Christians should be capable of enjoying legitimate musical expression without allowing talent, popularity, or emotional excitement to become substitutes for biblical truth. **If a message would be wicked when spoken, adding a melody does not make it holy.**

Video games introduce another concern because modern electronic entertainment can offer almost unlimited opportunities for competition, achievement, and continued participation. There is nothing inherently sinful about solving a puzzle, enjoying a sports simulation, building an imaginary structure, or playing a lawful game with family members. But recreation becomes a serious spiritual problem when it begins controlling time, emotions, finances, and responsibilities. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Paul was addressing Christian liberty and the proper use of the body, but the principle concerning personal mastery is directly applicable. A man who can command imaginary armies while refusing to fulfill ordinary household duties has developed an unusual definition of accomplishment. A teenager who can spend six hours mastering an electronic challenge while insisting that fifteen minutes of Bible reading is unbearable should examine his priorities. And an adult who becomes furious when interrupted during a game should remember that Ephesians 4:31 did not provide an exception for people wearing headphones. Recreation is supposed to serve a legitimate purpose in life. It is not supposed to become the master of life. **If a man can conquer a digital kingdom but cannot govern his own appetites, the most important battle is taking place outside the screen.**

Pornography exposes the moral consequences of entertainment more directly because its purpose is to cultivate sexual desire outside the boundaries established by God. Job declared in Job 31:1, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a

maid?" The Lord Jesus Christ addressed deliberate lust in Matthew 5:28, and Paul commanded believers in First Corinthians 6:18 to flee fornication. These passages belong to their proper historical and doctrinal settings, but none supplies permission for Christians to cultivate sexual impurity as recreation. Modern technology has made explicit material accessible through devices carried almost everywhere, often behind passwords and private accounts. Yet secrecy does not establish innocence. A man may clear his browsing history, conceal his activities, and convince himself that nobody knows what he has been doing. Hebrews 4:13 declares that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of God. The believer must distinguish accidental exposure from deliberate pursuit, natural temptation from willing consent, and genuine repentance from the convenient practice of concealing wickedness more effectively. Neither should anyone pretend that every individual exposed to pornography experiences identical consequences. Scripture gives sufficient grounds for condemning deliberate lust without inventing additional claims. **The greatest danger of a private screen is not merely that somebody might discover what appears upon it. It is that the owner may eventually stop caring whether God approves of what he deliberately watches.**

Violence and comedy reveal two additional ways entertainment can distort moral judgment. Modern productions sometimes transform cruelty, suffering, revenge, and human destruction into spectacles intended primarily to excite the audience. Yet Psalm 11:5 declares that the LORD condemns the wicked and the lover of violence. Proverbs 3:31 warns against envying the oppressor, while Proverbs 24:17 warns against rejoicing when an enemy falls. These passages do not condemn legitimate self-defense, responsible military service, lawful justice, serious historical instruction, or every fictional story containing conflict. They do expose the danger of cultivating pleasure in cruelty. Comedy raises a similar concern when wickedness becomes the foundation of amusement. Ephesians 5:4 warns against filthiness, foolish talking, and unsuitable jesting, while Proverbs 14:9 declares, "Fools make a mock at sin." Scripture does not forbid wholesome laughter, sharp wit, or the exposure of hypocrisy through memorable irony. But it does not permit Christians to celebrate blasphemy, sexual filth, humiliation, and contempt for righteousness merely because somebody delivers those things with excellent comedic timing. **A laugh track cannot pardon wickedness, and a dramatic soundtrack cannot convert brutality into holiness. The audience may applaud, but applause has never established righteousness.**

Celebrity worship and sports obsession demonstrate how entertainment can move beyond occasional enjoyment and become a governing influence over personal identity, convictions, finances, and affections. Exodus 20:3 declares, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That commandment was given to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, while

First Corinthians 10:14 directly commands Christians to flee idolatry. The believer should therefore recognize the danger of elevating famous human beings into objects of unreasonable devotion. A gifted musician is not automatically a sound theologian. A successful actor is not necessarily qualified to define morality. An accomplished athlete does not become an authority on marriage, righteousness, or salvation because he can throw a ball farther than ordinary men. Talent deserves appropriate recognition, but it does not establish spiritual authority. Sports can provide wholesome recreation, teamwork, physical fitness, and family enjoyment. Yet when a man knows every statistic concerning his favorite team while remaining almost completely ignorant of Scripture, the contrast deserves examination. Paul used athletic competition in First Corinthians 9 to illustrate disciplined Christian service, contrasting a corruptible crown with an incorruptible one. **It is an unfortunate arrangement when a Christian spends his life cheering for men pursuing temporary trophies while neglecting the eternal responsibilities entrusted to himself.**

The final danger brings every preceding subject together: the endless availability of entertainment and the gradual disappearance of meaningful attention. Streaming services provide another episode. Social media provides another argument. Video platforms provide another recommendation. Sports networks provide another contest. Gaming systems provide another objective. Celebrity culture provides another scandal. The customer need never experience a moment without amusement unless he deliberately chooses one. But while entertainment continues supplying material, life continues moving toward its conclusion. Children grow older. Parents age. Marriages require care. Work demands diligence. Neighbors need the gospel. Churches need faithful servants. The Bible deserves serious attention. Prayer requires time. Opportunities pass away, and no amount of regret can recover yesterday. Ephesians 5:15–16 commands believers to walk circumspectly, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The Bible does not declare every hour of recreation wasted. Necessary rest and lawful enjoyment have legitimate places in a responsible life. But the Christian who continually postpones important obligations because entertainment is available has confused refreshment with the purpose of his existence. **The world has manufactured enough amusement to occupy a thousand lifetimes, but God has given each man only one earthly life in which to serve Him.**

This series will therefore refuse two equally foolish extremes. On one side stands the worldly Christian who insists that every entertainment choice is protected by liberty, regardless of its content, consequences, or influence upon his conduct. On the other stands the religious legalist who invents commandments concerning every instrument, film, game, sporting event, or recreational activity and attempts to impose his personal

preferences upon the entire Church. Neither position reflects sound biblical judgment. Romans 14 addresses matters of conscience and warns against improperly judging brethren over disputable practices. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” The Christian must distinguish explicit biblical prohibitions from lawful activities requiring personal discernment. Fornication remains sin regardless of popularity. Blasphemy remains wicked regardless of artistic context. Covetousness does not become righteousness because an entertainer recommends it. But neither does Scripture authorize declaring every television program, secular song, sporting event, or video game sinful merely because someone personally dislikes it. **Christian liberty is not permission to ignore the Bible, and Christian conviction is not permission to rewrite it. The word of God must govern both.**

Parents in particular must understand that the protection of a Christian home requires something more substantial than confiscating electronic devices and issuing endless prohibitions. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” That responsibility involves instruction, correction, explanation, consistency, and personal example. A father who spends every evening absorbed in television while condemning his children's screen habits is delivering a lesson he probably did not intend. A mother who continually examines her telephone while demanding that her children pay attention during family conversations is demonstrating a contradiction they will recognize immediately. Parents possess legitimate authority to establish appropriate restrictions, but they should also model the disciplined conduct they expect their children to learn. Families can enjoy wholesome entertainment, participate in recreational activities, and appreciate useful technology without making those activities the center of household life. Children should learn why certain material is wicked, why responsibilities take precedence over amusement, and why the Bible remains authoritative when no parent is present to supervise them. **A household does not become Christian merely because somebody places a Bible on the coffee table. The question is whether that Bible possesses more authority than the entertainment surrounding it.**

Nor should the Christian imagine that the solution consists simply of purchasing religious entertainment and abandoning everything else. A documentary containing biblical terminology can still teach false doctrine. A popular Christian musician can communicate unsound theology. A religious film can confuse Israel and the Church, distort salvation by grace through faith, or substitute sentimental invention for the actual words of Scripture. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Colossians 2:8 warns against philosophy and vain deceit contrary to Christ. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The believer

must exercise judgment concerning both secular and religious material. Merely placing the word “Christian” upon a production does not guarantee biblical accuracy. The same careful examination applied to wicked entertainment must also be applied to religious entertainment that misrepresents the Scriptures. A beautifully produced story that teaches baptismal regeneration, salvation by works, or another false gospel has not become spiritually profitable because its actors occasionally quote a Bible verse. **A Christian label is not a substitute for Christian doctrine, and an impressive production cannot improve upon the truth of God's word.**

Above everything else, this investigation must preserve the distinction between salvation and Christian conduct. No sinner receives eternal life by abandoning television, refusing worldly music, avoiding pornography, rejecting violent entertainment, or maintaining a spotless record of personal discipline. Salvation is not purchased through entertainment restrictions. It is the gift of God received by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The gospel concerns the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, as First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes. The believer's eternal security rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not upon his ability to maintain perfect recreational habits. Nevertheless, the same grace that saves also instructs Christians concerning their walk. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. **Grace is not a license to cultivate the sins from which Christ redeemed us. It is the very reason a saved man ought to desire a life that honors his Saviour.**

There is also the solemn matter of eternal accountability. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This judgment concerns saved believers and their accountability before the Lord, not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Eternal salvation is not placed back upon the auction block, but the believer's works and service are examined. First Corinthians 3:13 declares, “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.” That ought to provoke serious reflection concerning the use of earthly life. A Christian may possess eternal life through Jesus Christ while wasting countless opportunities for faithful service. He may never lose the salvation purchased by the blood of the Saviour, yet he can surrender hours, days, and years that will never return. The judgment seat of Christ will not be concerned with whether a believer remembered every television storyline, celebrity scandal, or championship result. **A man may know the**

ending of every series he ever watched and still arrive at the conclusion of his own life having neglected the work God placed before him.

The objective of these ten studies is not to frighten Christians away from every screen or persuade believers to measure holiness by the number of electronic devices they own. It is to restore biblical judgment where careless entertainment has too often replaced it. Television, movies, music, gaming, pornography, violent spectacles, comedy, celebrity culture, sports, and endless digital consumption must all be examined according to their content, purpose, influence, and relationship to the believer's responsibilities. Some things must be rejected because Scripture plainly condemns them. Other things may be enjoyed within proper boundaries. Still others may be lawful for one believer yet unprofitable for another because of particular circumstances or matters of conscience. The Christian must learn to make those distinctions rather than demanding that the preacher manufacture a universal rule for every decision. Personal responsibility cannot be delegated to a rating system, an entertainment company, a favorite personality, or a list of prohibitions. The believer must bring his choices beneath the authority of the written word. **The question is not merely whether the entertainment is enjoyable. The question is whether enjoying it requires you to silence the very Scriptures you claim to believe.**

Psalm 101:3 provides the declaration, Proverbs 4:23 establishes the responsibility, Romans 12:2 warns against conformity to the world, and Ephesians 5:15–16 commands the believer to redeem the time. Those passages are sufficient to expose the carelessness with which many Christians have surrendered their attention to entertainment. There is no need to invent a conspiracy behind every television program or insist that every entertainer deliberately intends to corrupt the audience. The ordinary workings of worldly appetites, commercial incentives, and human foolishness already provide enough reason for caution. Nor is there any need to pretend that a screen literally possesses eyes or a mind capable of watching the viewer. The warning is more practical and more searching than that. What a person repeatedly watches, hears, admires, and welcomes into his life can influence his thoughts, affections, convictions, habits, and choices. The screen may be an object, but the viewer is a morally responsible human being. And the viewer must eventually answer for what he chose to do with the life entrusted to him.

That brings us to the heart of **Entertainment and the Eye Gate — What You Watch Is Watching You Back**. The world has become remarkably skilled at capturing attention, manufacturing desire, normalizing wickedness, and persuading people to surrender their time voluntarily. Christians must become more serious about recognizing what they are allowing to influence their homes, their children, their marriages, and their own daily walk. The answer is not fear of technology but submission to Scripture. It is not the invention of

religious bondage but the responsible exercise of Christian liberty. It is not a hatred of wholesome recreation but a refusal to make recreation more important than righteousness. The believer ought to be able to laugh without enjoying blasphemy, appreciate music without celebrating fornication, enjoy sports without worshipping athletes, recognize artistic talent without surrendering moral judgment, and use technology without becoming its servant. **The tragedy is not that the world has discovered a thousand ways to entertain mankind. The tragedy is that a Christian can become so thoroughly entertained that he stops noticing how little attention he is giving to the things of God. Lock the front door if you please, but remember to guard the eye gate. The enemy does not always need to break into a house when the occupants are paying him to come through the screen.**

1 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — The Window You Left Open: When Television Becomes a Teacher of Sin

Key Passage: Psalm 101:3 (KJV) — "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

The average Christian would never dream of inviting a fornicator into his living room to demonstrate adultery before his children, hiring a blasphemer to curse Jesus Christ across the dinner table, or paying a stranger to spend three hours ridiculing the Bible in front of his family. He would show such a visitor the door, and rightly so. Yet millions of professing Christians invite those very influences into their homes every evening, provide them with electricity, purchase comfortable furniture from which to enjoy them, and complain when the preacher suggests there might be something wrong with the arrangement. The stranger does not need a key. He comes through a screen. He does not demand permission to teach the children. He entertains them until they willingly learn his lessons. And he does not have to argue against the Bible openly. He merely presents a world in which God's commandments are unreasonable, sin is delightful, rebellion is courageous, and righteousness is something to laugh at. The front door is locked, the windows are secured, and the devil has a reserved seat in the living room.

David declared in Psalm 101:3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Notice what the man said. He did not say that he would avoid wicked things whenever they became inconvenient, that he would tolerate them as long as the entertainment was sufficiently amusing, or that he would permit them provided everybody else was watching. He said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." The statement concerns deliberate choice.

There is a difference between encountering wickedness while living in a fallen world and intentionally placing wickedness before oneself for enjoyment. David understood that the eyes were not independent instruments operating without connection to the heart. What a man deliberately welcomes into his sight can become something he entertains in his thoughts, excuses in his judgment, and eventually pursues in his conduct. The television industry did not invent that danger. The old serpent understood the usefulness of appealing to the eyes long before anybody invented a camera, and the first recorded temptation in human history demonstrates what can happen when desire begins overruling the commandment of God.

The subject is not whether every television program is wicked, whether every film is an instrument of Satan, or whether Christians must live without recreation. Scripture does not command believers to abandon every useful invention merely because sinners have found ways to misuse it. A television can display a Bible lesson, a historical documentary, a weather report, or a wholesome family program. The problem is not the existence of a screen but the surrender of judgment to whatever appears upon it. The issue is whether Christians are exercising biblical discernment or allowing an industry governed largely by worldly appetites to determine what their families will repeatedly see, hear, admire, and imitate. The Bible does not command a man to smash his television with a hammer. It commands him to exercise the spiritual judgment that should have prevented him from needing a hammer in the first place. A Christian who knows how to operate a remote control but refuses to govern his own viewing habits has mastered the machinery while surrendering the man.

1. David's Resolution: A Man Who Refused to Give Wickedness a Place

Psalm 101 is not a vague religious poem about maintaining a pleasant attitude. It is a declaration of righteousness, judgment, household integrity, and opposition to wickedness. David begins by saying, “I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing” (Psalm 101:1). He continues, “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way,” and then asks, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” (Psalm 101:2). The original setting concerns a king's determination to conduct himself and govern his household and royal administration in righteousness before the LORD. David was speaking within Israel's historical setting, and his responsibilities as king should not be confused with the position of a saved member of the Body of Christ under grace. Nevertheless, the principle of refusing deliberate fellowship with wickedness applies plainly to Christian conduct. The remarkable expression is “within my house.” David understood that righteousness must operate where a man lives, not merely where the public can observe him. A man who performs holiness before a congregation while cultivating wickedness inside his home is

not displaying spiritual maturity. He is running two different administrations, and the LORD knows both addresses.

The language becomes even more pointed in Psalm 101:3: “I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” David did not merely refuse the wicked thing; he refused to become attached to it. The word “cleave” describes something adhering or holding fast. That is precisely where much modern entertainment becomes dangerous. A Christian begins by watching something he knows contains material contrary to Scripture. He becomes interested in the characters, enjoys the storyline, laughs at the jokes, and gradually develops affection for the very conduct he initially recognized as wicked. Before long, he is defending what he once condemned because he has become emotionally attached to the entertainment. A man can become remarkably creative in his interpretations of Christian liberty when somebody threatens to cancel his favorite program. He may not remember the last three chapters he read in his Bible, but he can explain the relationships, scandals, and personal histories of twenty fictional people who do not exist. David determined that wickedness would not cleave to him. Modern entertainment would prefer that the customer cleave to the screen.

Psalm 101:4 adds, “A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.” Verse 7 declares, “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.” Again, David's royal setting must be respected, but the practical lesson is impossible to miss. Household leadership involves deciding what influences receive hospitality. Nobody expects a Christian father to control every conversation his children will ever hear or every wicked advertisement that might suddenly appear before them. But he is responsible for what he knowingly permits, repeatedly supplies, and deliberately encourages within his household. A man cannot control the whole world's wickedness, but he can exercise considerable authority over what he purchases for his own living room. If someone walked through the front door announcing that he intended to teach the children to despise their parents, mock marriage, and ridicule God, the father would immediately recognize the threat. Put the same lesson into a popular television series, and suddenly he wants to discuss artistic freedom. The lesson did not become righteous because the delivery system became expensive.

2. The Light of the Body: When the Eye Serves the Wrong Master

The Lord Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 6:22–23, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” These words belong to the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ addressed His disciples concerning righteousness, heavenly treasure, earthly affection,

divided loyalties, and the impossibility of serving God and mammon. The immediate context is not a discussion of electronic entertainment, which did not exist, and responsible Bible interpretation must never pretend otherwise. Yet Christ's teaching concerning the eye and the inner life exposes a principle far older than modern technology. The eye is connected with what the heart treasures and where the life is directed. The Lord was not delivering an ophthalmology lecture. He was exposing the spiritual consequences of misdirected affections. When the eye becomes an instrument of corrupt desire, the darkness does not remain politely confined to the eyeball.

Notice that Matthew 6:21 states, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Then Christ speaks concerning the eye, and immediately afterward He declares that no man can serve two masters. The passage exposes the connection between what a person values, what commands his attention, and whom he ultimately serves. The Christian should therefore ask more than whether a particular television program contains objectionable language. He should ask what the program is encouraging him to admire, what kind of life it presents as desirable, and whether its moral conclusions agree with the word of God. A screen can display a magnificent house while teaching covetousness, a romantic relationship while glorifying adultery, or an apparent act of courage while celebrating rebellion against legitimate authority. Attractive photography does not sanctify an evil message. The devil does not need to make every advertisement look like a graveyard. He can sell covetousness with sunshine, adultery with candlelight, and rebellion with a beautiful musical score. The wrapping paper has never changed the nature of the merchandise.

There is another serious danger in Christ's warning: “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” A man becomes particularly vulnerable when he begins mistaking darkness for light. It is one thing to recognize a sinful influence and struggle against it. It is another to argue that the influence is beneficial because it provides entertainment, cultural awareness, or an opportunity to understand the world. Such explanations may sometimes have legitimate applications, but they can also become convenient excuses for enjoying what Scripture condemns. Proverbs 14:12 warns, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Human reasoning can make almost anything appear respectable when desire has already reached its verdict. A Christian who wants to watch something badly enough can usually manufacture a defense for watching it. That is not necessarily discernment. Sometimes it is simply the flesh hiring an attorney. The question is whether the word of God is judging the entertainment or the entertainment is gradually teaching the Christian how to reinterpret the word of God.

3. The Living Room Classroom: Lessons Nobody Remembered Enrolling In

Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The surrounding passage is remarkably instructive. Verse 20 says, “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.” Verse 21 continues, “Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.” Then Solomon warns against a froward mouth, commands the eyes to look straight ahead, and instructs the feet to depart from evil. Ears, eyes, heart, mouth, and feet are brought under disciplined attention. These instructions belong to the wisdom teaching given within Israel's scriptural history, but they provide clear practical instruction concerning the relationship between what a person receives and how he conducts himself. The heart is not supposed to be an unattended warehouse into which every merchant of corruption may unload his inventory. Scripture demands diligence. That means watchfulness, attention, and deliberate care. A Christian who examines the ingredients in his breakfast cereal while allowing anything whatsoever into his mind has developed an interesting system of priorities.

Television teaches through repetition, approval, ridicule, and example. A character behaves wickedly, receives applause, encounters little meaningful consequence, and becomes the sympathetic hero of the storyline. Another character expresses a biblical conviction and is portrayed as ignorant, cruel, hypocritical, or hopelessly outdated. The audience may not consciously accept the message after one episode, but the program continues delivering it through familiar characters and entertaining situations. The Bible says, “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). In its immediate context, Paul warns the Corinthian believers about corrupt teaching concerning the resurrection and the influence of those denying that truth. The statement nevertheless expresses a principle about the corrupting power of evil associations and communications. The viewer is not literally joining every fictional character in fellowship, but he is voluntarily receiving the messages their stories communicate. A television program does not need to announce that it is preaching a sermon. It can deliver its moral instruction while the audience laughs, cries, eats popcorn, and thanks the network for another outstanding season.

Parents should recognize that children do not enter the world possessing mature biblical discernment. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The responsibility for instruction cannot be delegated without examination to people whose chief objective may be selling advertising or maintaining subscriptions. A father may spend fifteen minutes telling his children that fornication is wrong and then permit several hours of programming in which fornication is presented as normal, exciting, humorous, or essential to personal happiness. A mother may emphasize respect for parental authority while providing entertainment in which every

father is a fool and every obedient child is an embarrassment. Children notice contradictions. They may not understand doctrinal terminology, but they can recognize when the household's entertainment repeatedly celebrates what the household's Bible condemns. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 instructed Israelite parents to teach God's commandments diligently in ordinary household life. While Christians must not confuse Israel's covenant obligations with the Church's standing under grace, the responsibility to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord remains clear in Ephesians 6:4. Television should never become the family's most consistent theologian.

4. When the Scriptwriters Rewrite Morality: Sin With a Laugh Track

The Bible speaks plainly concerning fornication and adultery. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” First Thessalonians 4:3 states, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” These are not complicated passages requiring an advanced academic degree to discover what God meant. Yet entertainment frequently presents sexual immorality as ordinary romance, personal liberation, or an understandable response to an inconvenient marriage. Adultery becomes a touching love story when the offended spouse is written as an unpleasant character. Fornication becomes a harmless milestone when the participants are attractive and the dialogue is sufficiently clever. Other sexual conduct contrary to biblical teaching is likewise presented as something Christians must celebrate rather than evaluate according to Scripture. That does not authorize hatred or mistreatment of people. Christians are commanded to speak the truth in love, and every sinner needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. But love does not require surrendering biblical definitions of righteousness. The camera may change the lighting, but it cannot change the commandments.

Profanity and blasphemy present another revealing contradiction. Ephesians 4:29 commands, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Colossians 3:8 instructs believers to put off “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” A Christian may discipline his own child for using filthy language while laughing through a television program in which the same language forms half the entertainment. He may insist that God's name be respected in his household while repeatedly paying to hear it treated as a curse. Somebody will object that hearing a wicked word does not mean the listener has spoken it. Certainly not. The Bible recognizes the difference between committing an act and observing another person's conduct. But there is also a difference between unwilling exposure and deliberately seeking amusement in repeated corruption. A man is not guilty of every wicked sentence he happens to overhear.

He should still ask why he finds it so entertaining when somebody else says what he claims would dishonor God coming from his own mouth.

Rebellion receives similar treatment. Proverbs 30:17 warns concerning “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother,” and Ephesians 6:1 commands children to obey their parents in the Lord. Yet countless fictional households present the father as a permanent idiot, the mother as an obstacle to freedom, and the rebellious teenager as the only intelligent person in the building. Marriage becomes a prison, faithfulness becomes boring, and disrespect becomes the expected price of delivering another joke. This does not mean every fictional parent must be portrayed as wise or every child as obedient. Scripture itself records deeply flawed fathers, mothers, kings, and children. The issue is what the story asks the audience to admire. When contempt for authority becomes the entertainment's normal language, Christians should not be surprised if that contempt begins appearing in ordinary household conversations. A thousand jokes about foolish fathers do not establish that fatherhood is foolish. They establish that somebody has discovered a profitable market for dishonoring it. The Christian's duty is not to outlaw laughter but to refuse instruction in the art of despising what God commands people to honor.

5. Seeing Wickedness Is Not the Same as Enjoying Its Glorification

Biblical discernment requires an important distinction that careless preaching sometimes overlooks: the mere portrayal of wickedness does not automatically constitute an endorsement of wickedness. The Bible records murder, adultery, drunkenness, treachery, incest, idolatry, sexual violence, and terrible acts of human cruelty. Second Samuel 11 records David's adultery with Bathsheba and his arrangement for Uriah's death. The Holy Ghost did not include that account so readers could admire David's cleverness or enjoy another scandal involving a prominent ruler. Second Samuel 12 records Nathan confronting David with the judgment of God. “Thou art the man,” declared the prophet in verse 7. The record exposes sin and its consequences rather than decorating sin for applause. Likewise, Genesis 39 records the attempted seduction of Joseph by Potiphar's wife, but Joseph answers in verse 9, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” The account recognizes temptation and condemns wrongdoing. Therefore, the fact that a story contains sin does not settle whether the story itself promotes sin. The moral treatment of that sin matters.

This distinction prevents two opposite errors. The first is pretending that entertainment becomes acceptable merely because the events are fictional. Fictional characters can communicate real philosophies, and invented stories can teach real moral conclusions. The second error is declaring every story containing a sinful character automatically

unsuitable for Christian consideration. That reasoning would eventually condemn serious historical instruction, responsible accounts of criminal justice, and much legitimate literature. Philippians 4:8 instructs believers to think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. It does not require Christians to pretend evil does not exist. It does require them to govern what they willingly cherish and meditate upon. A narrative exposing the ugliness of adultery is not morally identical to one celebrating adultery as freedom. A historical account of persecution is not the same as a production encouraging delight in cruelty. Christian judgment must be governed by the Bible's actual teaching, not by a mechanical rule invented because examining context requires more effort than counting objectionable scenes.

The important questions concern purpose, emphasis, treatment, and effect upon the conscience. Does the entertainment portray wickedness as wickedness, or does it encourage the audience to celebrate it? Does the story expose consequences, or does it repeatedly excuse rebellion because the rebellious character is charming? Is a sinful event necessary to understand a serious subject, or is the production simply selling corruption under the respectable label of artistic expression? These questions do not create a universal Christian rating system, and they will sometimes require believers to exercise judgment where Scripture has not named the particular circumstances. Romans 14 addresses matters of conscience and warns believers against acting contrary to faith, while never giving them permission to excuse what God explicitly forbids. Christian liberty cannot transform adultery into righteousness, but neither should personal preference be promoted into a commandment supposedly binding every believer. Some people want a rulebook so detailed that they never have to exercise discernment. Others want liberty so unlimited that they never have to exercise restraint. The Bible provides neither excuse. It commands Christians to grow in judgment.

6. The Christian and the World: Conformed Without Noticing

Romans 12:2 declares, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The apostle Paul wrote these words to believers, and the command follows eleven chapters establishing profound truths concerning sin, justification, grace, Israel, and God's dealings with mankind. Romans 12:1 appeals to the brethren by the mercies of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice. Paul was not explaining how a lost man could earn eternal life by avoiding television programs. Salvation in the present dispensation is by grace through faith, not by entertainment restrictions, religious accomplishments, or external reform. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles that matter plainly. Romans 12 concerns the appropriate conduct of those who belong to God. The believer is not told to resist worldly

conformity in order to purchase redemption. He is told to refuse conformity because he already belongs to the Redeemer. Holiness is not the admission price of salvation. It is the proper walk of those who have been saved.

The word “conformed” deserves serious consideration. The world's influence does not always arrive as an open demand to renounce Christ. Sometimes it comes as a suggestion that biblical convictions are embarrassing, that godliness is old-fashioned, or that Christians ought to become more agreeable toward whatever the entertainment industry currently celebrates. The believer may never formally announce that he has changed his doctrine. He simply stops being troubled by things that once convicted him. The blasphemy no longer offends him. The adultery no longer grieves him. The ridicule of biblical morality becomes another amusing joke. Eventually, the Christian begins measuring acceptable conduct by what is normal on television rather than by what is written in Scripture. That is conformity. It is not necessary to burn a Bible when a man has learned to ignore the parts that interfere with his entertainment. The book can remain on the coffee table while its authority has been quietly transferred to the glowing screen sitting across the room.

Paul gives the remedy: “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewal comes through God's truth, not through simply replacing one form of entertainment with another. John 17:17 records the Lord Jesus Christ praying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Colossians 3:16 commands, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” The Christian mind must be furnished with Scripture so that falsehood can be recognized when it appears under attractive circumstances. This does not mean turning every evening into an exhausting religious examination or living in fear of accidentally encountering something improper. It means developing a conscience informed by the word of God and refusing to silence that conscience for amusement. A man who spends hours absorbing worldly philosophy and five hurried minutes reading Scripture should not wonder why the world's voice sounds louder. The trouble is not that the Bible has lost its power. The trouble may be that the Bible has been given five minutes to answer what the television has been preaching all week.

7. Casting Down Imaginations: Putting the Remote Control Back Under Authority

Second Corinthians 10:3–5 states, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” In its immediate context, Paul is defending the authority and character of his apostolic ministry against opposition, including reasoning exalted against the knowledge of

God. The passage should not be reduced to a convenient slogan about changing television channels. Nevertheless, the language exposes the necessity of submitting human reasoning to divine truth. The Christian is not authorized to maintain a private collection of cherished imaginations that contradict Scripture merely because those imaginations arrived through entertainment. When a television program presents adultery as admirable, revenge as righteousness, or unbelief as intelligence, the believer must compare those conclusions with the Bible. A thought does not become worthy of acceptance because a famous actor delivered it convincingly.

First Corinthians 6:12 provides another essential principle: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul is discussing Christian conduct within a setting that includes serious warnings concerning fornication and the proper use of the body. His declaration must not be twisted into permission to commit whatever sin someone desires. Nevertheless, the distinction between lawful things and profitable things applies broadly to Christian decision-making. Something may not be specifically forbidden and still become destructive through excess, misplaced priority, or personal bondage. Television offers an obvious illustration. A program may be relatively wholesome, yet the viewer may give it so much time that responsibilities are neglected and spiritual discipline disappears. One episode becomes four. An hour becomes an evening. The Bible remains unopened because the next installment begins automatically. Some Christians would loudly condemn drunkenness because alcohol can master a man, yet become strangely defensive when someone suggests that entertainment can master his schedule. Different bottle, same problem of surrendering control.

The practical response is deliberate self-government under the authority of Scripture. Examine what is being watched. Refuse entertainment that repeatedly glorifies what God condemns. Establish reasonable limits upon viewing time. Parents should know what their children are watching and should be prepared to explain the biblical reasons for their decisions. Husbands and wives should exercise mutual consideration rather than using personal preferences as weapons against one another. Children should be taught discernment, not merely trained to behave properly while a parent is standing beside the television. Psalm 119:37 provides a fitting prayer: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.” That is not the prayer of a man seeking more sophisticated excuses. It is the prayer of someone who understands his need for God's help in directing his attention. The Christian does not need to consult a committee before turning something off. The remote control has a power button, and using it occasionally does not constitute religious persecution. If a program repeatedly dishonors Christ, the believer is under no obligation to finish the season.

Conclusion: The Sermon Nobody Announced

The great danger of worldly entertainment is not simply that it occasionally places an offensive scene before the viewer. It is that a steady diet of corrupt influences can make wickedness seem ordinary, righteousness seem unreasonable, and biblical convictions seem increasingly difficult to maintain. Scripture warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). A Christian who deliberately feeds his mind with entertainment that celebrates sin should not expect those influences to remain completely disconnected from his affections and judgment. Yet the solution is not to retreat into an invented system of religious prohibitions or pretend that all entertainment must be condemned. The solution is to restore the authority of the word of God over the ordinary decisions of life. Whether the screen is a television, tablet, smartphone, or computer, the moral question remains unchanged. What am I willingly placing before my eyes, what is it teaching me to admire, and does that instruction agree with the Scriptures? Technology changes its machinery. Human nature has not changed its appetites.

The home should be a place where biblical truth is honored rather than constantly contradicted by purchased entertainment. Children should see parents who exercise the same judgment privately that they recommend publicly. Husbands and wives should be able to discuss their viewing habits without treating every concern as a personal attack. Believers should understand the distinction between appreciating useful recreation and becoming dependent upon constant amusement. Ephesians 5:15–16 declares, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Time spent with family, in necessary rest, or enjoying lawful recreation is not automatically wasted. But time deliberately surrendered to corrupting influences cannot be recovered by claiming that the television was only background noise. Every hour belongs to the life God has given. Every choice should be examined in the light of His word. The Christian who says he has no time to read his Bible but can describe the entire plot of six television series has already revealed something about his priorities. The problem is not a shortage of hours. It is an embarrassment of misplaced attention.

David's declaration remains a searching rebuke: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” The king was not promising that wickedness would never cross his path. He was declaring that he would not deliberately welcome it, entertain it, and allow it to cleave to him. Christians living under grace should certainly understand that salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ and not upon achieving a perfect record of acceptable entertainment. But grace is no invitation to make peace with the wickedness from which the Lord has called His people to separate themselves. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the

grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That instruction belongs in the living room as surely as it belongs in the church building. The world does not need permission to preach its philosophy through a screen. It only needs Christians willing to listen without opening their Bibles. **A locked front door will not protect a home whose occupants keep inviting wickedness through the window. What you watch is watching you back—not with eyes of its own, but through the influence you permit it to gain over yours.**

2 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — Hollywood's Other Gospel: When the Villain Becomes the Hero and Sin Becomes Virtue

Key Passage: Isaiah 5:20 (KJV) — "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Hollywood has discovered a remarkable method of preaching a false gospel without ever opening a Bible, building a church, or announcing a sermon. It takes a sinner, gives him an attractive face, surrounds him with beautiful scenery, provides a carefully written explanation for his wickedness, adds a sympathetic musical score, and invites the audience to applaud what God condemns. The adulterer becomes a misunderstood lover. The thief becomes a courageous rebel. The murderer becomes a troubled hero seeking justice. The dishonest politician becomes a necessary reformer, and the man who actually believes the Bible is frequently introduced as the miserable fanatic who needs to learn something about compassion. By the time the credits roll, the audience has been instructed in an entirely different system of morality, and many viewers have paid good money to receive the lesson. Nobody called it preaching because everybody was too busy enjoying the entertainment. But changing the name of a sermon does not change the doctrine being delivered. The devil has never insisted upon a pulpit when a movie theater would accomplish the same purpose.

The danger is not that every film contains a sinful character or portrays an act of wickedness. The Bible itself records adultery, murder, treachery, idolatry, drunkenness, rebellion, and every imaginable demonstration of man's depraved nature. The difference lies in how those things are presented, what conclusions the audience is encouraged to reach, and whether God's judgment has been quietly replaced with human sentiment. Scripture exposes David's adultery; entertainment may invite the viewer to celebrate it. Scripture condemns revenge; entertainment may make vengeance the triumphant conclusion of the story. Scripture warns against rebellion; entertainment may portray

rebellion against righteousness as the highest expression of personal courage. These distinctions are not small matters of artistic taste. They concern the authority by which Christians determine good and evil. A man who begins deciding morality by the attractiveness of fictional characters has already surrendered a considerable portion of his judgment. Sin does not become righteousness because the actor has perfect teeth, the lighting is flattering, and the background music sounds like heaven opening.

Isaiah 5:20 announces a divine judgment upon those who reverse God's moral distinctions. The prophet does not congratulate men for discovering a progressive understanding of righteousness. He declares, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” That sentence cuts through centuries of religious excuses and modern philosophical inventions with the precision of a sharpened sword. God has not delegated the authority to redefine wickedness to screenwriters, directors, actors, critics, or audiences. The Christian who professes to believe the King James Bible must therefore examine entertainment by something more substantial than popularity, production quality, emotional appeal, or personal enjoyment. Movies communicate ideas. Characters represent attitudes. Stories establish heroes and villains. Conclusions teach lessons. The question is not simply whether Christians may appreciate dramatic storytelling, historical films, or legitimate recreation. The question is whether they recognize when entertainment begins teaching them to love what God hates, excuse what God condemns, and ridicule what God commands. When the villain becomes the hero and sin becomes virtue, the problem is not merely bad entertainment. It is a competing moral authority.

1. Isaiah’s Woe: When Men Reverse the Labels on Good and Evil

Isaiah chapter 5 belongs to the prophetic condemnation of Judah and Jerusalem, where the LORD exposes the corruption of His covenant people. The chapter begins with the song concerning God's vineyard, depicting the care He had bestowed upon Israel and the bitter fruit produced despite that care. Isaiah 5:7 identifies the vineyard of the LORD of hosts as the house of Israel and the men of Judah as His pleasant plant. God looked for judgment and righteousness, but found oppression and a cry instead. The chapter proceeds through a series of solemn woes against covetousness, drunkenness, moral carelessness, pride, corruption, and the deliberate perversion of justice. Isaiah 5:20 is therefore not an isolated proverb invented for discussions about modern entertainment. It is part of God's indictment against a people who possessed His revelation while conducting themselves contrary to it. The immediate historical setting concerns Israel under the law, not the Church under grace. Nevertheless, the moral principle is unmistakable: when men deliberately reverse divine distinctions, they are not becoming wiser than God. They are displaying the corruption He has already condemned.

Consider the wording carefully. God identifies three exchanges: evil for good, darkness for light, and bitter for sweet. These are not innocent misunderstandings about matters upon which Scripture remains silent. They describe the corruption of moral judgment itself. Darkness is not improved by calling it light. Bitterness does not become sweetness because a persuasive salesman changes the label. Evil does not become good because an entire civilization agrees to applaud it. Isaiah 5:21 continues, “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” There is the trouble. Man decides that his judgment is superior to God's revelation, and then congratulates himself for having escaped the limitations of biblical righteousness. Hollywood has made a profitable business out of this ancient rebellion. The audience is invited to believe that traditional morality is narrow, that forbidden desires reveal authentic happiness, and that disobedience becomes admirable whenever the sinner has a sufficiently touching explanation. The labels change, the merchandise remains rotten, and the customer is expected to praise the improvement.

Isaiah 5:23 further condemns those “Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!” In its setting, this exposes judicial corruption, bribery, and the perversion of justice among God's covenant people. It is not a direct prophecy about motion pictures. Yet the principle provides a searching comparison with entertainment that invites audiences to reverse their moral verdicts. A fictional criminal may be portrayed as noble because he steals from unpleasant people. An adulterer may be justified because his spouse lacks charm. A rebellious child may become the righteous hero because his parents uphold standards the audience has been conditioned to despise. In each case, emotional presentation attempts to alter the moral judgment. The Christian must remember that sympathy can explain why someone sinned without making the sin righteous. Understanding temptation does not authorize surrendering to it. Recognizing difficult circumstances does not erase God's commandments. A clever script can make a sinner understandable, but it cannot make sin holy. The moral universe is not governed by whoever receives the longest close-up.

2. The Sympathetic Villain: When the Audience Learns to Cheer for Wickedness

One of the most effective methods of moral persuasion in entertainment is the sympathetic protagonist. The audience follows a character through hardship, injustice, disappointment, loss, or personal betrayal. It becomes familiar with his thoughts, understands his wounds, and develops affection for his personality. Then the character commits an act that Scripture plainly condemns, but the story presents that act as the inevitable expression of his circumstances. The audience has already invested its sympathies, so it begins defending the conduct rather than judging it. The theft was

necessary. The deception was understandable. The adultery was romantic. The revenge was deserved. Before long, the viewer is no longer asking whether the conduct was righteous. He is asking whether the character he likes will escape the consequences. That is a dangerous reversal. Personal affection has been promoted above moral judgment. A man who would condemn an action in his neighbor may find himself applauding the same action when committed by a fictional hero. Apparently, righteousness now depends upon which character receives the most screen time.

The Bible gives a remarkable demonstration of how a compelling story can expose corrupted judgment. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan confronted David after the king committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged the death of Uriah. Rather than immediately naming the king's wickedness, the prophet described a rich man who possessed abundant flocks but stole a poor man's single beloved lamb. David became furious and declared that the offender deserved judgment. Then Nathan delivered the devastating words of verse 7: “Thou art the man.” The king recognized injustice when it appeared in another man's story, but had failed to judge his own conduct rightly. The passage concerns David's historical sin and God's dealings with Israel's king, yet its exposure of selective moral judgment remains searching. Human beings can become remarkably inconsistent when their affections are involved. Entertainment frequently exploits that weakness by ensuring the audience loves the offender before the offense occurs. Once the viewer identifies with the character, the moral defense often arrives almost automatically.

This does not mean Christians must be incapable of compassion toward a fictional wrongdoer or a real sinner. Scripture itself distinguishes between understanding human misery and approving human wickedness. Jesus Christ demonstrated compassion toward sinners without declaring their sins righteous. In John 8:11, He told the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Whatever the serious textual and historical circumstances surrounding that account, the words certainly do not celebrate adultery as personal liberation. Mercy and righteousness are not enemies. A Christian can recognize the pain that influenced a person's choices while maintaining the truth that those choices were sinful. The trouble begins when sympathy becomes a substitute for moral judgment. Hollywood often asks the audience to believe that a sufficiently tragic childhood, disappointing marriage, or cruel employer can transform wicked conduct into virtue. Scripture recognizes human suffering, but it does not make suffering a license to rebel against God. A believable villain may deserve thoughtful consideration. He does not deserve a revised Bible.

3. Adultery by Candlelight: When Hollywood Calls Betrayal Romance

Consider the treatment of marriage and adultery in modern storytelling. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” There is nothing mysterious about that statement. God honors marriage, and He condemns sexual immorality. Yet entertainment frequently constructs romantic situations in which the audience is encouraged to desire an adulterous relationship. A married character is portrayed as emotionally neglected, misunderstood, or trapped with someone deliberately written to be unpleasant. Then a charming alternative appears, understands every feeling, delivers the perfect dialogue, and provides the excitement missing from the marriage. The scriptwriter carefully prepares the audience to hope that the forbidden relationship succeeds. By the time the characters finally betray their marriage vows, the music swells and the scene is presented as a triumph of love. It is a remarkable piece of moral advertising. A covenant is broken, trust is betrayed, and somebody has the nerve to call the wreckage beautiful because the violins were playing.

Second Samuel 11 provides a very different treatment of adultery. David saw Bathsheba, inquired concerning her, learned that she was Uriah's wife, and nevertheless took her. The historical record does not convert David's royal position, personal desires, or surrounding circumstances into moral permission. Second Samuel 11:27 concludes with the statement, “But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” That is the verdict. No romantic arrangement of the details can overturn it. The following chapter records divine rebuke and painful consequences. David was a great king in Israel's history, but his greatness did not sanctify his transgression. Scripture does not need to invent an unpleasant personality for Uriah to make David appear more sympathetic. It presents the matter according to truth. That distinction should govern Christian judgment when watching stories about forbidden relationships. A film may honestly portray marital failure, temptation, repentance, or the destructive consequences of adultery. But a production that deliberately invites the audience to celebrate betrayal has crossed from portraying sin into promoting its attractiveness.

The same principle applies to fornication, the trivialization of sexual purity, and other conduct contrary to biblical instruction. First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” Paul wrote to believers, and the command concerns Christian conduct rather than an impossible requirement for earning salvation. The Christian's standing before God rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, received by faith, while his daily walk must still be brought under the authority of Scripture. Entertainment often suggests that sexual restraint is repression, that fidelity is old-fashioned, and that satisfaction of personal desire is the highest expression of authenticity. Such ideas may be presented through comedy, romance, or serious drama, but the underlying message remains contrary to Scripture. This

does not authorize Christians to mock, mistreat, or despise people whose conduct they believe is sinful. The believer must speak truth with charity. Nevertheless, charity toward people does not require approval of every action. A compassionate Christian can love the sinner without purchasing a ticket to celebrate the sin.

4. Revenge With a Soundtrack: When Vengeance Dresses Like Justice

Revenge is another favorite instrument of cinematic moral confusion. A character suffers a terrible wrong, loses someone dear, or witnesses an outrageous injustice. The audience is properly disturbed by the wickedness that occurred. Then the storyline begins preparing viewers to celebrate an increasingly brutal retaliation. The hero becomes judge, jury, and executioner, while every act of cruelty is justified by the original injury. The more painful the punishment, the more satisfying the conclusion is supposed to become. Yet Romans 12:19 declares, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Paul does not deny that wickedness deserves judgment. He denies the Christian's supposed right to surrender himself to personal vengeance. There is a considerable difference between seeking lawful justice and cultivating delight in retaliation. Hollywood can spend two hours convincing the audience that revenge is a sacred duty, but it still cannot erase one sentence written by the apostle.

This distinction must be handled carefully because Scripture recognizes legitimate civil authority and the punishment of wrongdoing. Romans 13:1–4 establishes the responsibility of governing powers and describes the civil ruler as one who does not bear the sword in vain. The Christian is not required to pretend that murderers should escape justice or that victims must abandon lawful protection. Nor does Romans 12 forbid self-defense in every circumstance. The passage addresses personal vengeance, hatred, and the believer's responsibility not to repay evil for evil. Entertainment frequently confuses these distinctions by making private retaliation appear morally superior to justice itself. A character's suffering becomes permission for whatever violence follows. Cruelty receives applause because its victim previously committed cruelty. The audience is taught to enjoy brutality as long as the supposedly righteous character performs it. But two wrongs do not become righteousness because a director places them in chronological order. God has never taught that the first villain's wickedness converts the second villain's wickedness into holiness.

Proverbs 24:17 warns, “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.” The verse does not require delight in evil or forbid satisfaction when justice protects the innocent. It warns against a corrupt heart taking malicious pleasure in another person's downfall. That warning reaches beyond the courtroom and into the entertainment a Christian willingly enjoys. Why does a scene of suffering

sometimes become the audience's favorite moment? Why must the villain experience increasingly imaginative cruelty before the story feels complete? Why does righteous indignation so easily become amusement at pain? A film may legitimately portray the consequences of wickedness or the necessity of stopping a dangerous offender. The moral concern arises when cruelty itself becomes the attraction. The Christian's conscience should not require a villain with a halo before recognizing that taking pleasure in suffering is spiritually dangerous. If the only thing separating a fictional hero from the villain is that the hero commits his violence during the final twenty minutes, the moral difference may be considerably smaller than the advertising promised.

5. The Religious Fool: When Hollywood Makes Faith the Villain

Another familiar device involves portraying religious conviction through characters designed to inspire contempt. The Bible-believing father becomes an unreasonable tyrant. The preacher becomes a hypocrite whose secret wickedness supposedly exposes the fraudulence of Christianity. The Christian student becomes an ignorant embarrassment, incapable of understanding ordinary human experience. The person defending biblical standards is portrayed as cruel, while the character rejecting those standards receives wisdom, compassion, and emotional depth. Such portrayals can communicate a powerful message without presenting a single sustained argument against Scripture. If the audience has been taught to despise the representative of biblical convictions, those convictions can be dismissed without examination. It is much easier to make a Christian character ridiculous than to answer the Scriptures he supposedly believes. A screenwriter can give the believer every foolish line in the script and then proudly announce that biblical faith has lost the debate. That is rather like choosing both contestants, tying one man's shoelaces together, and congratulating yourself when he falls.

Yet Christians must not respond by pretending that religious hypocrisy does not exist. The Bible exposes corrupt priests, false prophets, dishonest religious leaders, and men who use spiritual authority for personal advantage. In Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus Christ delivered severe rebukes against the scribes and Pharisees for hypocrisy, outward religious display, and neglect of weightier matters. In verse 27, He compared them to “whited sepulchres,” beautiful outwardly but inwardly full of corruption. Jeremiah 23 likewise condemns false prophets whose wickedness harmed God's people. Scripture is not afraid to expose religious fraud. Therefore, a film portraying a corrupt minister is not automatically attacking biblical Christianity. The important question is whether it truthfully condemns hypocrisy or dishonestly suggests that sincere faith itself is foolish and wicked. A story exposing a preacher who steals money may communicate a righteous moral judgment. A story implying that everyone who believes the Bible is secretly dishonest promotes an

entirely different conclusion. The first confronts sin. The second attempts to discredit truth through caricature.

First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Verse 22 continues, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” The passage calls for discernment rather than gullibility. Christians should therefore refuse both the worldly assumption that every religious person is a hypocrite and the equally foolish assumption that anyone carrying a Bible must be trustworthy. A corrupt preacher is not evidence against the truth of Scripture any more than a dishonest mathematics teacher proves arithmetic false. The teacher may be a scoundrel while the multiplication table remains perfectly sound. The hypocrisy of a professing Christian deserves condemnation when established by evidence, but it does not alter the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nor does it change the authority of God's written word. Entertainment that uses religious corruption to expose genuine wrongdoing may serve a legitimate purpose. Entertainment that uses a collection of carefully manufactured fools to teach contempt for biblical righteousness deserves serious scrutiny. The Christian should examine the argument, not merely laugh when somebody places spectacles and a Bible on the designated villain.

6. The Reprobate Mind: When Pleasure Replaces the Knowledge of God

Romans 1:28 declares, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” The surrounding passage describes the rejection of God's revelation, the corruption of worship, the exchange of truth for falsehood, and the resulting manifestations of human wickedness. Paul is establishing the guilt of mankind before God, preparing the foundation for the gospel expounded throughout Romans. The passage must not be reduced to a convenient insult against particular entertainers or audiences. A reprobate mind is not a label that Christians should casually attach to every person who disagrees with their entertainment choices. Nevertheless, Romans 1 describes a genuine moral disorder: people reject God's truth and increasingly embrace conduct contrary to His righteousness. The passage reveals that moral corruption is not confined to outward actions. It involves the mind's judgment concerning good and evil. When a society begins celebrating the very conduct Scripture condemns, Christians should recognize something more serious than a disagreement about artistic preference.

Romans 1:29–31 lists unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, deceit, pride, disobedience to parents, and other manifestations of corruption. Then verse 32 delivers an especially searching conclusion: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” Notice the final

expression. The passage does not stop with personally committing wickedness. It also exposes the approval of wickedness practiced by others. This does not mean that watching a fictional character commit an evil act automatically makes the viewer equally guilty of that act. Such reasoning would be careless and would confuse observation with participation. But the passage certainly raises a question about deliberately taking pleasure in the celebration of what God condemns. There is a difference between witnessing a representation of wickedness and finding delight in wickedness itself. The Christian should be particularly concerned when he discovers that the sinful conduct has become the very reason he enjoys the entertainment. He has stopped observing the problem and begun purchasing admission to its applause.

Colossians 2:8 provides another warning: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Paul's immediate concern involves false teaching threatening believers in Colossae, particularly deceptive philosophies and religious systems contrary to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Verse 9 declares that in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and verse 10 reminds believers, “And ye are complete in him.” The passage is not specifically about cinema, but its warning against worldly philosophies contrary to Christ provides a legitimate principle for evaluating the ideas entertainment communicates. Movies frequently advance assumptions about human nature, moral authority, marriage, identity, freedom, happiness, and the meaning of life. Those assumptions deserve examination. A philosophy does not become harmless because nobody writes it on a blackboard. It can arrive through a romantic conversation, a heroic speech, or a beautifully photographed conclusion. A false doctrine wearing a tuxedo is still a false doctrine. The Christian's responsibility is to recognize the message beneath the performance.

7. The Renewed Mind: When the Bible Judges the Screen Instead of the Screen Judging the Bible

Philippians 4:8 declares, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Paul addresses saved people, calling their attention to the proper direction of Christian thought. The verse is not a command to ignore every unpleasant historical fact, refuse every serious tragedy, or pretend that wickedness does not exist. Scripture itself reveals the terrible realities of human sin because understanding truth sometimes requires confronting evil. The command concerns the things believers should esteem, cultivate, and deliberately occupy their minds with. That distinction is

essential when evaluating entertainment. A serious film exposing the consequences of wickedness may be morally different from a frivolous production glorifying the same conduct. The Christian should not merely count offensive words and declare the matter settled. He should examine the moral direction of the entire work. What is being praised? What is being condemned? What does the story invite the audience to admire?

Romans 12:2 supplies the governing principle: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Paul is addressing believers whose salvation rests entirely upon God's mercy and grace. The instruction does not establish a new system of salvation by avoiding objectionable films. It concerns the believer's daily walk and the surrender of his life to God. The world continually attempts to establish its own standards, and Christians must refuse to allow those standards to govern their thinking. The renewing of the mind requires exposure to God's truth, submission to His authority, and willingness to reject conclusions contrary to Scripture. A believer cannot expect biblical discernment to flourish while consistently allowing worldly entertainment to provide most of his moral instruction. A man who reads three verses before bedtime and spends the entire evening absorbing a contrary philosophy should not be surprised when worldly reasoning comes more naturally than biblical judgment. The problem is not that Hollywood has greater authority. The problem is that the Christian may have given it greater attention.

Practical discernment therefore requires more than consulting a movie rating or reading a promotional description. Ratings may help identify certain content, but they cannot determine whether a production glorifies rebellion, mocks righteousness, or advances ideas contrary to biblical doctrine. A film can avoid explicit profanity while communicating a thoroughly corrupt philosophy. Another may portray serious wrongdoing in a manner that exposes its consequences rather than praising it. Christians should consider the content, message, treatment of wickedness, and influence upon their consciences. Parents should take responsibility for what their children watch, remembering that age-appropriate entertainment is not necessarily spiritually profitable entertainment. Believers should also recognize the difference between scriptural commandments and personal standards developed through individual judgment. Romans 14 warns against despising or improperly judging brethren in matters of conscience, while never authorizing Christians to approve explicit sin. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Permission is not the highest standard of Christian conduct. Profitability before God matters too.

Conclusion: When the Credits Roll, the Lesson Remains

Hollywood is capable of producing impressive visual effects, memorable performances, compelling historical stories, and legitimate entertainment. Christians need not pretend otherwise. Artistic ability is real, and a well-told story can communicate truth, expose injustice, illustrate courage, or remind audiences of the terrible consequences of human wickedness. The problem arises when artistic excellence becomes a substitute for moral judgment. A beautifully produced film can communicate a destructive philosophy just as effectively as an unattractive one. A talented actor can make a wicked character sympathetic without making his conduct righteous. An emotional conclusion can persuade the audience to celebrate something Scripture condemns. None of these things should surprise anyone who understands human nature. The flesh has always preferred its own desires to the commandments of God. Modern entertainment merely possesses more sophisticated machinery for presenting those desires attractively. The devil does not need to invent new sins when he can persuade people to applaud the old ones. Changing the costumes, scenery, and soundtrack does not change the moral character of the action being celebrated.

The Christian's responsibility is not to establish a new collection of man-made commandments and declare salvation dependent upon obedience to them. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23 makes that plain, and Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. The believer's eternal security rests upon Christ's finished work, not upon maintaining a flawless entertainment history. Nevertheless, the same grace that saves believers also teaches them to live godly lives. Titus 2:11–12 declares, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Grace is not permission to admire wickedness. Christian liberty is not an invitation to surrender the conscience. A believer may possess the liberty to enjoy legitimate recreation without possessing the wisdom to recognize when recreation has become an instructor in rebellion. The Christian who defends every questionable pleasure by shouting about liberty may eventually discover that he has been defending the very thing that has gained power over him.

Isaiah's warning remains as direct today as when the prophet delivered it to Judah: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” The LORD has never surrendered His authority to determine righteousness. Hollywood cannot vote adultery into virtue, transform revenge into holiness, or make contempt for biblical truth an evidence of superior wisdom. A film may invite the audience to sympathize with a sinner, but sympathy does not require approval. It may expose religious hypocrisy, but hypocrisy does not disprove Scripture. It may portray human suffering, but suffering does not automatically sanctify every choice

made in response. The Christian should be capable of recognizing artistic skill while rejecting false doctrine, understanding a character's circumstances while condemning sinful conduct, and appreciating legitimate storytelling without surrendering the authority of the written word. When the theater empties and the screen goes dark, the moral lessons do not necessarily disappear with the credits. They remain wherever the audience has welcomed them. **A movie does not have to persuade you to renounce the Bible if it can persuade you to applaud everything the Bible condemns. The most dangerous villain is not always the one committing wickedness on the screen. Sometimes it is the false moral judgment the audience carries home after the hero takes his bow.**

3 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — The Soundtrack of a Compromised Heart: When Music Preaches What the Bible Condemns

Key Passage: Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) — "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

There is something remarkably strange about a Christian who would never permit a preacher to stand behind his pulpit and encourage fornication, drunkenness, adultery, drug abuse, blasphemy, or rebellion against God, yet will happily pay a musician to deliver those very messages through his automobile speakers. Put the wickedness into a sermon, and he recognizes it immediately. Put the same wickedness into a catchy song, add a talented vocalist, a memorable melody, and a rhythm that makes his foot move, and suddenly he wants to discuss artistic expression. Apparently, sin becomes less objectionable when somebody remembers to bring the drums. The Bible never established that arrangement. God did not prohibit filthy communication on Sunday morning and authorize it on Friday evening because the offender had a recording contract. Words carry meaning. Messages communicate ideas. Repetition strengthens familiarity. And music possesses an extraordinary capacity to carry those words into the memory long after an ordinary conversation has been forgotten. The Christian who carefully guards what people say to him but never examines what he voluntarily sings along with has left a rather important entrance to his heart standing wide open.

Consider how easily music becomes attached to ordinary life. A person hears a song while driving, working, shopping, exercising, or preparing dinner. Years later, a familiar melody can bring back its words, associations, and memories with remarkable clarity. A man may struggle to remember what he ate last Tuesday, yet recall the lyrics of a song he heard forty years ago. That is not evidence of some mysterious supernatural power hiding inside every

musical composition. It is a familiar demonstration of how strongly music can be connected with memory and repeated experience. The question is what the Christian has chosen to preserve in that memory. Has he filled his mind with words that glorify God, encourage righteousness, and communicate truth? Or has he spent years memorizing the advertisements of sin while complaining that he cannot remember Scripture? There is a peculiar contradiction in claiming that the Bible is too difficult to memorize while effortlessly remembering hundreds of songs celebrating conduct the Bible condemns. Evidently, the memory works quite well when the heart approves the material.

Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Solomon did not say to keep the heart occasionally, casually, or only when somebody from the church happened to be watching. He said to keep it “with all diligence.” The context includes the ears, eyes, mouth, and feet, demonstrating that the inward life and outward conduct are not separate kingdoms operating without relationship. Music enters primarily through hearing, but the message does not necessarily remain confined to the ears. It can become part of what a person thinks about, desires, repeats, and eventually treats as acceptable. That does not mean every song automatically changes someone's conduct or that every listener responds identically. It means the Christian has a responsibility to examine what he deliberately receives. The issue is not whether music is pleasant, skillfully performed, emotionally moving, or popular. The issue is whether its message agrees with the word of God. **A beautiful melody can carry a filthy message just as easily as a beautiful envelope can carry a threatening letter. The wrapping does not sanctify the contents.**

1. Keep Thy Heart: The Ear Is Not an Unrestricted Entrance

Proverbs chapter 4 belongs to the wisdom instruction Solomon gives concerning the pursuit of understanding, the rejection of wickedness, and the preservation of a righteous course. Verse 20 declares, “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.” Verse 21 continues, “Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.” Then comes the command to guard the heart, followed by warnings concerning a froward mouth, wandering eyes, and feet turning toward evil. The original setting concerns instruction within Israel's scriptural history, not a direct commandment concerning modern musical technology. Nevertheless, the wisdom is plain and its practical application legitimate. The ear receives instruction. The heart retains what is welcomed. The mouth expresses what has been cultivated. The feet follow the direction a person chooses. A Christian cannot reasonably insist that these things are unrelated merely because the instruction happens to arrive through entertainment instead of an ordinary conversation.

The Bible recognizes the importance of what enters a person's life long before modern technology made constant musical exposure possible.

Notice that Solomon did not place the responsibility upon the wicked world to become righteous before his son exercised judgment. He commanded his son to keep his own heart. That distinction matters. A Christian cannot control every song produced, every advertisement broadcast, every sound played in a public establishment, or every musical preference expressed by another person. He can, however, exercise substantial control over what he deliberately purchases, downloads, streams, plays repeatedly, and introduces into his home. There is a difference between hearing an objectionable song while standing in a grocery store and intentionally making it the soundtrack of one's daily life. The first may be an unavoidable encounter with the world. The second is a voluntary decision. Christians sometimes speak as though exercising personal judgment over entertainment requires heroic sacrifice. Most of the time, it requires no more courage than refusing to press the play button. If a song repeatedly celebrates wickedness, the believer does not need a special revelation from heaven before deciding that another selection would be wiser.

Proverbs 4:26 commands, “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” The word “ponder” calls for deliberate consideration rather than careless surrender to whatever happens to be convenient or enjoyable. Apply that instruction to music. What is the song saying? What conduct does it celebrate? What attitude does it encourage? What kind of person is presented as admirable? Does it glorify immorality, encourage bitterness, romanticize drunkenness, or treat the name of God with contempt? A song's popularity cannot answer those questions. Neither can the reputation of the performer, the beauty of the arrangement, or the excitement of a live audience. The Christian should also recognize that encountering an unpleasant subject in a song is not identical to approving that subject. Scripture itself contains songs of sorrow, judgment, suffering, and national tragedy. The moral question concerns what the composition communicates about those realities. The heart must be guarded with intelligence, not merely with suspicion. Biblical discernment examines the message rather than inventing guilt by association.

2. The New Song: What God Intended Music to Accomplish

Psalm 40:3 declares, “And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” David begins the psalm by describing his patient waiting upon the LORD and God's gracious deliverance. The LORD heard his cry, brought him out of a horrible pit and miry clay, established his feet upon a rock, and ordered his goings. The new song follows that deliverance. It is the expression of a man praising God for what the LORD has accomplished, not an advertisement for human

rebellion. The immediate passage concerns David's testimony and God's dealings with him, and Christians should not pretend that every mention of a new song establishes a technical rule concerning musical style. The principle, however, is unmistakable. Music can communicate gratitude, declare divine truth, and direct attention toward the LORD. It can become an instrument through which God's goodness is remembered and His mighty works are proclaimed.

The Scriptures demonstrate that music has served many legitimate purposes. Exodus 15 records Moses and the children of Israel singing after the LORD delivered them through the Red Sea and overthrew Pharaoh's forces. Their song declares, “The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation” (Exodus 15:2). The historical subject is Israel's deliverance from Egypt, not the Church's salvation through Christ's finished work, and those settings must not be confused. Nevertheless, the passage shows music being used to rehearse the works of God. The Psalms contain praise, prayer, instruction, thanksgiving, lamentation, and warnings concerning wickedness. Some compositions celebrate victory; others express grief and desperate dependence upon the LORD. The Bible does not reduce acceptable music to one emotional mood or a single musical arrangement. Scripture recognizes music as a means of expressing truth across many circumstances. The question is not whether a song sounds cheerful enough to satisfy someone's religious expectations. The question is whether its words and purpose can stand examination under God's revelation.

Psalm 40:3 adds that others shall see the testimony expressed through praise, “and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” The song directs attention beyond the singer toward God. That provides a striking contrast with music whose central message is the exaltation of human lust, vanity, wealth, vengeance, or rebellion. The world frequently presents the performer as the center of devotion and personal desire as the highest authority. Biblical praise directs the listener toward the LORD and His works. This does not mean every acceptable song must contain an explicit reference to God. A wholesome song about family, history, faithful love, honest labor, or the beauties of creation is not automatically wicked because it lacks a Bible verse. Neither is every composition containing religious vocabulary automatically sound. A man can sing the word “hallelujah” repeatedly while communicating almost nothing about the God he claims to praise. **The presence of religious language does not guarantee truth, and the absence of religious language does not automatically establish sin. Scripture requires better judgment than counting sacred vocabulary.**

3. The Lyrics on Trial: When Sin Becomes the Chorus

Consider the ordinary subjects promoted in a considerable portion of popular entertainment. Sexual immorality is presented as excitement. Drunkenness becomes the foundation of a successful evening. Drug abuse is romanticized as freedom or escape. Covetousness becomes ambition, pride becomes self-confidence, and revenge becomes personal strength. A song celebrating fornication may spend three minutes describing conduct condemned in First Thessalonians 4:3, which declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” Another may turn adultery into a romantic adventure despite Hebrews 13:4 declaring, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” The singer may never explicitly announce rebellion against Scripture. He simply makes forbidden conduct attractive and invites the listener to enjoy the presentation. Christians who recognize these sins in ordinary life should not suddenly lose the ability to recognize them when they become the subjects of memorable songs.

Ephesians 4:29 commands, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Colossians 3:8 likewise commands believers to put away “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” These passages concern the conduct of saved people, not a method of earning eternal life. Nevertheless, the instructions are direct. Christians are not supposed to cultivate filthy communication as part of their manner of life. Now consider the contradiction when believers condemn profanity in conversation but enthusiastically repeat the same corrupt language through music. The melody does not change the nature of the words. The rhythm does not place the vocabulary outside biblical examination. James 3:10 declares, “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” A Christian who blesses God in church and spends the journey home singing corrupt words should at least recognize that something in his conduct deserves examination. The Lord's commandments do not stop functioning when the radio begins playing.

Yet careful judgment requires distinguishing between a song portraying wickedness and a song promoting wickedness. A composition describing the tragedy of alcoholism is not morally identical to one encouraging drunkenness. A serious song concerning marital betrayal may expose the suffering adultery causes rather than glorify the betrayal. A historical ballad may recount violence without celebrating cruelty. Likewise, love songs are not inherently sinful, and expressing affection between a man and woman is not automatically an invitation to immorality. The Song of Solomon provides abundant evidence that Scripture recognizes romantic affection without treating every expression of love as wickedness. The question concerns moral direction. Is the song describing sin truthfully, warning against it, lamenting its consequences, or encouraging the listener to

celebrate it? Does the language merely identify something evil, or does it invite approval and participation? These distinctions prevent biblical discernment from degenerating into indiscriminate suspicion. **The Christian is not required to condemn every song describing a sinner. He is required to refuse the notion that sin becomes righteous when the singer makes it sound attractive.**

4. The Melody That Masters the Man: Pleasure, Bondage, and Misplaced Affections

First Corinthians 6:12 declares, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Paul is addressing the Corinthians concerning Christian liberty, the proper use of the body, and serious matters involving fornication. His statement cannot be twisted into permission for believers to commit sins explicitly forbidden elsewhere in Scripture. Nevertheless, the distinction between lawful conduct and profitable conduct is important. Music can become a form of misplaced devotion even when the individual compositions are not inherently wicked. A person can spend enormous amounts of time following performers, purchasing merchandise, attending concerts, defending celebrities, and organizing his daily life around entertainment. The issue is not whether attending a concert is automatically sinful. The issue is whether recreation has become a master. When a Christian cannot tolerate the suggestion that his musical habits might need correction, the intensity of his resistance deserves examination.

Scripture warns against misplaced affections because the human heart is capable of promoting created things into positions of authority they were never intended to occupy. First John 5:21 concludes, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." Paul commands believers in Colossians 3:2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." These instructions do not mean that Christians must despise every earthly pleasure or refuse all legitimate artistic enjoyment. They warn against devotion that competes with one's allegiance to God. Celebrity culture can transform musical performers into objects of extraordinary admiration, with fans defending their conduct, imitating their appearance, adopting their opinions, and excusing behavior they would condemn in ordinary people. Talent is real, but talent is not righteousness. A gifted singer may possess remarkable ability while promoting ideas contrary to Scripture. The ability to hold a note does not confer authority to redefine holiness. God has never appointed recording artists as a new class of apostles merely because they can fill an arena.

The home provides another important test. Parents may spend years teaching their children modesty, sobriety, respect for marriage, obedience, and reverence for God, only to supply entertainment that repeatedly celebrates the opposite. Children notice those contradictions. They learn not merely from formal instruction but also from the priorities

and habits demonstrated by adults. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 instructed Israelite parents to teach God's commandments diligently in daily household life. That covenant setting must be respected, but Ephesians 6:4 plainly commands Christian fathers to bring their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Parents should therefore consider the music that becomes familiar within the home. This does not require treating children as incapable of judgment or declaring that every song from outside religious circles is dangerous. It requires consistency. A father who forbids profanity at the dinner table should not make profanity the entertainment during the family drive. **Children can recognize a double standard long before they can explain one. A household cannot continually sing the praises of wickedness and expect its biblical instruction to remain unchallenged.**

5. Instruments, Rhythms, and Religious Rulebooks: What Scripture Actually Condemns

There is another danger that must be addressed because some Christians, having correctly recognized corrupt lyrics, proceed to condemn entire categories of music without sufficient biblical authority. Scripture does not establish that every particular rhythm, tempo, instrument, or modern musical genre is inherently sinful. Such claims require more than personal dislike, cultural association, or a preacher's certainty. Psalm 150:3–5 commands praise with the trumpet, psaltery, harp, timbrel, stringed instruments, organs, and cymbals, including “loud cymbals” and “high sounding cymbals.” The psalm belongs within Israel's inspired collection of praise and does not function as a detailed prescription for every Church-age worship service. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that Scripture recognizes considerable instrumental variety. David played the harp. Israel used trumpets. Other instruments accompanied praise. The Bible does not teach that holiness can be measured by how quietly an instrument is played or whether the listener happens to prefer its sound.

Musical style can carry cultural associations, and particular arrangements, performances, and settings may contribute to the message being communicated. It would be foolish to pretend those considerations never matter. But it is equally foolish to declare an instrument wicked merely because someone has used it in wicked entertainment. A piano can accompany an excellent hymn or a filthy song. A guitar can provide accompaniment for sincere praise or an invitation to drunkenness. A drum can mark a rhythm without somehow acquiring a personal moral character. Instruments do not possess regenerated hearts or depraved souls. They are objects used by people. The moral questions concern what is being communicated, the setting, the conduct involved, and whether the presentation encourages what God condemns. Some believers have constructed elaborate

systems in which certain musical sounds supposedly communicate righteousness while others automatically invite corruption. Such claims should be tested against Scripture rather than accepted because they sound suitably severe. A prohibition does not become biblical merely because somebody delivers it with a red face and a loud voice.

Romans 14 provides essential instruction concerning matters of conscience and the danger of improperly judging brethren over disputable practices. Paul addresses believers who differed concerning food and the esteem of particular days, commanding them not to despise or condemn one another over matters in which God had not established the same universal prohibition. The passage does not make explicit sins negotiable. Fornication remains fornication, blasphemy remains blasphemy, and filthy communication does not become acceptable through an appeal to personal liberty. Nevertheless, the Christian must distinguish clear biblical commandments from personal standards adopted through prudence, background, experience, or conscience. One believer may avoid a musical style because its associations trouble him. Another may hear an entirely different association and find no moral problem with the arrangement itself. Neither has the authority to add commandments to Scripture. **The Bible is sharp enough without Christians attempting to improve its edge by attaching their own inventions.** Strong convictions are valuable when governed by truth. They become dangerous when personal taste is promoted into divine revelation.

6. Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: When the Church Forgets Why It Sings

Ephesians 5:18–19 commands, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” The contrast is unmistakable. Paul sets drunkenness against being filled with the Spirit, then describes conduct associated with spiritual life. Music appears as part of the believer's expression of worship, fellowship, and devotion to God. The passage is addressed to Christians and belongs to practical instruction concerning their walk. It is not a requirement for obtaining salvation, which remains entirely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that the apostle identifies the direction and character of the singing. Believers are to speak to themselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in their hearts “to the Lord.” Christian singing is therefore not merely a performance designed to excite an audience. It should communicate spiritual truth and direct the affections toward God.

Colossians 3:16 provides an even more detailed explanation: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Notice the order and substance. The word of Christ is to dwell richly within believers. The singing is connected

with teaching and admonishing one another. That establishes a standard frequently neglected when musical presentation becomes more important than scriptural content. A congregation may sing an emotionally powerful composition containing almost no recognizable biblical instruction. The arrangement may be impressive, the singers talented, the lighting dramatic, and the audience deeply moved. Yet emotion alone does not establish doctrinal soundness. A person can experience strong feelings while hearing something foolish, false, or spiritually empty. The real questions are whether the words communicate truth, whether they agree with Scripture, and whether they direct attention toward the Lord Jesus Christ. **A church service does not become more spiritual because the musicians successfully manufacture goosebumps. The Holy Ghost has never needed a lighting technician to establish the authority of God's word.**

Contemporary Christian music deserves the same honest examination as traditional hymns, without indiscriminate condemnation or automatic endorsement. Some newer compositions communicate sound biblical doctrine, exalt Jesus Christ, and provide useful material for personal and congregational singing. Others offer vague religious sentiments, repeated emotional phrases, questionable theology, or language that directs attention toward personal experience while saying little about the Scriptures. Older hymns should also be examined rather than treated as incapable of error merely because they were written generations ago. Age does not establish inspiration. Popularity does not establish sound doctrine. The test is truth. First Corinthians 14:15 declares, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” Paul was addressing orderly spiritual activity within the Corinthian assembly, but his emphasis upon understanding plainly warns against thoughtless religious expression. Christians should know what they are singing and why they are singing it. A song that misrepresents salvation, confuses Israel and the Church, promotes works as the means of receiving eternal life, or contradicts biblical doctrine deserves correction regardless of the composer's reputation. The tune may be excellent while the teaching remains wrong.

7. Singing With Understanding: Putting the Word of God Back in Charge

Philippians 4:8 declares, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Paul does not command believers to pretend that wickedness does not exist or to avoid every serious subject involving suffering, sorrow, or human failure. The same apostle wrote extensively concerning sin, persecution, false doctrine, judgment, and the sufferings of Christ. His command concerns the proper direction of Christian thought. The believer should deliberately cultivate truth,

righteousness, purity, virtue, and things worthy of praise. Applied to music, that instruction raises searching questions. Does the song encourage wholesome thought or cultivate corrupt desire? Does it communicate honest reflection or glorify deception? Does it preserve appropriate affections or promote covetousness, bitterness, vengeance, and rebellion? The Christian should not be satisfied merely because a particular song lacks explicit profanity. The message deserves examination as carefully as the vocabulary.

There is a practical difference between hearing a song and allowing it to become part of one's regular thought life. Streaming services, personal playlists, radios, and mobile devices make music available almost continuously. That convenience is not itself wicked. Music can accompany productive labor, provide lawful enjoyment, strengthen remembrance, encourage families, and serve genuine Christian worship. But constant availability also makes careless listening remarkably easy. A man may continue playing a song simply because the next selection begins automatically, without considering whether its message deserves his attention. The Christian should occasionally examine his listening habits rather than allowing convenience to make every decision. Consider the songs played most frequently, the words repeatedly memorized, and the attitudes they encourage. If some selections openly celebrate sin, remove them. If others communicate questionable teaching, examine them. If an otherwise lawful pleasure consumes time and attention that should be given to greater responsibilities, exercise restraint. Biblical wisdom does not require an elaborate committee meeting every time a song begins. Sometimes a little thought and a functioning stop button will accomplish wonders.

The local church should likewise consider what its music communicates. Congregational singing is not supposed to become a contest for the most impressive performance or an opportunity for musicians to demonstrate their superiority over ordinary worshippers. Colossians 3:16 emphasizes teaching, admonishing, and singing with grace in the heart. Ephesians 5:20 continues with thanksgiving “always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The purpose is spiritual, doctrinal, and directed toward God. Musicians should serve that purpose rather than replace it with entertainment. Congregations should sing with understanding rather than merely admire talented performers. Families should encourage music that strengthens righteous affections, and individual believers should remember that their private listening habits also belong under the authority of Christ. First Corinthians 10:31 declares, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Music is certainly included within “whatsoever ye do.” The Christian is not required to turn every song into a sermon, but neither may he declare that his musical choices are beyond the reach of biblical instruction.

Conclusion: The Song Ends, but the Message Remains

Music is one of the remarkable gifts available to mankind, capable of expressing joy, sorrow, gratitude, affection, solemn remembrance, and praise. Scripture does not condemn that gift. It demonstrates its legitimate use throughout the historical record and provides direct instruction concerning singing among believers. The problem arises when Christians allow the pleasure of music to silence their judgment concerning its message. A song glorifying adultery remains morally objectionable even when performed with extraordinary talent. A composition encouraging drunkenness does not become wholesome because the audience knows every word. A performer who blasphemes God does not become a trustworthy moral instructor because millions admire his voice. Yet the opposite error must also be rejected. Not every secular composition is wicked, not every modern musical arrangement is corrupt, and not every song addressing human sorrow or failure is encouraging sin. The Bible requires honest discernment rather than religious superstition. **A musical instrument is not a devil, a melody is not a doctrine, and a singer's talent is not a substitute for righteousness. What matters is whether the message being communicated can stand before the authority of God's word.**

The Christian's salvation does not depend upon his musical preferences, the contents of his playlists, or his ability to maintain a flawless record of acceptable entertainment. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. The believer's security rests upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, not upon successfully avoiding every questionable song. Nevertheless, grace does not make holiness irrelevant. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That instruction reaches into ordinary decisions, including recreation. Christians should not confuse conviction with salvation or personal taste with biblical commandment. But neither should they use Christian liberty as a convenient shelter for whatever the flesh desires to enjoy. It is possible to be eternally secure in Christ while making foolish decisions concerning entertainment. It is possible to possess legitimate liberty while exercising remarkably poor judgment. The Christian should seek conduct that honors the Saviour who redeemed him, not merely search for technical arguments permitting whatever he already wants.

Proverbs 4:23 brings the matter to its proper conclusion: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The heart must be guarded because its affections, thoughts, desires, and decisions influence the course of life. Music deserves examination precisely because it can communicate so effectively, remain so familiar, and accompany people through so many ordinary circumstances. The question is not whether Christians

should enjoy music. The question is whether they will exercise biblical judgment concerning what they enjoy. A believer should be able to recognize wickedness even when somebody has given it a beautiful arrangement. He should be able to appreciate musical ability without adopting the performer's philosophy. He should be capable of singing hymns with understanding, enjoying wholesome compositions without unnecessary guilt, and rejecting songs that openly celebrate rebellion against God. And he should never permit the pleasure of a melody to become an excuse for disregarding the truth of Scripture. **If you would not tolerate a preacher encouraging fornication, blasphemy, drunkenness, or rebellion from the pulpit, why welcome the same sermon through your headphones merely because somebody added a chorus? The devil does not need to change the message when he can persuade Christians to sing along with it.**

4 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — One More Level, One More Hour: When Gaming Becomes a Master Instead of a Pastime

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 6:12 (KJV) — "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

There is something almost comical about a grown man who can command an imaginary army, conquer three kingdoms, defeat a digital dragon, build a virtual empire, and accumulate enough fictional gold to purchase half the countryside, yet cannot manage to take out the garbage without being reminded six times. He has mastered twenty-seven levels, memorized the weaknesses of imaginary enemies, developed extraordinary reflexes with a controller, and earned enough electronic trophies to decorate a digital mansion. Meanwhile, the real grass needs mowing, the electric bill needs paying, his wife would appreciate an uninterrupted conversation, and his Bible has been sitting exactly where he left it three weeks ago. Somewhere along the way, entertainment stopped being an occasional diversion and became the organizing principle of his life. The game did not physically chain him to the chair. It did something more convenient. It persuaded him to remain there voluntarily, congratulating him for accomplishments that disappear the moment somebody disconnects the electricity.

Video games are not automatically wicked because they involve electronics, competition, imagination, or recreation. Scripture does not condemn a man for enjoying a lawful pastime after completing his responsibilities. There is nothing inherently sinful about solving a puzzle, building a virtual structure, participating in a simulated sporting event, or enjoying an occasional contest with family and friends. Christians have always found ways

to enjoy recreation, whether through games, athletic contests, outdoor activities, or various forms of entertainment. The problem begins when recreation acquires authority over the individual who was supposed to govern it. A child who cannot stop playing without throwing a temper tantrum has a problem. A teenager who neglects schoolwork because his online team needs him has a problem. An adult who repeatedly sacrifices sleep, employment, marriage, parental duties, and spiritual responsibilities for another gaming session has a problem. The problem is not that the machine possesses supernatural authority. The problem is that the person holding the controller has stopped exercising the self-government Scripture requires.

The apostle Paul declared, “I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). That is a remarkably searching statement for a generation that prides itself upon freedom while constantly complaining that it cannot stop doing what it supposedly enjoys. The modern world has perfected the art of selling voluntary captivity and calling it entertainment. Games provide endless objectives, daily rewards, rankings, challenges, virtual possessions, and carefully arranged incentives to return tomorrow. There is always another level, another achievement, another opponent, another purchase, another opportunity to improve a score that ultimately carries no eternal significance. Some of these features can contribute to legitimate enjoyment. Others can encourage excessive attachment and irresponsible behavior. The Christian must therefore examine more than whether a particular game is permitted. He must ask whether he remains free to put it down. **When a man can conquer an imaginary kingdom but cannot govern his own appetites, the real battle is taking place outside the screen—and he is losing it.**

1. I Will Not Be Brought Under the Power of Any: When Liberty Becomes Bondage

First Corinthians 6:12 belongs to Paul's instruction concerning the believer's conduct, particularly the proper use of the body and the danger of fornication. The apostle is not announcing that every conceivable activity is morally acceptable. Verse 13 declares, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” Verse 19 reminds believers that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and verse 20 concludes, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” The doctrinal setting concerns Christians who belong to Jesus Christ, not lost men attempting to earn salvation through respectable behavior. Their redemption has already been accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's concern is how redeemed people ought to live. The declaration concerning liberty therefore comes with a qualification: not everything a man may lawfully enjoy is necessarily profitable, and nothing should be permitted to exercise improper mastery over him.

Notice the apostle's expression, “I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul did not say that he would avoid bondage unless the activity happened to be particularly enjoyable. He did not permit his favorite recreation to become an exception to the rule. He understood that lawful things can become destructive when they gain control over a person's conduct. Food is necessary, yet gluttony is sinful. Rest is beneficial, yet laziness is condemned. Money is useful, yet covetousness destroys judgment. Recreation is legitimate, yet excessive attachment can make a man neglect his obligations. The question is not merely whether the activity is lawful in itself. The question is whether the individual has surrendered his ability to regulate it. A gaming controller does not have to become an idol before its owner needs to exercise restraint. But when a person continually announces that he can quit whenever he chooses while refusing every opportunity to demonstrate that freedom, his declaration begins sounding suspiciously like a prisoner insisting that the bars are decorative.

First Corinthians 10:23 reinforces the principle: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” In that chapter Paul addresses Christian liberty, idolatrous associations, the conscience, and the responsibility to consider the spiritual welfare of others. The immediate concern differs from modern gaming, but the distinction between permission and edification remains applicable. A Christian should not stop at asking whether Scripture contains a verse specifically prohibiting a particular pastime. He should consider whether the activity is profitable, whether it interferes with greater duties, whether it encourages sinful conduct, and whether he can participate with a clear conscience. The Bible does not specifically mention video games because the apostles were not sitting around Corinth discussing electronic entertainment. Nevertheless, Scripture provides sufficient principles for governing the conduct of believers. **The absence of a verse naming your favorite pastime does not mean the pastime has been granted authority to rule your life. Christian liberty was never intended to become a respectable name for personal slavery.**

2. Redeeming the Time: The Hours That Never Come Back

Ephesians 5:15–16 commands, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Paul is addressing members of the Body of Christ concerning their practical Christian walk. The preceding verses contrast darkness and light, exposing the unfruitful works of darkness and commanding believers to walk as children of light. The apostle then turns attention toward wisdom and the responsible use of time. The expression “redeeming the time” is especially appropriate when considering entertainment designed to continue indefinitely. Time is not an inexhaustible resource. A lost hour does not return because someone offers a compelling

explanation for losing it. A man may recover misplaced money, repair broken equipment, or replace damaged property. He cannot purchase another yesterday. Every evening given to recreation is an evening that cannot simultaneously be given to another responsibility. That fact does not condemn recreation, but it certainly requires wisdom concerning its proper place.

Modern games frequently provide almost unlimited opportunities to continue playing. The older amusement might have ended when the board game was completed or the children were called inside for supper. Today's entertainment can supply new objectives without interruption. Complete one mission, and another becomes available. Defeat one opponent, and a stronger opponent appears. Earn one reward, and the next reward requires another hour. Some games introduce daily bonuses that encourage repeated participation, while others create competitive pressures to keep playing. None of these features automatically makes a game sinful. Yet they can become instruments through which an undisciplined person repeatedly sacrifices responsibilities. The Christian should recognize that an activity designed to retain his attention may not have his spiritual welfare among its priorities. The company producing the entertainment wants another hour of engagement. Your employer, spouse, children, and unfinished responsibilities may have rather different opinions about how that hour should be spent. One side earns revenue when you keep playing. The other side lives with the consequences.

The real question is what must be neglected to sustain the habit. A man who enjoys an occasional game after working faithfully and fulfilling his responsibilities is not necessarily violating Ephesians 5. A man who routinely ignores his family, neglects his work, refuses necessary rest, and abandons spiritual discipline because he cannot bear to stop playing is another matter entirely. Proverbs 6:6 commands, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.” The ant accomplishes necessary work without requiring an audience, a trophy ceremony, or an electronic announcement celebrating every completed task. Modern entertainment frequently rewards imaginary diligence while real diligence is postponed. A player may labor for hours constructing a fictional building while refusing to repair the broken things in his actual house. He may manage a virtual business with extraordinary care while showing little concern for his own employment. **The Lord did not give a man twenty-four hours in a day so he could spend eighteen of them pretending to accomplish what he refuses to undertake in real life.**

3. The City Without Walls: When Self-Control Surrenders to a Controller

Proverbs 25:28 declares, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” In the ancient world, a city without defensive walls was exposed to invasion and destruction. Its inhabitants possessed little protection against hostile

forces. Solomon uses that picture to describe the individual who cannot govern his own spirit. The historical setting belongs to Israel's wisdom literature, but the principle concerning self-government is plainly applicable to Christians. A person who cannot control his anger, desires, speech, appetites, or reactions is vulnerable to influences that a disciplined individual can resist. Gaming provides a practical illustration. The difficulty is not merely the amount of time spent playing. It may also be the inability to respond properly when interrupted, defeated, corrected, or required to stop. When entertainment produces uncontrolled anger, damaged property, profanity, or hostility toward family members, the issue has extended far beyond harmless recreation.

Consider the individual who becomes furious because his character loses an imaginary contest. He shouts at the television, curses another player, threatens strangers through a headset, or throws an expensive controller across the room. Then he explains that the game simply made him angry. That explanation deserves examination. The game provided the occasion, but the man remains responsible for his response. Ephesians 4:31 commands believers to put away “all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking.” James 1:20 declares, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Neither passage contains an exception for competitive entertainment. The Christian cannot excuse sinful conduct by explaining that somebody defeated him during a fictional battle. A man who claims that victory requires a certain amount of screaming may need to reconsider what kind of victory he is pursuing. The imaginary enemy did not conquer his character. His own uncontrolled temper accomplished that without assistance.

Self-government also appears when the player must stop. Can he respond promptly when his wife needs assistance? Can a child obey a parent's instruction without bargaining for another twenty minutes? Can a teenager complete school assignments before entering another online competition? Can an adult recognize that he needs sleep and actually turn off the system? These ordinary questions expose whether recreation remains under proper authority. First Corinthians 9:25 declares, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” Paul uses athletic discipline to illustrate the Christian's responsibility to exercise restraint in pursuing what matters. The ancient competitor accepted limitations to pursue a temporary crown. The believer should certainly exercise comparable discipline concerning eternal priorities. Modern gamers sometimes demonstrate impressive patience while mastering complicated systems, then insist that self-control is impossible when someone asks them to stop playing. Evidently, discipline is available when the reward is digital. The Christian must learn to exercise it when obedience, responsibility, and righteousness are at stake.

4. The Virtual Battlefield: When Fiction Makes Wickedness Entertaining

Another serious question concerns the moral content of particular games. Some provide harmless puzzles, simulated sports, educational challenges, or imaginative adventures without requiring participation in obviously corrupt conduct. Others make simulated criminal behavior, cruelty, sexual immorality, occult practices, or deliberate wickedness central to the experience. The Christian must distinguish between recognizing that fictional representation is not identical to real-world participation and pretending that fictional entertainment is therefore beyond moral examination. A player who defeats an imaginary opponent has not necessarily committed actual murder. A fictional representation of theft is not the same legal act as stealing another person's property. Nevertheless, the distinction between fiction and reality does not settle whether the entertainment encourages enjoyment of wickedness. Scripture addresses the desires, thoughts, and affections of the heart, not merely outward acts. Psalm 101:3 declares, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” That principle deserves examination when a game deliberately makes the celebration of cruelty or corruption its principal attraction.

Romans 1:32 condemns those who, knowing God's judgment, “not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” In its context, Paul describes humanity's rejection of God's revelation and the resulting corruption of moral judgment. The passage does not establish that every person observing a fictional transgression has personally committed the corresponding sin. Such an interpretation would confuse representation with participation and ignore the purpose of the narrative. The Bible itself records murders, wars, idolatry, and terrible human cruelty. But there is a difference between considering wickedness as part of a serious historical or fictional narrative and deliberately cultivating delight in wickedness itself. A game that accurately portrays warfare is not automatically equivalent to one designed to reward sadistic cruelty. A fictional conflict involving good and evil is not identical to entertainment requiring the player to celebrate evil as virtue. The question is what conduct receives approval and what affections the experience encourages.

Occult themes also require careful biblical judgment. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 forbids specific occult practices within Israel's covenant setting, including divination, enchantment, witchcraft, and consulting familiar spirits. Christians must not transplant Israel's national penalties into the Church Age, but Scripture's opposition to actual occult involvement is unmistakable. Galatians 5:19–21 includes witchcraft among the works of the flesh. Yet not every imaginary creature, fictional supernatural event, or fantasy setting constitutes participation in occult practice. A story depicting an invented world is not automatically the same as attempting to communicate with devils. Christians should

examine whether the entertainment merely employs fictional devices or actively encourages fascination with forbidden spiritual practices. The distinction matters because careless condemnation can become as unscriptural as careless approval. **The Bible does not require Christians to fear every imaginary dragon, but neither does it permit them to treat actual witchcraft as a harmless spiritual hobby.** Sound judgment examines the substance rather than surrendering either to superstition or worldly indifference.

5. Digital Crowns and Imaginary Kingdoms: When Achievement Becomes an Idol

Games frequently provide structured systems of progress that reward repeated effort. Players earn points, improve abilities, unlock equipment, build collections, acquire virtual possessions, and advance through rankings. These mechanisms are not inherently wicked. Human beings naturally enjoy developing skills, completing challenges, and observing progress. The concern arises when fictional accomplishments become more important than actual responsibilities or when the pursuit of increasingly meaningless rewards consumes disproportionate time and attention. Colossians 3:2 commands, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Paul addresses believers whose lives are identified with the risen Christ. His instruction does not require Christians to despise every earthly activity, but it does establish the superiority of heavenly priorities. A digital achievement may provide temporary satisfaction. It cannot replace faithful service, honest labor, righteous conduct, or spiritual fruit. The impressive trophy displayed on a gaming account will not answer for the hours a man neglected his responsibilities to obtain it.

There is a revealing contrast between imaginary achievement and actual faithfulness. A player may spend months acquiring virtual property, strengthening a fictional character, or improving a competitive ranking. Meanwhile, he may postpone necessary education, refuse professional development, ignore household maintenance, or neglect opportunities to serve others. Proverbs 22:29 asks, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” The verse commends genuine diligence in meaningful labor. It does not promise that every diligent worker will become wealthy, nor does it condemn recreation. But it exposes the folly of substituting simulated progress for actual responsibility. A young man who spends hours learning to operate complicated electronic equipment is plainly capable of sustained attention. That capacity should not disappear whenever he encounters mathematics, Scripture, employment, or practical duties. **If a man can memorize the geography of an imaginary kingdom, he can learn where the book of Habakkuk belongs in his Bible. The trouble is not always an inability to learn. Sometimes it is an unwillingness to care.**

The financial side deserves equal consideration. Some games encourage repeated purchases of digital equipment, cosmetic items, virtual currencies, subscriptions, or

opportunities to obtain uncertain rewards. Such purchases are not automatically sinful merely because the items are intangible. People legitimately spend money on recreation, and Christians should not invent a doctrine requiring every leisure expense to produce a physical object. Yet financial stewardship remains a biblical responsibility. First Timothy 5:8 warns against failing to provide for one's household, and Proverbs 21:20 commends the wise preservation of resources while condemning foolish consumption. A Christian who struggles to pay necessary bills while repeatedly purchasing virtual advantages has misplaced his priorities. Parents should also examine whether children are being encouraged to spend irresponsibly or become attached to systems built around endless acquisition. The ability to purchase another digital treasure does not establish that doing so is wise. **A virtual sword purchased with real money still comes out of a real bank account. The game may be imaginary, but the credit card statement is not.**

6. The Family on Hold: When the Screen Receives the Attention Others Need

Ephesians 5 and 6 provide extensive instruction concerning Christian relationships within marriage, family, and household responsibilities. Husbands are commanded to love their wives, wives are instructed concerning their relationship to their husbands, children are commanded to obey their parents in the Lord, and fathers are told not to provoke their children to wrath but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These instructions are not suspended during recreational hours. A husband who continually ignores his wife because he is occupied with online entertainment cannot excuse his neglect by appealing to the absence of a biblical prohibition against gaming. His responsibilities already exist. A father who is too occupied with electronic competition to instruct his children has allowed recreation to interfere with an explicit obligation. The issue is not whether a married man may enjoy an occasional game. The issue is whether he has made the game his regular companion while treating his family like an interruption.

The same principle applies to children and teenagers. Ephesians 6:1 declares, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” A young person does not escape that instruction because he is participating in an online match that cannot be paused. Parents should establish reasonable expectations and communicate them clearly, particularly when a game involves other participants who may be inconvenienced by an abrupt departure. But the final authority in the home does not belong to an anonymous online team. A child who repeatedly argues, deceives, or disobeys to continue gaming is revealing a problem of conduct that requires correction. Parents must also avoid hypocrisy. A father who spends every evening staring at his own entertainment while condemning his children's screen habits is demonstrating an unfortunate talent for detecting faults at a

distance of approximately three feet. Biblical instruction carries greater weight when parents practice the self-government they require from their children.

Gaming can also interfere with employment, sleep, and necessary service. Second Thessalonians 3:10 declares, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Paul addresses deliberate idleness among believers, not those genuinely unable to work. Nevertheless, the passage establishes that Christians should not cultivate irresponsible dependence while refusing available labor. Likewise, Colossians 3:23 commands, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” A Christian employee who remains awake playing until the early morning and repeatedly arrives exhausted, distracted, or late is not honoring that instruction. Nor should necessary sleep be treated as an inconvenient obstacle to amusement. Rest prepares a person to fulfill genuine responsibilities. The Christian's calling is not to demonstrate how many consecutive hours he can remain conscious while operating a game. **If entertainment leaves a man too tired to work, too distracted to serve, and too irritable to love his family, he has purchased amusement at the expense of obedience.**

7. Whatever Ye Do: Bringing Recreation Under the Lordship of Christ

Colossians 3:17 declares, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” The surrounding chapter concerns the believer's position in Christ and the practical conduct that should follow. Paul commands Christians to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying, while putting on mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness, and charity. These instructions belong to saved members of the Body of Christ and concern Christian living rather than the method of obtaining salvation. Verse 17 is remarkably comprehensive: “whatsoever ye do.” The apostle does not exclude employment, recreation, conversation, purchases, or leisure activities. The Christian should therefore examine whether his gaming habits can be maintained consistently with his profession of faith. The issue is not whether every fictional contest must become a religious ceremony. It is whether the believer's conduct remains subject to the Lord whose name he claims to honor.

This principle provides practical guidance without creating a new system of man-made commandments. Games containing objectionable material should be evaluated according to Scripture. Time limits may be necessary where responsibilities are regularly neglected. Parents should consider the age and maturity of their children rather than blindly relying upon commercial ratings. Online conversations should be governed by biblical standards concerning speech, honesty, and kindness. Ephesians 4:29 remains binding when a

Christian communicates through a microphone. Philippians 4:8 remains relevant when he chooses what to entertain in his thoughts. First Corinthians 6:12 remains relevant when he decides whether another hour is profitable. Some believers may wisely choose to avoid gaming entirely because of previous problems or particular convictions. Others may participate moderately without compromising their responsibilities. Neither circumstance authorizes inventing commandments that God has not given. Biblical liberty requires discernment, but genuine liberty also permits a man to refuse an activity without apologizing to everybody who enjoys it.

Parents should teach their children how to exercise judgment rather than merely establishing rules that disappear when supervision ends. Explain why some games are inappropriate, why responsibilities take precedence, why anger and profanity remain sinful during competition, and why imaginary rewards must not become the center of life. Adults should apply the same standards to themselves. A man who establishes an evening limit should honor it. A Christian who recognizes that a particular game provokes sinful anger should stop defending it and deal with the problem. A household that enjoys gaming together may find legitimate opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and recreation. The objective is not to make every enjoyable activity suspicious. It is to ensure that enjoyment remains under proper authority. Proverbs 16:32 declares, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” That is a striking comparison for the modern gamer. **God places greater value upon governing your own spirit than upon conquering a city. The virtual conqueror should remember that the real victory begins with himself.**

Conclusion: When the Game Is Over, What Have You Actually Won?

Video games are not the great moral exception to the ordinary principles of Christian conduct. They must be judged by the same Scriptures governing every other form of entertainment. A lawful pastime may provide refreshment, friendly competition, harmless amusement, and opportunities for family enjoyment. Yet the same activity can become destructive when a person allows it to consume excessive time, encourage corrupt affections, provoke sinful anger, undermine financial responsibility, or interfere with duties already established by the word of God. Scripture does not require Christians to condemn every game, and honesty demands acknowledging that fictional activity is not automatically equivalent to actual wrongdoing. Nevertheless, entertainment does not become spiritually neutral merely because its characters exist inside a computer. The thoughts a player cultivates, the attitudes he develops, the words he speaks, and the responsibilities he neglects are entirely real. The imaginary world may disappear when the

screen goes dark. The consequences of an undisciplined life remain when the electricity is switched off.

The believer's eternal salvation must never be confused with his success or failure in governing recreation. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” A Christian does not preserve eternal life by avoiding video games, establishing household time limits, or maintaining an impressive record of personal discipline. His salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, not upon his entertainment history. Nevertheless, the grace that saves also instructs believers concerning their conduct. Titus 2:11–12 declares that God's grace teaches Christians to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The Christian should therefore examine his gaming habits honestly. Does he remain capable of stopping? Are his responsibilities being fulfilled? Is his speech honoring Christ? Is his family receiving proper attention? Is his money being spent wisely? These questions do not establish salvation. They examine whether a saved man is walking wisely.

First Corinthians 6:12 supplies the final verdict: “I will not be brought under the power of any.” Those words should be remembered whenever recreation begins demanding what belongs to greater responsibilities. The Christian may enjoy a lawful game, but he should never allow the game to govern his schedule, control his emotions, consume his resources, or displace his obligations. The world may celebrate digital rankings, electronic trophies, imaginary possessions, and victories that vanish with the next software update. God calls His people to faithfulness in matters that extend beyond a screen. There are children who need instruction, marriages that require attention, responsibilities that demand diligence, Scriptures that deserve study, and opportunities to serve the Lord that will not remain available forever. Enjoy recreation within proper boundaries, but remember that the Christian life is not an endless competition for meaningless rewards. **A man may reach the highest level in a game and remain at the lowest level of responsibility in his own home. He may defeat every imaginary enemy while continually surrendering to his own appetites. The question is not merely whether you are playing the game. The question is whether the game has begun playing you.**

5 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — The Private Screen and the Public Ruin: Pornography, Secret Lust, and the Destruction of Purity

Key Passage: Job 31:1 (KJV) — “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”

There was a time when a man had to make a deliberate journey into some disreputable establishment to purchase the kind of filth that now arrives in his pocket before breakfast. Today, he can sit in the church pew on Sunday morning, sing about the holiness of God, shake the preacher's hand, and carry an entire library of sexual corruption home in the same device that contains his Bible application. The devil has certainly benefited from modern convenience. He no longer needs to advertise his merchandise on a dark street when he can deliver it through a brightly illuminated screen. The entertainment industry has discovered that lust can be packaged, distributed, and sold with remarkable efficiency, while the customer convinces himself that nobody is being hurt because nobody knows what he is doing. But secrecy has never been the same thing as innocence. The question is not whether the neighbors can see the screen. The question is whether the man watching it has forgotten that the God who created his eyes also knows the thoughts of his heart.

Pornography represents one of the most calculated forms of entertainment because its very purpose is to provoke and cultivate sexual desire outside the boundaries established by God. Unlike an ordinary story that may portray human temptation, moral failure, or the consequences of sexual sin, pornography deliberately makes sexual stimulation the principal attraction. It takes something God established within the honorable covenant of marriage, separates it from that covenant, and turns human bodies into merchandise for strangers. Then it calls the arrangement harmless entertainment. The customer is encouraged to believe that looking is not doing, that private desire has no moral significance, and that personal freedom includes the right to cultivate whatever appetite he pleases. Scripture destroys those excuses before the modern salesman can finish preparing his advertisement. Job made a covenant with his eyes. Jesus Christ addressed lust in the heart. Paul commanded believers to flee fornication. The Bible does not treat the inner life as an independent territory where sin becomes permissible because nobody has touched anybody.

The purpose of confronting pornography is not to construct a new method of salvation, accuse every struggling Christian of being lost, or pretend that sexual temptation disappears when a person trusts Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith in the finished work of the Saviour, and no amount of outward restraint can replace His blood atonement. Nevertheless, the grace that saves a sinner does not authorize him to make peace with the sins from which Christ redeemed him. This investigation will examine the eyes, the heart, the imagination, the body, the marriage relationship, the private habits of the believer, and the necessity of genuine repentance. It will distinguish temptation from

deliberate consent, accidental exposure from intentional pursuit, and biblical restoration from the shallow business of hiding evidence while leaving the sin untouched. Pornography is not merely a problem with a particular kind of website. It is a confrontation between the desires of the flesh and the authority of God's word. **The screen may be private, but the spiritual battle taking place before it is anything but imaginary.**

1. Job's Covenant With His Eyes: When a Righteous Man Refused to Negotiate With Lust

Job 31:1 declares, “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” The statement occurs during Job's defense of his integrity in the midst of terrible suffering and accusations. His supposed friends had repeatedly suggested that his calamities must indicate some secret wickedness, and Job answered by examining his own conduct before God. Chapter 31 contains a solemn series of declarations concerning honesty, purity, justice, treatment of servants, care for the poor, covetousness, idolatry, and other matters of personal righteousness. Job was not explaining how a man could purchase eternal salvation through moral achievements. Neither was he addressing the Church under the apostle Paul's revelation. He was declaring his integrity before the God who knew his conduct. His statement concerning the eyes is particularly revealing because he understood the connection between deliberate looking and the cultivation of forbidden thoughts. Job did not wait until he had committed an outward sexual transgression before considering whether something needed to be guarded. He determined to exercise restraint at the entrance.

The wording deserves careful attention. Job said, “I made a covenant with mine eyes.” That expresses a deliberate resolution concerning what he would permit himself to look upon for the purpose of cultivating desire. He was not claiming that he possessed the power to prevent every inappropriate image from ever entering his field of vision. Such a claim would be absurd. A person can encounter something objectionable unexpectedly without having chosen to seek it. Job's declaration concerns intentional conduct. He recognized that the eyes could become instruments through which the heart pursued what was unlawful. Verse 7 reinforces the point: “If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands.” Notice the order. The heart walking after the eyes becomes part of the examination of conduct. A man may insist that he is merely looking, but the question is what his heart intends to do with what he sees. **The first glance may be unexpected. The second look may reveal what the heart has decided to entertain.**

Job continues in verse 9, “If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door.” He understood that sexual misconduct involved more than

the final outward act. There were desires to be restrained, circumstances to be avoided, and decisions to be governed. Proverbs 6:25 similarly warns, “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.” These passages concern actual moral choices, not the condemnation of every natural awareness of human attractiveness. Recognizing beauty is not automatically lust. Sexual desire is not inherently wicked, since God established the marriage relationship and its proper affections. The sin arises when desire is deliberately directed toward what God has forbidden. Modern pornography exists to encourage precisely that deliberate cultivation. It does not merely acknowledge that human beings possess sexual desires. It provides material specifically intended to feed those desires apart from God's established boundaries. Job understood the danger without possessing a smartphone, a wireless connection, or an internet subscription. Apparently, the ancient patriarch knew something about guarding his eyes that the modern world has forgotten while congratulating itself on its technological sophistication.

2. Adultery in the Heart: What Jesus Christ Actually Condemned

Matthew 5:27–28 records the words of Jesus Christ: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” These words belong to the Sermon on the Mount, where the Lord addressed His disciples within the historical setting of His earthly ministry to Israel. Christ was exposing the insufficiency of merely outward religious respectability and demonstrating the searching righteousness of God's standards. The passage should not be carelessly lifted from its setting and turned into a new system of Church-age salvation by personal purity. Nevertheless, the moral truth concerning lust is unmistakable. The Lord distinguished between outward adultery and deliberate adulterous desire while exposing the sinfulness of both. A man may avoid the outward act and still cultivate wickedness within his heart. The absence of physical contact does not automatically establish moral innocence.

Notice the exact wording: “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her.” The Lord identifies purposeful desire. He does not declare that every involuntary thought, unexpected visual encounter, or momentary recognition of attractiveness constitutes the deliberate sin under discussion. Temptation and consent must be distinguished. Hebrews 4:15 declares concerning Jesus Christ that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Temptation itself cannot therefore be identical to committing sin. James 1:14–15 explains how a person is drawn away by lust, enticed, and eventually brought into sin. The responsibility arises in what the person chooses to entertain, pursue, and cultivate. Pornography is especially dangerous because the viewer is not ordinarily stumbling upon temptation while conducting an unrelated duty. He is deliberately seeking material

designed to encourage lustful thought. The very activity is organized around producing the desire Christ condemned. Calling it harmless observation is rather like purchasing gasoline, pouring it over the furniture, striking a match, and explaining that one had no intention of encouraging a fire.

The Lord continues in Matthew 5:29–30 with severe language concerning the offending eye and hand, warning that it is better to lose a member than for the whole body to be cast into hell. These statements must be understood in their immediate setting and should never be twisted into a command for bodily mutilation. Removing a physical eye would not remove the sinful desires of the heart. The imagery communicates the seriousness of dealing with whatever leads a person toward sin. Christ was not prescribing physical injury as a remedy for temptation. He was exposing the folly of treating sin casually while eternal realities were at stake. The application to modern pornography is plain. If a particular application continually provides access to sexual corruption, remove it. If a certain account regularly promotes filth, stop following it. If unrestricted private internet use repeatedly becomes the occasion for deliberate sin, establish meaningful restrictions. Christians sometimes act as though surrendering access to a corrupting website would constitute unbearable persecution. Yet the Lord spoke of losing an eye. Surely a believer can survive deleting an application without requiring a funeral service for his entertainment privileges.

3. The Body Belongs to Christ: When Sexual Sin Contradicts Christian Liberty

First Corinthians 6:18 declares, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth, a city where sexual immorality was a serious practical concern. The surrounding passage addresses the believer's union with Christ, the proper use of the body, and the absurdity of joining what belongs to Christ with sexual wickedness. Verse 15 asks, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” This is not a discussion of how an unsaved man can earn redemption by avoiding immorality. Paul is instructing those already belonging to Jesus Christ. His command to flee fornication concerns their walk, testimony, and obedience. Pornography must not be confused in every respect with the actual physical act of fornication, but its deliberate cultivation of sexual lust plainly conflicts with the purity commanded throughout the passage. The Bible does not need to name every technological means of promoting sin before its commandments become applicable.

The passage becomes even more pointed in verses 19–20: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” The Christian does not possess an independent moral kingdom in

which his appetites outrank the claims of the Saviour. He has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. His body is not his own in the ultimate spiritual sense described by Paul. Therefore, the question concerning pornography cannot be reduced to whether another person knows about it or whether the viewer considers it a private recreational activity. The believer must ask whether deliberately cultivating lust glorifies the God who redeemed him. Some Christians possess remarkably complicated explanations for why their private conduct supposedly falls outside biblical examination. Paul settled the matter without consulting their theories. "Ye are not your own." That statement leaves considerably less room for negotiation than the flesh would prefer.

First Corinthians 6:12 supplies the necessary distinction concerning liberty: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Paul was not announcing permission to commit whatever wickedness a Christian desires. He was demonstrating that liberty cannot become an excuse for bondage or disobedience. The man who says pornography is merely personal entertainment while repeatedly returning to it despite his stated desire to stop should examine whether his conduct has gained power over him. The individual who arranges his schedule around secret viewing, conceals his activities, and continually searches for additional material is not demonstrating impressive freedom. He is revealing that appetite has become a governing influence. This does not establish that every person who encounters pornography develops identical habits or experiences the same difficulties. It does establish that Christians must recognize the possibility of becoming controlled by what they repeatedly indulge. **A man is not exercising Christian liberty when he continually surrenders his decisions to the very appetite he claims to control.**

4. The Secret Screen: When Privacy Becomes an Excuse for Wickedness

Modern technology has made private access to pornography easier than at almost any previous point in history. Smartphones, tablets, computers, streaming services, social media platforms, online advertising, and private messaging systems can place explicit material before individuals with very little effort. Some encounters are unsolicited. Others occur because users deliberately search for progressively more objectionable content. The distinction matters. A person who unexpectedly encounters an indecent advertisement is not automatically guilty of the deliberate lust described in Matthew 5:28. What he chooses to do afterward is another question. Does he dismiss the material, or does he pursue it? Does he recognize the temptation, or does he begin looking for more? The internet provides opportunities for education, communication, business, Bible study, and legitimate recreation. It also provides remarkably convenient access to corruption. The machine is

not morally responsible for every choice made through it. The individual remains accountable for the decisions he makes.

Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The surrounding passage connects the eyes, ears, heart, mouth, and feet with responsible conduct. That wisdom remains relevant regardless of the technology involved. A Christian should not assume that privacy removes the moral significance of his actions. Hebrews 4:13 declares, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” In its context, the passage emphasizes the searching knowledge of God and the accountability of His creatures. It does not teach that every secret sin will necessarily become public knowledge during earthly life. It teaches something more fundamental: nothing is hidden from God. A man may clear his browsing history, delete an application, lock his phone, and convince himself that he has successfully concealed his conduct. That may deceive another human being. It does not erase the conduct from divine knowledge. **The delete button is useful technology, but it has never possessed the authority to pronounce absolution.**

Privacy itself is not wicked. People have legitimate reasons to protect personal correspondence, financial information, confidential records, and ordinary private affairs. Nor should Christians become suspicious of every person who uses a password. The problem arises when privacy is deliberately converted into protection for sinful conduct. A man may refuse reasonable accountability, conceal repeated violations of his marriage commitments, or create elaborate arrangements to continue an activity he knows is wrong. At that point the issue is no longer ordinary privacy. It is calculated concealment. Proverbs 28:13 declares, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” The verse belongs to Israel's wisdom literature and should not be twisted into a claim that confession earns Church-age salvation. Its practical warning concerning concealment and repentance remains clear. A believer who genuinely desires freedom from secret wickedness must eventually become more interested in abandoning the sin than protecting the arrangements that make it convenient. **A locked screen can protect valuable information, but it cannot protect a corrupt conscience from the truth of God's word.**

5. The Marriage Covenant and the Damage of Cultivated Lust

Pornography introduces serious moral questions concerning marriage because it deliberately directs sexual desire toward people outside the marriage covenant. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” God established marriage as an honorable relationship, not

an inconvenient restriction upon human appetite. Genesis 2:24 declares that a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirmed this foundation in Matthew 19:4–6. Marriage involves more than physical proximity or a legal arrangement. It establishes a covenant relationship requiring faithfulness, honor, and mutual responsibility. Deliberately cultivating sexual desire toward strangers contradicts the loyalty that marriage requires. This does not mean that every exposure to sexual imagery constitutes the same outward act as physical adultery. Scripture distinguishes inward lust from outward conduct while condemning both where appropriate. The Christian must preserve those distinctions without using them to excuse the deliberate corruption of his thoughts.

Pornography also encourages the viewer to treat other human beings primarily as instruments for sexual gratification. The people portrayed are not merely images without personal significance. They are human beings whose bodies, dignity, circumstances, and moral responsibilities do not disappear because someone has placed them on a screen. Commercial production can involve willing participants, but willingness does not automatically make every act righteous. Exploitation, coercion, and abuse may also occur, and Christians should never assume that every person appearing in explicit material has freely chosen every circumstance surrounding its production. The Bible teaches that human beings are created in God's image, as Genesis 1:27 declares. That truth belongs to mankind generally, not merely to those whose conduct Christians approve. The command to flee sexual immorality does not authorize contempt for people involved in it. Instead, believers should recognize their humanity while refusing to participate in the deliberate commercialization of lust. **A person does not become merchandise in God's sight simply because an industry has discovered a profitable way to sell access to that person's body.**

The consequences within marriage can be serious. Deliberate pornography use may involve secrecy, dishonesty, broken agreements, diverted attention, unrealistic expectations, and damaged trust. Not every marriage experiences identical difficulties, and Scripture does not authorize inventing medical or relational consequences that have not been established. Nevertheless, dishonesty and cultivated lust can plainly undermine marital faithfulness. Ephesians 5:25 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” That instruction emphasizes sacrificial love rather than self-centered appetite. A husband who hides sexual corruption while demanding unquestioning trust from his wife has misunderstood the responsibility of Christian leadership. Likewise, the biblical commands concerning purity and honesty apply to wives as well as husbands. Pornography is not exclusively a male temptation, and sexual righteousness is not a requirement imposed upon one sex while the other receives

permission to indulge. Neither should a spouse be blamed for another person's deliberate wrongdoing. Marital difficulties may require honest discussion and practical attention, but they do not transfer moral responsibility for chosen sin to the offended husband or wife.

6. Confession Without Camouflage: Repentance That Changes More Than the Browsing History

Psalm 119:9 asks, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Verse 11 continues, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” These verses provide a positive foundation for overcoming sinful habits. The answer is not merely to manufacture stronger emotions against the consequences of pornography or to promise greater discipline whenever guilt becomes uncomfortable. The individual must take heed according to God's word. That means acknowledging the sin as Scripture identifies it, refusing excuses that contradict divine truth, and bringing conduct under biblical authority. A person may sincerely regret being discovered without sincerely regretting the wickedness itself. Another may feel distressed by consequences while remaining determined to preserve future opportunities for indulgence. Biblical repentance requires a change in judgment concerning the sin, not merely improved techniques for avoiding embarrassment. **A man has not forsaken wickedness when his greatest accomplishment is learning how to hide it more efficiently.**

First John 1:9 declares, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” John addresses believers concerning fellowship with God, walking in the light, and honestly acknowledging sin. The verse must not be turned into a system in which the Christian repeatedly loses eternal salvation and must purchase it again through confession. The believer's redemption rests upon Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin, as verse 7 declares. Nevertheless, a saved person can sin and must deal honestly with that sin before God. Confession means agreeing with God's judgment rather than defending rebellion through religious language. It also requires practical seriousness. A Christian who repeatedly returns to pornography while assuring himself that a hurried confession will settle everything has misunderstood grace. The Lord is merciful, but His mercy is not a subscription service that gives the flesh unlimited permission to continue its preferred corruption. First John 2:1 states, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” The objective is obedience, not the management of repeated excuses.

Practical safeguards can assist believers who genuinely desire to abandon pornography. Removing access to particular websites, establishing content restrictions, changing online habits, keeping devices out of situations associated with deliberate temptation, and

seeking appropriate accountability may all be wise measures. None of these arrangements possesses spiritual power apart from genuine willingness to obey God. A filtering program can block some material, but it cannot regenerate the heart or produce righteousness by itself. A trusted pastor, mature Christian, or responsible counselor may provide assistance, but accountability must never become an excuse for improper intrusion, public humiliation, or the careless exposure of confidential information. Where marriage has been harmed, honest communication and patient rebuilding of trust are necessary; the offended spouse should not be pressured to pretend that consequences disappear immediately after an apology. Where exploitation or abuse is involved, protecting victims and involving appropriate authorities must take precedence over protecting reputations. Genuine restoration does not require concealing wrongdoing to preserve appearances. **The objective is not to construct a more impressive system of surveillance. It is to cultivate a heart that desires obedience even when nobody else is watching.**

7. Sanctification, Not Despair: The Believer's Responsibility to Walk in Purity

First Thessalonians 4:3–5 declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.” Paul wrote to Christians, and his instruction concerns their practical sanctification. The passage does not suggest that sexual purity earns eternal life or that a believer who experiences temptation has automatically forfeited salvation. The Christian is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works, as Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes. Yet the same believer is commanded to pursue holiness in daily conduct. Notice Paul's expression, “This is the will of God.” Christians sometimes speak endlessly about discovering God's will concerning employment, finances, marriage, and future opportunities while overlooking commandments already written plainly in Scripture. A man may insist that he cannot determine what God wants him to do next year while deliberately ignoring what God has told him to stop doing tonight. The problem is not always insufficient guidance. Sometimes it is unwillingness to obey the guidance already given.

First Corinthians 10:13 provides genuine encouragement: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” The passage belongs to Paul's warnings concerning Israel's wilderness failures and the responsibility of Corinthian believers to avoid repeating patterns of disobedience. It does not promise that temptation will become effortless or that every struggle disappears after a single prayer. It declares God's faithfulness and the

availability of a way to endure temptation without surrendering. That truth should encourage believers who have become convinced that repeated failure makes obedience impossible. Second Timothy 2:22 commands, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Notice the two movements: flee what is wicked and follow what is righteous. The Christian must not merely empty his life of one destructive activity. He must deliberately pursue better things. An abandoned appetite should not remain the governing subject of his entire existence.

There is also a dangerous error in treating repeated sexual temptation as proof that a person can never enjoy meaningful Christian service, a faithful marriage, or a useful life. Scripture condemns sin without teaching that every sinner who has fallen must remain permanently disqualified from all possible obedience. First Corinthians 6:11 declares to believers who had formerly practiced serious wickedness, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul does not minimize the sins listed in the preceding verses. He announces what God has accomplished in those who belong to Christ. Believers who have fallen should confess their sins, abandon deliberate wrongdoing, accept appropriate consequences, and pursue righteousness rather than surrendering to despair. Restoration may require time, honest accountability, and patient rebuilding of damaged relationships. It does not require pretending the past never happened. **The devil is pleased when a man excuses his sin, and he is equally pleased when that man concludes that obedience is now impossible. Scripture provides no permission for either surrender.**

The great tragedy of pornography is not simply that a person may waste time viewing corrupt material. It is that deliberate lust invites a man or woman to cultivate desires contrary to God's commandments while treating other human beings as instruments for private satisfaction. It can turn secrecy into a habit, dishonesty into a convenience, and personal appetite into an authority competing with the written word. Yet the Bible does not leave believers without instruction. Job teaches the seriousness of guarding the eyes. Christ exposes deliberate lust in the heart. Paul commands Christians to flee fornication and glorify God in the body. The Psalms direct attention toward the cleansing instruction of God's word. These passages belong to their proper historical and doctrinal settings, but they present a consistent moral warning: the inner life is not beyond divine examination. A Christian cannot justify deliberate wickedness merely because it remains concealed from other people. **Sin does not become private property when it enters a locked room. It remains rebellion against the God whose authority reaches every room in the house.**

At the same time, biblical preaching must distinguish condemnation of sin from denial of the gospel. Pornography is wicked because it deliberately cultivates sexual lust outside God's appointed boundaries, but the forgiveness of sin does not come through achieving a flawless record of purity. Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, as First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares. Eternal salvation rests upon His finished work, not upon the believer's ability to reconstruct his past or maintain perfect control over every temptation. Nevertheless, the grace of God does not leave the Christian without practical instruction. Titus 2:11–12 declares that grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The proper response to secret sexual sin is therefore neither self-righteous condemnation nor careless indulgence. It is honest confession, genuine repentance, practical obedience, and continued dependence upon the Lord. The believer should refuse to excuse the flesh while remembering that Christ remains sufficient for those He has redeemed.

Job's ancient declaration deserves to stand beside every modern screen: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” He did not possess the conveniences of digital technology, but he understood the necessity of governing what he deliberately welcomed into his thoughts. That responsibility has not disappeared because temptation can now arrive through a wireless connection. Christians should guard their eyes, honor their marriages, protect their families, exercise wisdom in their use of technology, and refuse to cultivate lust under the respectable name of entertainment. When they fall, they should deal honestly with their sin rather than surrendering to excuses or hopelessness. The Christian life is not a contest to see how closely a person can approach wickedness without experiencing visible consequences. It is a walk of obedience before the God who redeemed him. **A man may lock his bedroom door, silence his telephone, clear his browsing history, and convince the world that nothing happened. But the One who said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” never needed an internet connection to know the secrets of the heart. The real question is not whether anybody else can see the screen. It is whether the man looking at it still cares that God can see him.**

6 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — Blood for Applause: When Violence Becomes Something Christians Enjoy

Key Passage: Psalm 11:5 (KJV) — "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."

There is something seriously wrong with a civilization that can watch a man being beaten, tortured, mutilated, or murdered on a screen and call the experience a wonderful evening of entertainment. The audience purchases refreshments, settles into comfortable chairs, and waits for the bloodshed to begin. When the violence finally arrives, the music becomes louder, the camera moves closer, and the spectators receive exactly what they paid to see. Some laugh. Others cheer. Still others complain that the production was disappointing because the violence was not sufficiently realistic. Meanwhile, Christians who would be horrified to witness actual human suffering sometimes applaud its dramatic imitation without giving the matter a second thought. Nobody is suggesting that fictional violence and actual murder are identical. They are not. But there is a considerable difference between recognizing that distinction and developing an appetite for watching cruelty. **When suffering becomes amusement, brutality becomes excitement, and bloodshed becomes a selling point, the question is no longer merely what appears upon the screen. The question is what kind of heart enjoys the spectacle.**

The Bible is certainly no stranger to violence. From Cain murdering Abel in Genesis 4 to the terrible judgments recorded in Revelation, the Scriptures present an honest account of human wickedness, warfare, persecution, murder, cruelty, and divine judgment. The Bible does not conceal the brutality of fallen mankind behind pleasant religious language. It records the murder of innocent men, the destruction of cities, the suffering of righteous servants, and the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God. Yet Scripture does something fundamentally different from entertainment that glorifies brutality. It reveals the truth about violence, exposes the wickedness behind it, records its consequences, and places human conduct beneath the judgment of Almighty God. The biblical account of Abel's murder does not invite readers to admire Cain's technique. The record of David arranging Uriah's death does not congratulate the king for eliminating an inconvenient husband. And the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is not presented as a thrilling exhibition of Roman cruelty. Scripture records these events because they reveal important truths. **The Bible may describe bloodshed without celebrating bloodlust. Modern entertainment does not always bother making that distinction.**

The central question is not whether a Christian may ever watch a historical battle, a serious crime drama, a documentary about persecution, or a fictional story containing violence. Scripture does not establish a universal prohibition against every representation of conflict. Nor does it teach that every soldier, police officer, hunter, or individual defending innocent life is guilty of loving violence. Those distinctions must be handled with biblical precision.

The issue is whether Christians are learning to enjoy cruelty for its own sake, admire men whose defining characteristic is brutality, and treat the suffering of human beings as something amusing. Psalm 11:5 makes a declaration that ought to disturb anyone who has developed such an appetite: “The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” Notice that the verse addresses not merely violent conduct but the love of violence. God examines more than what a man does with his hands. He also knows what that man has learned to cherish in his heart.

1. The God Who Hates Violence: What Psalm 11 Actually Says

Psalm 11 begins with David's declaration, “In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” The psalm describes a dangerous situation in which the wicked have prepared their bow and made ready their arrow to shoot secretly at the upright in heart. Verse 3 asks, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The answer follows immediately: “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.” David was not discussing imaginary theatrical violence. He was facing the reality of wicked men threatening righteous people, and he answered that danger by declaring the sovereign authority and searching judgment of God. The LORD was not absent simply because wickedness appeared powerful. His throne remained established, His eyes continued observing mankind, and His judgment would not be defeated by the weapons of violent men. The passage concerns God's righteous government, not a prohibition against every portrayal of conflict.

Then comes the searching statement of verse 5: “The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” Notice that the LORD examines the righteous, while the wicked and the lover of violence stand beneath His condemnation. Verse 6 continues with judgment upon the wicked, and verse 7 declares, “For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.” The contrast is deliberate. God loves righteousness and condemns wickedness. He does not treat cruelty as a harmless personality trait, nor does He celebrate the appetite that delights in oppression and destruction. The immediate subject is actual wickedness and the violent men who practice and love it. We must not dishonestly claim that David was writing a direct prophecy about modern motion pictures. Nevertheless, the moral principle provides a searching warning. If God condemns the love of violence, Christians should seriously examine entertainment that encourages them to find pleasure in cruelty. The question is not whether the pixels are real human beings. The question is whether the enjoyment being cultivated is morally sound.

There is an important distinction between hating wickedness and loving violence against the wicked. A righteous man may recognize that a murderer deserves punishment without developing an appetite for watching the murderer suffer. He may support legitimate military defense without becoming fascinated with human destruction. He may read a truthful account of persecution without enjoying the cruelty inflicted upon the persecuted. David's psalm demonstrates that God judges the wicked, but it does not authorize believers to convert brutality into personal amusement. Modern entertainment frequently blurs these distinctions by presenting increasingly gruesome acts as something exciting, satisfying, or worthy of applause. The villain is made sufficiently hateful, and then the audience is invited to enjoy whatever suffering follows. Apparently, once the scriptwriter has established that the victim is unpleasant, the spectators are supposed to suspend every moral concern. **God has never taught that cruelty becomes righteousness merely because the person receiving it has previously behaved wickedly. Justice and bloodlust are not the same thing, regardless of how enthusiastically the audience cheers.**

2. Envy Not the Oppressor: When Brutality Becomes Heroic

Proverbs 3:31 declares, “Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.” The instruction belongs to the wisdom given within Israel's scriptural history, where the reader is repeatedly warned against wicked associations, dishonest gain, violence, and the foolishness of following ungodly examples. The following verse explains, “For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.” The command involves more than refraining from physically imitating an oppressor. It forbids admiring his wicked course and deliberately choosing his ways. That principle reaches directly into the moral imagination. A person may never commit a particular crime, yet repeatedly admire the kind of ruthless character who commits it. He may enjoy watching intimidation, cruelty, domination, and revenge because they appear powerful. The Bible exposes the danger of mistaking wicked strength for genuine greatness. An oppressor may possess influence, wealth, weapons, and authority, but those advantages do not make his conduct admirable before God.

Modern entertainment has an impressive talent for making violent men appear attractive. Give a cruel character an expensive automobile, a fashionable wardrobe, a tragic childhood, and several memorable lines of dialogue, and suddenly audiences begin defending conduct they would otherwise condemn. The murderer becomes sophisticated. The criminal becomes courageous. The merciless aggressor becomes an independent thinker unwilling to submit to society's restrictions. His brutality is described as strength, his lack of compassion as determination, and his willingness to destroy others as evidence that he is not afraid to make difficult decisions. The character may be fictional, but the

moral message is real. Proverbs 3:31 does not say to envy the oppressor provided he is handsome, wealthy, amusing, or sufficiently talented with a weapon. It says, “Envy thou not the oppressor.” A man does not become worthy of admiration because his cruelty is accompanied by expensive special effects. **If wickedness needs beautiful scenery and a dramatic musical score before people will applaud it, perhaps the scenery is doing more moral work than the audience realizes.**

The danger is particularly serious when violent behavior is presented as the highest form of masculine strength. Young men may be encouraged to admire characters who cannot control their anger, refuse legitimate authority, solve every disagreement through intimidation, and regard compassion as weakness. Yet Proverbs 16:32 declares, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” That is God's comparison. Self-government is superior to the uncontrolled exercise of force. A man who can destroy an enemy but cannot govern his temper is not demonstrating the biblical excellence described by Solomon. Scripture recognizes courage, fortitude, lawful defense, and the necessary exercise of authority, but it does not confuse those qualities with cruelty. The strongest man in a room may be the one who possesses the power to retaliate but refuses to act unjustly. Entertainment often gives the trophy to whoever delivers the most spectacular beating. God places greater value upon the man who governs his own spirit.

3. The Bible Records Bloodshed Without Selling Tickets to Enjoy It

One of the weakest arguments offered in defense of violent entertainment is the claim that the Bible contains violence, so Christians cannot object to violent films. That reasoning confuses the existence of a subject with the moral treatment of the subject. The Bible records adultery, but that does not make adultery righteous. It records drunkenness, but that does not make drunkenness commendable. It records Satan's temptations, but that does not make the devil a suitable instructor in Christian conduct. Genesis 4:8 declares concerning Cain and Abel, “And Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” The passage does not invite readers to enjoy the killing. God's subsequent confrontation exposes Cain's guilt, and the LORD declares that Abel's blood cries from the ground. The event reveals the murderous consequences of sin. The account is intentionally serious because murder is serious. Scripture does not provide a detailed exhibition of Abel's suffering to entertain readers who have developed a taste for brutality. Its concern is moral truth.

Second Samuel 11 and 12 provide another example. David arranged for Uriah to be placed in the forefront of the hottest battle, then instructed that the soldiers retire from him so that he would be struck down. The account exposes a king using military circumstances to

conceal his adultery. Second Samuel 11:27 concludes, “But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” The next chapter records Nathan's confrontation and the consequences of David's wickedness. Scripture does not glorify David's ability to manipulate the battlefield. It condemns his abuse of power and the destruction of an innocent man's life. Likewise, the historical narratives of Judges record some of the most dreadful behavior found anywhere in Scripture. They reveal the moral collapse of a nation repeatedly turning from the LORD. The recurring declaration that every man did that which was right in his own eyes exposes the disorder of that period. These accounts are warnings, not advertisements for brutality. The Bible describes man's depravity because truth requires exposing what sin produces.

Consider also the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel records describe His betrayal, unjust condemnation, mocking, scourging, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. They establish the fulfillment of Scripture and the accomplishing of redemption through His finished work. Isaiah 53:5 declares, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” First Corinthians 15:3 states, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” The suffering of the Saviour is not presented as an opportunity to enjoy the cruelty of His tormentors. It reveals the terrible reality of sin and the immeasurable significance of His sacrifice. A Christian should approach such suffering with reverence, gratitude, and doctrinal understanding. The Bible's truthful account of violence is therefore no blanket endorsement of violent amusement. **A physician may describe a terrible wound because healing requires understanding the injury. That does not make him a sadist, and it certainly does not justify selling tickets to watch somebody inflict the wound.**

4. Revenge Is Not Righteousness: When the Hero Becomes an Executioner

Romans 12:9 commands, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Paul is instructing believers concerning sincere love, proper conduct, humility, patience, generosity, and relationships with others. The chapter begins with the appeal to present their bodies a living sacrifice and to refuse conformity to the world. It then moves into the practical conduct expected of those who belong to Jesus Christ. Notice the balance in verse 9. Christians are commanded to abhor evil, not admire it, but they are also instructed to cleave to good. Hatred of wickedness does not authorize a corresponding love of cruelty. A believer may condemn the conduct of a criminal without becoming personally consumed by the desire to witness his suffering. Entertainment frequently encourages exactly that unhealthy exchange. The audience begins with legitimate indignation over a terrible wrong, but the story gradually converts moral outrage

into an appetite for increasingly severe retaliation. By the final scene, the spectators may be cheering for conduct they would have condemned at the beginning.

Romans 12:17 declares, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Verse 19 continues, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” These commandments concern personal vengeance, not the abolition of civil justice. Romans 13 immediately recognizes governing authority and its responsibility to punish evildoers. Nevertheless, the distinction between lawful justice and private revenge is fundamental. A person who has suffered a terrible wrong may properly seek protection and legal accountability. He is not thereby authorized to cultivate cruelty as a personal pleasure. Films frequently reverse this instruction by presenting revenge as emotional healing and increasingly brutal retaliation as the final proof of courage. The villain commits wickedness, the hero commits additional wickedness, and the audience is instructed to call the second performance righteous because the first offender deserved punishment. **Two wrongs do not become holiness merely because one receives better camera angles.**

Proverbs 24:17 provides an even more searching warning: “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.” Verse 18 continues by warning that the LORD may see such rejoicing and be displeased. The passage does not command believers to celebrate successful wickedness or oppose legitimate judgment. It warns against the personal delight that grows from another person's downfall. That distinction matters when watching fictional revenge stories. A Christian may reasonably desire that an evil character be stopped, that an innocent person be rescued, and that justice be established. But what happens when the audience's satisfaction depends upon increasingly cruel punishment? What happens when the film seems disappointing unless the villain suffers in some spectacular fashion? The problem has moved beyond appreciation for justice. It has become enjoyment of suffering. The Bible commands believers to abhor evil, but it never instructs them to entertain themselves by becoming emotionally attached to cruelty. Justice can be welcomed without turning another person's misery into a celebration.

5. The Spectacle of Suffering: When Human Misery Becomes Entertainment

Modern entertainment does not limit violent spectacle to fictional motion pictures. Sensationalized crime programming, graphic online videos, dramatic reenactments, and other forms of media may turn actual human suffering into material designed primarily to attract attention. Serious criminal investigations, historical documentaries, and responsible reporting can serve legitimate purposes. They may expose injustice, explain dangerous behavior, preserve important testimony, and help the public understand events

that require attention. But the moral character of a production changes when the primary attraction becomes the suffering itself. A victim's death should not be reduced to an exciting plot device while surviving relatives are treated as inconvenient background material. Proverbs 31:8 commands, “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.” Verse 9 calls for righteous judgment and pleading the cause of the poor and needy. These verses reflect concern for vulnerable people, not fascination with watching them suffer. The Christian should recognize the humanity of those whose experiences are presented for public consumption.

There is also the question of repeated exposure. Nobody should claim, without evidence, that every person watching violent entertainment will become violent or that all viewers experience identical changes in their attitudes. Human responses differ, and the Bible does not authorize careless predictions concerning every individual. Nevertheless, repeated amusement at cruelty can provide opportunities for a person to become less troubled by suffering or increasingly attracted to violent spectacle. The Christian must therefore examine his own conscience honestly. Does cruelty still grieve him, or has he begun treating it as a necessary ingredient in enjoyable entertainment? Does he recognize the suffering of victims, or does he merely complain when a production fails to provide enough excitement? Ephesians 4:19 describes those who, “being past feeling,” gave themselves over to lasciviousness and uncleanness. The immediate passage concerns the darkened understanding and corrupt conduct of unbelieving Gentiles. It should not be converted into a claim that everyone watching violent fiction has reached that condition. But its warning about moral callousness deserves serious consideration.

The entertainment industry also knows that outrage attracts attention. A shocking incident may be repeated, enlarged, dramatized, and circulated until the actual victim disappears beneath the spectacle. The audience is invited to watch another clip, share another scene, and demand additional details. The desire to understand an event can gradually become fascination with the event's brutality. Christians should distinguish responsible knowledge from morbid curiosity. There are circumstances in which disturbing evidence must be examined by investigators, courts, journalists, medical personnel, or those responsible for protecting others. Such duties are not equivalent to casually seeking violent material for pleasure. The Lord did not command believers to remain ignorant of wickedness, but neither did He appoint them spectators of every terrible thing mankind can record. **Knowing that evil exists is necessary wisdom. Developing a hobby out of watching evil destroy people is another matter entirely.** The distinction becomes especially important when real victims, grieving families, and ongoing investigations are involved.

6. The Sword of Justice: Violence, Self-Defense, and Legitimate Authority

A proper examination of violence must distinguish wicked aggression from the lawful use of force. Romans 13:1–4 addresses civil authority, declaring that rulers are responsible to punish evil conduct and that the governing authority does not bear the sword in vain. Verse 4 describes the ruler as “the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” The passage does not teach that every decision made by earthly governments is righteous, nor does it excuse corruption, oppression, or unlawful violence by officials. It establishes that civil authority has a legitimate responsibility to restrain wrongdoing and administer justice. That is fundamentally different from an individual cultivating pleasure in cruelty. The police officer who must restrain a dangerous criminal, the soldier who acts within lawful military duties, and the individual who uses necessary force to protect innocent life cannot simply be classified alongside a murderer who delights in suffering. Circumstances, authority, necessity, conduct, and moral purpose matter. Scripture does not collapse all uses of force into one undifferentiated category.

Luke 3:14 records soldiers asking John the Baptist, “And what shall we do?” He answered, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” The passage belongs to John's ministry to Israel in preparation for the manifestation of the Messiah, and its historical setting must be respected. Notice that John confronted abusive violence, false accusations, and covetousness rather than merely declaring that every man wearing a military uniform was necessarily wicked. In Acts 10, Cornelius was a centurion described as devout and God-fearing before Peter preached the gospel to his household. These passages do not resolve every difficult question concerning military ethics, but they demonstrate that Scripture recognizes distinctions between responsible service and unlawful oppression. The Christian should not confuse the courage required to protect innocent people with the pleasure of inflicting suffering. Nor should legitimate military service be romanticized into permission for cruelty. **A uniform does not automatically sanctify a man's conduct, but neither does carrying a weapon automatically establish that he loves violence.**

Scripture also records actual warfare within Israel's historical dealings with surrounding nations. David confronted Goliath in First Samuel 17, and the account emphasizes the LORD's deliverance rather than David's enjoyment of bloodshed. David declared, “The battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands” (1 Samuel 17:47). The event concerns Israel's historical conflict with the Philistines and must not be converted into a blanket authorization for every modern nation to claim divine approval for its military campaigns. Likewise, God's judgments upon particular nations under Israel's covenant history do not establish a universal command for Christians to imitate those battles. The distinction between Israel and the Church remains essential. Nevertheless, Scripture recognizes that force may be involved in resisting aggression and protecting life. The moral

issue is whether the action is just, necessary, and properly governed. A Christian may honor a veteran's sacrifice, appreciate a truthful account of military courage, or support legitimate defense without cultivating an appetite for destruction. **Real courage is not measured by how much suffering a man can cause. It is measured in part by what he is willing to endure and what he is rightly prepared to protect.**

7. Abhor Evil, Cleave to Good: Teaching the Heart What to Admire

Philippians 4:8 declares, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Paul addresses believers and directs their attention toward the proper cultivation of Christian thought. This command does not require Christians to pretend that terrible things never happen or to abandon every serious account involving tragedy, persecution, or injustice. The apostle himself wrote concerning imprisonment, suffering, persecution, false teachers, and the trials experienced by faithful servants of God. The question is not whether a subject is unpleasant. The question is what the believer is deliberately choosing to cherish, admire, and meditate upon. A responsible historical account of war may encourage gratitude, sober reflection, courage, and recognition of sacrifice. A production designed to make cruelty delightful encourages an entirely different response. The same outward subject can be presented with radically different moral purposes.

Christian parents should examine what their children are learning through violent entertainment without resorting to superstition or careless exaggeration. A child who enjoys an imaginary contest has not automatically become cruel. A teenager who watches a historical battle is not necessarily developing an appetite for actual bloodshed. But parents should ask whether the entertainment portrays violence responsibly, glorifies unnecessary cruelty, or encourages delight in suffering. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” That responsibility involves more than purchasing appropriate equipment and trusting commercial age ratings to provide spiritual instruction. Parents should discuss the difference between courage and brutality, justice and revenge, legitimate defense and oppression, historical reality and fictional spectacle. They should also examine their own example. A father who enthusiastically celebrates graphic cruelty while warning his son against fighting has provided a rather confusing lesson. **Children may not always understand a parent's theological explanation, but they can certainly recognize when the parent's entertainment contradicts the parent's sermon.**

The believer must also exercise personal judgment without inventing commandments that Scripture has not given. Romans 14 addresses matters of conscience and warns against improperly condemning brethren over disputable practices. That chapter does not make explicit wickedness acceptable, but it reminds Christians that personal standards must not automatically become universal laws. One believer may wisely avoid violent fiction entirely. Another may responsibly view a serious historical film or fictional account of conflict without taking pleasure in cruelty. The moral evaluation depends upon content, purpose, presentation, conscience, and conduct. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” The Christian should not merely ask whether he can defend an entertainment choice with a technical argument. He should ask whether the choice is profitable, whether it cultivates righteous judgment, and whether it encourages the kind of affections Scripture commands. **The purpose of Christian liberty is not to discover how much wickedness can be enjoyed without violating a technical rule. It is to walk responsibly before the Lord who purchased us with His blood.**

The great danger of violent entertainment is not that every fictional battle corrupts the viewer or that every portrayal of human suffering is spiritually objectionable. The Bible itself contains truthful accounts of terrible events, and responsible storytelling can communicate courage, justice, sacrifice, and the consequences of wickedness. The danger arises when the portrayal of suffering becomes an opportunity to cultivate pleasure in cruelty. A man may begin by appreciating a compelling story and eventually find himself seeking increasingly brutal spectacles because ordinary entertainment no longer satisfies his appetite. Another may never experience that progression at all. Scripture does not authorize inventing universal consequences, but it certainly commands believers to examine what they deliberately love. Psalm 11:5 condemns the lover of violence. Proverbs 3:31 warns against envying the oppressor. Proverbs 24:17 warns against rejoicing in an enemy's downfall. Romans 12:9 commands believers to abhor evil and cleave to good. These passages provide a far more substantial foundation for judgment than whatever happens to attract applause in a theater.

Neither should the seriousness of this subject be confused with the gospel of salvation. Avoiding violent entertainment does not save a sinner, and watching an objectionable program does not automatically prove that someone has never trusted Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The Christian's eternal security rests upon Christ's finished work, not upon a flawless record of entertainment choices. Yet salvation by grace does not eliminate the responsibility to walk in holiness. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny

ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The saved person should therefore examine his appetites, entertainment habits, speech, and conduct. He should recognize the dignity of human life, the difference between justice and revenge, and the importance of refusing delight in wickedness. The same Saviour who redeemed the believer also commands him to walk wisely. Grace does not require pretending evil is harmless simply because it has become entertaining.

Psalm 11:5 leaves the matter where it belongs, before the searching judgment of Almighty God: “The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” The Christian should read that declaration carefully before congratulating himself for enjoying another spectacle of human suffering. God does not condemn every legitimate use of force, every truthful account of warfare, or every fictional story containing conflict. But He certainly does not celebrate cruelty, and His people should not cultivate an appetite for what He condemns. A believer may appreciate courage without admiring brutality, desire justice without enjoying vengeance, and understand the reality of violence without turning suffering into recreation. When the entertainment ends, the most important question is not how many fictional enemies were destroyed, how realistic the effects appeared, or whether the audience applauded the final scene. The question is what the experience encouraged the heart to love. **A civilization that turns human suffering into entertainment should not be surprised when compassion becomes inconvenient and cruelty becomes amusing. The world may sell blood for applause, but the Christian ought to remember that the God who gave His Son to save sinners never instructed His children to entertain themselves by learning to love violence.**

7 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — Everybody Laughs Until God Is Mocked: Comedy, Filthy Jesting, and the Death of Reverence

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:3–4 (KJV) — “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

The modern entertainment industry has discovered that almost anything can be made acceptable if somebody can persuade the audience to laugh at it first. Adultery becomes a punchline. Drunkenness becomes a personality trait. Fornication becomes a romantic comedy. Disrespect toward parents becomes clever dialogue. Blasphemy becomes an expression of surprise, and the name of Jesus Christ becomes something to throw into a sentence when the comedian runs out of intelligent material. Meanwhile, the audience

laughs, applauds, purchases another ticket, and insists that nobody should take these things seriously because the whole performance was intended as a joke. What a remarkable arrangement! The comedian gets paid to say what the Christian would supposedly condemn if it were spoken from a pulpit, and the Christian gets to enjoy the wickedness without admitting that he approves of it. Apparently, putting a laugh track behind sin is now supposed to function like putting a pardon from heaven behind a criminal. But God has never announced that His commandments become optional whenever somebody delivers the violation with excellent timing. **Sin does not become harmless because the audience finds it hilarious, and blasphemy does not become innocent because somebody calls it comedy.**

There is nothing inherently wicked about laughter. God created human beings with the capacity to enjoy humor, recognize absurdity, appreciate wit, and experience genuine happiness. Scripture contains striking irony, memorable comparisons, sharp rebukes, and accounts of joyful laughter. A Christian does not demonstrate superior holiness by walking around with a facial expression suggesting that somebody baptized him in pickle juice. There is no commandment requiring believers to become miserable companions who cannot appreciate a cheerful conversation, a harmless joke, or an amusing incident from ordinary life. Indeed, some religious people have confused solemnity with spirituality so thoroughly that they appear to believe a smile is the first step toward apostasy. The Bible teaches no such nonsense. Nevertheless, the existence of wholesome humor does not provide permission for every variety of comedy. There is a difference between laughing at human foolishness and celebrating human wickedness. There is a difference between clever observation and filthy communication. There is a difference between exposing hypocrisy through sharp wit and treating the holiness of God as an object of contempt. The distinction is not established by whether somebody laughs. It is established by what Scripture says.

The apostle Paul addresses this subject directly in Ephesians 5:3–4, placing filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting among conduct that does not become the saints. His words belong to practical instruction concerning the walk of those who have already been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is not explaining how a sinner earns eternal life by maintaining respectable conversation. He is explaining how redeemed people ought to conduct themselves in a wicked world. The surrounding passage commands believers to walk in love, reject uncleanness, refuse fellowship with darkness, and walk as children of light. That context makes the warning concerning speech particularly important. God is concerned not only with the outward acts Christians commit but also with what they approve, celebrate, repeat, and encourage through their words. Modern comedy provides an especially searching examination because laughter can become the means by which

people stop objecting to things they once recognized as shameful. **When everything becomes a joke, eventually nothing remains sacred, and a generation that laughs at every warning may discover too late that the judgment of God was never part of the entertainment.**

1. A Merry Heart Is Not a Wicked Heart: What the Bible Actually Says About Laughter

Proverbs 17:22 declares, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” That verse should settle the foolish notion that biblical Christianity requires a permanent expression of misery. Solomon recognized the value of a cheerful disposition and contrasted it with the destructive weight of a crushed spirit. Ecclesiastes 3:4 likewise acknowledges “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” These passages belong to Israel's wisdom literature and should not be mistaken for instructions concerning every particular form of modern entertainment. Nevertheless, they establish that laughter has a legitimate place in human life. The Bible does not identify joy as wickedness, nor does it commend unnecessary gloom as an evidence of spiritual maturity. A believer can enjoy a wholesome joke without needing to confess the experience afterward. **Holiness is not measured by how successfully a Christian imitates the expression on a funeral director's face.**

Genesis 21:6 records Sarah declaring, “God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.” The occasion was the birth of Isaac, the promised son born when Abraham and Sarah were advanced in years. Sarah's joy followed the fulfillment of God's promise, and her laughter celebrated what the LORD had accomplished. Psalm 126:2 likewise declares, “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.” The psalm concerns Israel's restoration and the joy accompanying the LORD's mighty works. Neither passage teaches that every amusing experience is righteous, but both demonstrate that laughter can accompany gratitude and blessing. God did not create His people to live as though every pleasant moment were a suspicious departure from spirituality. There is a laughter of gratitude, a laughter of innocent delight, and a laughter arising from the recognition of ordinary human absurdity.

Scripture also contains purposeful irony. In 1 Kings 18:27, Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and mocked the helplessness of their imaginary god, suggesting that perhaps he was occupied, traveling, or sleeping and needed to be awakened. Elijah's words exposed the absurdity of idolatry rather than turning Jehovah into an object of ridicule. The Lord Jesus Christ likewise rebuked hypocritical religious leaders with unforgettable imagery, declaring in Matthew 23:24, “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” The comparison is deliberately striking. Men who meticulously examined tiny matters while

overlooking enormous wickedness were pictured swallowing an entire camel. That is biblical wit with a doctrinal purpose. Scripture therefore gives no support to the claim that all sharp humor, irony, or sarcasm is sinful. The question concerns the target and purpose. **There is a world of difference between using wit to expose wickedness and using wickedness to manufacture amusement. One strengthens the truth; the other teaches people to laugh while truth is being discarded.**

2. Neither Filthiness Nor Foolish Talking: When the Mouth Becomes a Sewer

Ephesians 5:3 begins, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” Paul has just commanded believers to be followers of God as dear children and to walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. The contrast is deliberate. Christian love follows the example of Jesus Christ; worldly lust follows the appetites of the flesh. Paul then names conduct that contradicts the believer's position and calling. The phrase “as becometh saints” does not mean that respectable behavior transforms a lost sinner into a saint. The Corinthians were called saints despite their many practical failures, and Ephesians 2 establishes salvation by grace apart from works. Rather, Paul addresses those who belong to Christ and commands conduct appropriate to their standing. Fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are not supposed to become celebrated features of Christian life. Neither should believers make these things favorite subjects of filthy amusement.

Verse 4 continues, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” The connection between corrupt conduct and corrupt conversation is unmistakable. Paul does not merely condemn committing certain sins. He also addresses the manner in which believers speak about them. Filthiness and foolish talking are not improved by being presented as entertainment. Neither does the reference to jesting require the conclusion that every harmless joke is forbidden. Such an interpretation would ignore the context, which concerns corrupt and unsuitable speech associated with the wickedness already mentioned. Paul contrasts these expressions with thanksgiving, directing the believer toward language appropriate to those who know God's grace. The issue is not whether a Christian can recognize something amusing. The issue is whether his conversation has become a vehicle for sexual vulgarity, irreverence, and the celebration of sin. **A dirty joke is still dirty when told by a clean-cut man, and a laugh does not wash the filth out of the sentence.**

The expression “which are not convenient” deserves careful consideration. Paul is not discussing whether the language fits conveniently into someone's busy schedule. He is describing conduct unsuitable for the believer's calling. Ephesians 4:29 has already commanded, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is

good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Notice the positive standard. Christian speech should be capable of benefiting others rather than merely avoiding the most scandalous vocabulary. Colossians 3:8 commands believers to put away "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." These are direct instructions to the Church. Yet some Christians who would never tell a filthy joke in front of their pastor will laugh enthusiastically when a professional entertainer delivers the same material. The only difference is who received payment for saying it. **If the words would dishonor Christ coming from your own mouth, paying somebody else to say them does not magically turn them into wholesome entertainment.**

3. Fools Make a Mock at Sin: When the Joke Becomes a Moral Lesson

Proverbs 14:9 declares, "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour." Solomon identifies a serious moral defect: the foolish treatment of wrongdoing as something deserving laughter rather than sober judgment. The verse does not prohibit recognizing the absurdity of a sinner's excuses or exposing the hypocrisy of wicked men. Scripture itself does both. The warning concerns the attitude that regards sin lightly, as though God's commandments were matters of amusement rather than righteousness. Modern comedy frequently depends upon precisely that attitude. A drunken character staggers through a series of humiliating incidents, and the audience is encouraged to find intoxication charming. An adulterous character invents increasingly elaborate lies, and the deceit becomes the central source of laughter. A sexually immoral relationship is presented as a delightful adventure, provided the participants are sufficiently attractive and amusing. The consequences disappear beneath the jokes, and the moral verdict is replaced by applause. The audience receives its lesson without recognizing that instruction has taken place.

Consider how repeated humor can change the apparent seriousness of a subject. When adultery is consistently presented as an amusing inconvenience, marital faithfulness begins appearing unnecessarily restrictive. When drunkenness is repeatedly associated with entertaining adventures, sobriety may begin looking dull. When fornication becomes the normal foundation of romantic comedy, chastity is portrayed as an outdated obstacle to happiness. These are not unavoidable consequences for every viewer, and the Bible does not authorize claiming that every person who hears a particular joke will imitate the conduct. Nevertheless, the message deserves examination. Hebrews 13:4 declares, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." First Thessalonians 4:3 commands believers to abstain from fornication. Scripture treats these subjects seriously because they involve real moral responsibilities. The comedian may produce laughter by trivializing them, but laughter cannot reverse the

commandment. **God did not establish marriage as honorable merely until somebody discovered that adultery could produce excellent television ratings.**

The same corruption appears when religious hypocrisy becomes an excuse to ridicule biblical truth itself. A dishonest preacher deserves exposure. A religious leader exploiting his congregation deserves rebuke. The Lord Jesus Christ condemned hypocrisy with extraordinary force in Matthew 23. But there is a difference between exposing a false minister and treating everyone who believes Scripture as an ignorant fool. Comedy frequently portrays biblical conviction as stupidity, parental authority as oppression, and Christian restraint as evidence that a person has never experienced ordinary human life. Such caricatures can become easier to laugh at than actual biblical arguments are to answer. A comedian invents a ridiculous religious character, gives him foolish statements no responsible Bible teacher would defend, and then congratulates the audience for recognizing the absurdity. What an astonishing victory! He created the fool, supplied the foolishness, and defeated the entire character without opposition. **Ridiculing a dishonest preacher does not disprove the gospel, and laughing at a fictional Christian does not establish that the Scriptures are false.**

4. The Name Above Every Name: When Blasphemy Becomes Entertainment

Exodus 20:7 declares, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” The commandment was delivered to Israel within the covenant established at Sinai, and the Church must not be confused with that nation under the Mosaic law. Nevertheless, reverence toward God is not an obsolete principle that expired when the present dispensation of grace began. Colossians 3:8 directly commands Christians to put away blasphemy, while Ephesians 4:29 condemns corrupt communication. The New Testament does not teach that believers may now treat the name of God with contempt because they are no longer under Israel's national covenant. Yet modern comedy frequently employs the name of Jesus Christ as a profanity, an exclamation of disgust, or an object of mockery. The same name through which sinners receive salvation becomes a convenient expression for entertainers who cannot construct an amusing sentence without insulting what Christians hold sacred.

Philippians 2:9–11 declares that God has highly exalted Jesus Christ and given Him “a name which is above every name,” and that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The passage concerns the exaltation of the Saviour following His humiliation and obedience unto death. It is not merely a devotional expression of personal admiration. It declares the universal supremacy of Jesus Christ. Compare that truth with the casual blasphemy presented in entertainment. A comedian may use Christ's name as an insult, and the audience is expected to laugh because irreverence has become ordinary.

The Christian should recognize the enormous contradiction. The One before whom every knee shall bow is being treated as material for a cheap joke. **The name that will command the attention of every creature in heaven and earth does not become common property for profanity simply because a comedian possesses a microphone.** The audience may applaud today, but applause has never determined divine authority.

This does not mean that Christians must answer every irreverent remark with personal hostility or attempt to punish unbelievers for failing to share Christian convictions. Scripture commands believers to exercise wisdom, patience, and appropriate conduct toward others. Nor should every discussion of religious institutions, doctrinal disagreements, or genuine hypocrisy be falsely labeled blasphemy. A careful distinction exists between questioning human religious claims and deliberately dishonoring God. But the Christian must examine his own response when the Lord's name becomes the entertainment. Does he recognize the irreverence, or has repeated exposure made it seem entirely ordinary? Does he object inwardly while continuing to reward the performance with his attention? Does he defend the language because the entertainer is talented? Psalm 111:9 declares, "Holy and reverend is his name." The immediate psalm praises the LORD for His works and covenant faithfulness, but its declaration concerning divine holiness remains true. **A man may laugh at a king and escape the consequences. He should not imagine that laughter has diminished the authority of the King of kings.**

5. Am Not I in Sport? When Cruelty Hides Behind a Practical Joke

Proverbs 26:18–19 provides one of Scripture's most devastating examinations of irresponsible humor: "As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" The comparison is vivid. A man behaves like someone recklessly throwing deadly weapons, and afterward he attempts to excuse his conduct by claiming that he was only amusing himself. The passage concerns deception disguised as sport, exposing the danger of causing harm and then appealing to humorous intent as though the explanation erased the offense. Solomon does not condemn every harmless surprise, playful exchange, or friendly practical joke. He condemns the man who uses amusement as a covering for conduct that injures another person. The principle is especially relevant in an age when humiliating strangers, frightening unsuspecting people, and manufacturing embarrassment can produce attention, followers, and financial reward. Apparently, some people have concluded that possessing a camera transforms cruelty into creativity.

Modern practical-joke entertainment sometimes depends upon deception, humiliation, intimidation, or creating unnecessary distress. An unsuspecting person is frightened, embarrassed, or placed in an upsetting situation while hidden spectators enjoy the

reaction. Afterward the organizers announce that everything was merely a joke, as though that declaration settles every moral question. Proverbs 26:19 exposes the weakness of the excuse. “Am not I in sport?” is not a satisfactory defense when the preceding conduct has been reckless or malicious. The Christian should examine whether a prank is genuinely harmless and welcome or whether its enjoyment depends upon another person's suffering. There is a difference between a cheerful surprise among willing friends and deliberately making somebody miserable for an audience. A person's dignity does not disappear because strangers may find his embarrassment entertaining. **When the victim is distressed and the spectators are delighted, the word “prank” may simply be a convenient label attached to ordinary cruelty.**

Ephesians 4:32 commands believers to be “kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” That instruction should govern Christian humor as surely as it governs ordinary conversation. Sarcasm can expose falsehood, hypocrisy, and absurdity without becoming a means of continually humiliating weaker people. A clever observation may reveal truth; a personal insult may merely demonstrate the speaker's willingness to wound. The difference often lies in purpose, context, and conduct. Proverbs 12:18 declares, “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.” Christians should not imagine that every sharp remark is prohibited, since Scripture contains severe rebukes when necessary. But neither should they disguise bitterness as humor and then accuse offended people of lacking a sense of amusement. **Some people do not possess a sharp wit nearly as much as they possess a sharp tongue, and the fact that both can draw blood does not make them equally useful.**

6. The Family Laugh Track: When Marriage and Authority Become Punchlines

The modern situation comedy has frequently portrayed the family as a collection of foolish adults, rebellious children, failing marriages, and relationships maintained through sarcasm rather than respect. Not every comedy follows that pattern, and many programs have portrayed family affection, responsibility, reconciliation, and ordinary human weakness with genuine warmth. Nevertheless, recurring themes deserve examination. The father becomes a permanent idiot who cannot perform basic responsibilities without supervision. The mother becomes an object of contempt or the only competent person in a household of fools. Children demonstrate intelligence primarily by ridiculing their parents, while marriage is presented as an unfortunate arrangement that prevents adults from enjoying their lives. These portrayals can become familiar enough that viewers stop recognizing the underlying message. The joke is not always about one foolish decision. Sometimes it is about the supposed foolishness of marriage, faithfulness, parental

authority, and responsibility themselves. A family may spend the evening laughing at everything that holds a family together and then wonder why ordinary respect has become difficult to maintain.

Ephesians 5:25 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Ephesians 5:33 instructs husbands to love their wives and wives to reverence their husbands. Ephesians 6:1 declares, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” These are direct instructions concerning Christian household conduct. They do not promise that every husband will always be wise, every wife will always be gracious, or every child will behave correctly. Scripture recognizes human failure. Nevertheless, the household is not supposed to operate upon perpetual contempt. Entertainment that presents disrespect as cleverness and marital bitterness as normal behavior communicates a philosophy contrary to those instructions. A Christian should distinguish between a story exposing genuine family problems and one that consistently encourages contempt for family responsibilities. **A father may occasionally do something foolish without fatherhood becoming a joke, and a marriage may experience disagreements without marriage itself becoming an object of ridicule.**

Parents should also recognize that children learn from what adults repeatedly approve. A mother may teach her children to speak respectfully while laughing at characters who continually insult their parents. A father may insist that marriage deserves honor while making contemptuous jokes about his wife in front of the children. The contradiction is not difficult to recognize. Colossians 3:19 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” Verse 21 adds, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” These instructions apply to ordinary speech, including humorous speech. Families can enjoy playful teasing, friendly banter, and cheerful conversation without treating one another as convenient targets for humiliation. In fact, wholesome humor can strengthen affection when everyone understands the spirit in which it is offered. The trouble begins when ridicule becomes the household's normal language. **If the family can only laugh when somebody is being belittled, perhaps the problem is not a shortage of humor. Perhaps it is a shortage of kindness.**

7. Every Idle Word: When Christians Forget That the Mouth Belongs to God

Matthew 12:36 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” The immediate context concerns Christ's confrontation with the Pharisees, who had attributed His work through the Spirit of God to Beelzebub. The Lord exposed the wicked condition of their hearts and the connection between inward corruption and outward speech. Verse 34 declares, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” These words must

not be removed from their historical setting and carelessly converted into a claim that Christians will lose eternal salvation because they once told an inappropriate joke. Salvation in the present dispensation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the passage reveals that words are morally significant and that God does not treat speech as something entirely disconnected from the heart. The Christian should not imagine that humorous intent provides automatic exemption from divine examination.

James 3 likewise exposes the extraordinary influence of the tongue. Verse 5 declares, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” James compares the tongue to a small flame capable of producing enormous destruction. The passage does not condemn every instance of wit, but it warns against careless and destructive speech. Modern social media provides countless opportunities for such behavior. A Christian may publish a vulgar joke, circulate a humiliating image, ridicule another person's suffering, or spread an unverified accusation merely because the material seems amusing. Once shared, the words may travel far beyond the original audience. Proverbs 18:21 declares, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” The Christian should remember that pressing a button to distribute a corrupt message is still a voluntary act. **A joke does not become innocent because the speaker used a keyboard instead of his tongue, and a thousand approving reactions do not make the message righteous.**

Christian liberty must be exercised with both courage and judgment. A believer may enjoy wholesome comedy, appreciate sharp biblical wit, laugh at ordinary absurdities, and recognize humor in family life without violating Scripture. He may also establish personal standards concerning particular entertainers or programs without insisting that every other Christian adopt identical preferences where Scripture has not given an explicit command. Romans 14 warns against improperly judging brethren in matters of conscience, but it does not authorize filthy communication or blasphemy. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” The issue is not simply whether a joke can be defended as permissible. The question is whether it is profitable, truthful, appropriate, and consistent with Christian conduct. **The Bible does not command believers to surrender their sense of humor at salvation. It commands them to bring their whole manner of life, including their humor, beneath the authority of Jesus Christ.**

The world has developed an enormous appetite for entertainment that treats wickedness as amusing and righteousness as ridiculous. Sexual vulgarity becomes sophisticated comedy. Blasphemy becomes ordinary language. Humiliation becomes a profitable performance. Marriage becomes an inconvenience, parental authority becomes a joke, and

biblical conviction becomes evidence that someone has failed to understand modern life. Christians should recognize the moral instruction contained within such entertainment. A comedian does not need to announce that he is teaching doctrine. He can communicate his philosophy through the subjects he celebrates and the things he invites the audience to despise. Yet Scripture does not demand that Christians abandon laughter or spend their lives examining every harmless joke for hidden wickedness. It demands discernment. Proverbs 14:9 remains true: “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.” The Christian should be capable of enjoying humor without cultivating an appetite for what God condemns. **A cheerful heart is a blessing, but a heart that requires wickedness before it can laugh has misunderstood the purpose of joy.**

Neither should this subject become another opportunity for religious self-righteousness. Avoiding objectionable comedy does not make a sinner worthy of heaven, and maintaining a respectable vocabulary cannot wash away guilt before God. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The believer's eternal security rests upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, not upon the perfection of his entertainment choices. Nevertheless, grace does not give Christians permission to disregard God's instructions concerning speech. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That instruction reaches the conversation around the dinner table, the jokes shared among friends, the programs watched at home, and the material circulated through social media. **A saved man does not become more righteous by pretending he has never laughed at something foolish. He demonstrates wisdom by learning when laughter is appropriate and when wickedness deserves something other than applause.**

Ephesians 5:4 brings the issue to its proper conclusion: “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” The apostle did not command the saints to become miserable, humorless creatures incapable of enjoying the blessings of ordinary life. He instructed them to reject corrupt speech and cultivate conduct appropriate to those redeemed by Jesus Christ. Christians should therefore enjoy wholesome laughter, appreciate genuine wit, expose hypocrisy when necessary, and refuse the notion that every subject becomes acceptable once somebody attaches a punchline. They should be especially careful when the name of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the object of ridicule, when sexual wickedness becomes a celebration, and when cruelty becomes entertainment. The believer should never allow a laugh track to determine what is morally acceptable. God's word has already established that authority. **There is a time to laugh, but there is also a time to recognize that the joke has gone too far. When a generation can laugh at adultery, applaud blasphemy, mock marriage, ridicule**

righteousness, and make a punchline out of the name of Jesus Christ, the problem is not that Christianity has lost its sense of humor. The problem is that the world has lost its sense of reverence. And one day, when every mouth is stopped before Almighty God, nobody will be laughing at His holiness.

8 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — Famous for Being Famous: Celebrity Worship and the Idols Behind the Screen

Key Passage: Exodus 20:3 (KJV) — "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

There was a time when men carved their idols out of wood, covered them with gold, set them upon pedestals, and bowed before them in temples. Today, the idols have publicists, personal trainers, endorsement contracts, millions of followers, and enough money to purchase the temple outright. The modern worshipper does not necessarily kneel before a golden calf. He purchases concert tickets, memorizes the opinions of famous strangers, defends their wickedness, imitates their lifestyles, and treats their every public statement as though it descended from Mount Sinai accompanied by thunder and lightning. A movie actor expresses an opinion about morality, and suddenly half the country is expected to reconsider what it believes. A singer announces a personal philosophy, and devoted admirers repeat it as though musical ability confers divine revelation. An athlete becomes wealthy through extraordinary physical talent, and people begin consulting him about marriage, religion, and the meaning of life. Apparently, being able to throw a ball, carry a tune, or pretend to be somebody else on a screen now qualifies a person to instruct civilization in righteousness. The golden calf has received a considerable technological upgrade, but the human appetite for idolatry has not changed.

Celebrity culture has become one of the most influential institutions in modern society because it converts public attention into personal authority. Famous individuals are not merely admired for their abilities. They become models of conduct, objects of emotional devotion, and representatives of whatever moral philosophy they choose to promote. Their clothing becomes fashionable, their language becomes familiar, their personal habits become desirable, and their opinions become respectable because their names are recognized. Millions of people who would never accept advice from an ordinary stranger will enthusiastically follow that same advice when delivered by somebody whose photograph appears on a magazine cover. The contradiction is astonishing. A man may demand qualifications from the mechanic repairing his automobile, credentials from the physician treating his illness, and experience from the contractor repairing his roof, yet

accept moral instruction from an entertainer whose principal qualification is that other people know his name. Fame has become a counterfeit certificate of wisdom, and the public keeps renewing the license without examining the applicant.

The Bible never condemns the recognition of genuine talent, artistic skill, athletic excellence, or legitimate achievement. Scripture recognizes gifted individuals, skilled craftsmen, accomplished musicians, courageous soldiers, diligent workers, and people entrusted with unusual abilities. The problem is not appreciating a person's gifts. The problem begins when admiration becomes devotion, when talent becomes moral authority, and when the created person receives the affection, loyalty, and trust that belong ultimately to the Creator. Exodus 20:3 declares, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Although the commandment was originally given to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, its condemnation of idolatry cannot be dismissed as an obsolete concern for Christians living under grace. The New Testament repeatedly warns believers against idols, covetousness, worldly affection, and misplaced worship. The modern Christian should therefore examine whether entertainment has become a means of appreciating human ability or a doorway through which famous strangers begin governing his convictions. **There is nothing wrong with appreciating talent. The trouble begins when the talented person replaces the truth as the object of your loyalty.**

1. Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods: The Commandment Modern Celebrity Culture Forgot

Exodus 20 records the LORD delivering His commandments to the children of Israel following their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The opening declaration establishes the covenant setting: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2). The first commandment follows immediately: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The second forbids making and worshipping graven images. These commandments were delivered to Israel as part of the law governing that nation, and Christians must not confuse Israel's national covenant with the spiritual position of the Body of Christ. The Church is not under the Mosaic law as its covenant arrangement, and believers are not justified through obedience to Israel's commandments. Nevertheless, the character of God has not changed. The LORD who condemned idolatry at Sinai has not suddenly become agreeable toward creature worship because the present dispensation is characterized by grace. First Corinthians 10:14 directly commands Christians, “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

The original commandment addressed the worship of false gods and the construction of physical idols. Israel repeatedly demonstrated the danger by adopting the religious practices of surrounding nations. Exodus 32 records the people persuading Aaron to make

a golden calf while Moses remained upon the mountain. Aaron fashioned the image, and the people proclaimed, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:4). Imagine the absurdity. The LORD had delivered Israel through mighty judgments, parted the Red Sea, destroyed Pharaoh's army, and sustained His people in the wilderness. Then the people credited their deliverance to an object recently manufactured from their own jewelry. Idolatry had not improved their intelligence. It had merely provided an impressive demonstration of how foolish men can become when they decide to manufacture something more convenient than obeying the living God. The modern world may laugh at Israelites worshipping a golden calf while displaying nearly identical devotion to entertainers whose pictures were manufactured in a photography studio.

Modern celebrity admiration is not automatically the same act as bowing before an ancient idol, and biblical judgment requires that distinction. Appreciating an actor's performance or admiring an athlete's discipline does not constitute worship merely because the person is famous. But devotion becomes spiritually dangerous when admiration assumes the characteristics of misplaced religious loyalty. Does the admirer excuse wickedness because his favorite celebrity commits it? Does he rearrange his convictions whenever that celebrity announces a contrary opinion? Does he defend the person's reputation more passionately than he defends biblical truth? Does his affection become so intense that criticism of the entertainer produces greater outrage than public blasphemy against Jesus Christ? Those questions reveal whether ordinary appreciation has become something considerably more serious. **An idol does not need a golden body when it has already captured the heart. The ancient worshipper carried his god into a temple; the modern worshipper carries his favorite celebrity everywhere in his pocket.**

2. Put Not Your Trust in Princes: Fame Is Not a Certificate of Wisdom

Psalm 146:3 declares, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.” The psalm contrasts the limitations of human power with the everlasting faithfulness and authority of the LORD. Verse 4 reminds readers that a man's breath departs, he returns to the earth, and his thoughts perish. Verse 5 declares, “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.” The immediate setting concerns trusting God rather than placing ultimate confidence in earthly rulers and powerful men. The principle extends naturally to the misplaced confidence people place in famous individuals. A prince may possess authority, wealth, influence, and public recognition while remaining a mortal man. The same is true of the celebrity. Fame does not deliver a person from sin, guarantee wisdom, establish righteousness, or provide authority

over God's revelation. A famous person may possess remarkable abilities while being profoundly mistaken concerning matters outside his knowledge.

Consider the strange arrangement in which entertainers become authorities upon subjects unrelated to their actual accomplishments. A gifted actor may understand theatrical performance, memorization, dramatic expression, and the requirements of professional filmmaking. Those abilities deserve recognition where appropriate. But none of them automatically qualifies him to interpret Scripture, define marriage, establish morality, or instruct Christians concerning their duty before God. A musician may possess extraordinary musical ability without possessing sound judgment concerning spiritual matters. An athlete may demonstrate remarkable dedication while maintaining foolish convictions about life. A social-media personality may understand how to attract attention while knowing very little about the truth he confidently discusses. The Christian should not confuse expertise in one field with authority in every field. **A man who can entertain ten million people may still be incapable of giving one sound answer concerning eternal salvation. The size of the audience does not improve the quality of the doctrine.**

First Corinthians 1:26 reminds believers, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” Paul was addressing the Corinthians concerning the wisdom of God and the foolishness of worldly boasting. The passage does not teach that educated, wealthy, or accomplished individuals cannot be saved. It exposes the inability of worldly status to establish spiritual superiority. Verse 29 gives the purpose: “That no flesh should glory in his presence.” The Christian should therefore refuse the popular assumption that fame confers special insight into righteousness. A celebrity may say something true, and truth should be recognized. He may also say something false, and falsehood should be rejected. The standard is not the speaker's popularity but the accuracy of the statement. Christians who demand that preachers support their teaching from Scripture should not suspend that requirement whenever a movie star begins discussing religion. **The Bible does not become less authoritative because the person contradicting it owns a mansion, wears expensive clothing, and has a personal chef.**

3. Worshipping the Creature: When God's Gifts Become God's Competitors

Romans 1:25 describes fallen mankind as those “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” The surrounding passage concerns humanity's rejection of divine revelation, the corruption of worship, and the resulting manifestations of unrighteousness. Verse 21 explains that men knew God but failed to glorify Him as God or become thankful. Verse 23 describes the exchange of the glory of the incorruptible God for images resembling

corruptible creatures. Paul is establishing the guilt of mankind before God, preparing the doctrinal foundation for the gospel of justification by faith developed throughout Romans. The passage should not be reduced to a careless accusation that everyone who admires a famous person has committed the precise idolatry described in Romans 1. Nevertheless, it exposes the spiritual disorder that occurs when the creature receives devotion properly belonging to the Creator. That disorder remains possible wherever human achievement becomes the ultimate object of affection.

Consider the abilities that make celebrities famous. Musical talent, physical coordination, intelligence, creativity, beauty, persuasive speech, and unusual discipline are all exercised by human beings who remain dependent upon their Creator for life itself. Acts 17:28 declares, “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Paul spoke those words while addressing the Athenians concerning the true God who made the world and all things therein. The creature cannot claim ultimate independence from the Creator. Yet celebrity culture frequently encourages admiration of the gift while completely disregarding the One who made human ability possible. The singer receives worshipful praise for possessing a remarkable voice. The athlete is treated almost as a supernatural being because of physical ability. The actor becomes an object of devotion because of personal charm and dramatic skill. Such accomplishments may be impressive, but none of them establishes divinity. **The ability to sing beautifully does not make a person worthy of worship any more than the ability to paint beautifully makes the artist the Creator of the universe.**

Acts 14 provides a remarkable example of how quickly human admiration can become idolatry. After Paul healed a man at Lystra, the people declared, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11). They identified Barnabas and Paul with their false gods and prepared to offer sacrifices. The apostles did not accept the attention as a wonderful opportunity to improve their public reputation. They tore their clothes, ran among the people, and declared, “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Acts 14:15). Then they directed attention toward the living God. Here were genuine apostles through whom God had worked a miracle, yet they refused worship. Compare that response with a celebrity culture in which ordinary human beings are routinely surrounded by language suggesting they are almost divine. Paul and Barnabas understood that servants must not steal the glory of their Master. **If genuine apostles refused to be treated as gods after a miracle, an entertainer ought not require worship merely because he successfully completed another motion picture.**

4. The Stranger Who Feels Like Family: When Entertainment Manufactures Intimacy

Modern technology permits people to follow the ordinary activities of famous strangers with remarkable detail. They can watch personal videos, observe family celebrations,

follow vacations, read daily opinions, and receive carefully selected glimpses into private life. Some public figures communicate sincerely with their audiences, and there is nothing automatically dishonest about sharing appropriate personal information. Nevertheless, the constant appearance of familiarity can create an illusion of closeness that does not correspond to an actual personal relationship. A person may know a celebrity's birthday, favorite foods, childhood stories, and daily schedule while the celebrity has never heard his name. He may feel personally wounded when the entertainer makes a disappointing decision, as though a trusted relative has betrayed him. Meanwhile, the public figure continues living an entirely separate life. **Knowing everything a stranger chooses to publish about himself is not the same thing as knowing the stranger. A screen can provide familiarity without providing fellowship.**

The Christian should examine how much emotional attention he gives to relationships that exist primarily through entertainment. Proverbs 18:24 declares, “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” The passage concerns the value and responsibilities of genuine friendship. Actual relationships require mutual concern, honesty, responsibility, and a willingness to serve another person beyond the convenience of passive observation. Watching a famous individual speak into a camera does not necessarily establish that kind of relationship. Christians may reasonably appreciate a public teacher, admire an entertainer, or enjoy a personality's work without pretending that a one-sided familiarity constitutes intimate friendship. The trouble begins when distant personalities receive the affection and attention that ought to be invested in real family members, church relationships, and responsible personal fellowship. A man can spend an evening following the details of a celebrity's marriage while ignoring the wife sitting beside him. He knows every development in a stranger's household and cannot remember what his own child told him at breakfast.

Obsessive fan communities can intensify this misplaced loyalty. Individuals may defend famous people against every criticism, attack strangers who question them, and treat ordinary disagreements as personal betrayals. The celebrity becomes the center of an identity larger than the actual entertainment being enjoyed. Such conduct should be examined in the light of First Corinthians 3, where Paul rebuked believers for attaching themselves improperly to particular ministers. Some claimed allegiance to Paul, others to Apollos, and still others to Cephas. Paul exposed the carnality involved in such divisions and reminded them that ministers were servants through whom they had believed. If Christians were wrong to develop improper loyalties around genuine ministers of the gospel, they should certainly be cautious about surrendering their judgment to entertainers. **A favorite actor is not your Saviour, a popular singer is not your shepherd, and a social-media celebrity is not entitled to the loyalty that belongs to Jesus Christ.**

5. Buying the Image: Covetousness, Merchandise, and the Price of Admiration

Celebrity culture does not merely sell entertainment. It sells lifestyles, appearances, possessions, and the suggestion that ordinary people can acquire some measure of fame's imagined happiness by purchasing the appropriate merchandise. A famous individual appears wearing expensive clothing, displaying luxurious property, or promoting a fashionable product, and admirers are encouraged to imitate the example. Advertisers understand that association with celebrity can increase the attractiveness of ordinary merchandise. There is nothing inherently sinful about purchasing a useful product because someone recognizable recommends it. But the Christian must examine whether his decisions are governed by actual need, reasonable preference, or covetous desire. Luke 12:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ warning, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” The historical occasion concerned a dispute over inheritance, but the principle exposes the folly of making possessions the measure of life. A person does not become more valuable because he purchases the same expensive shoes as a famous athlete.

First Timothy 6:6 declares, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Paul continues by reminding Timothy that people brought nothing into the world and can carry nothing out. Verse 10 warns that “the love of money is the root of all evil,” exposing the destructive consequences of covetousness. These instructions do not condemn honest wealth, legitimate business, or every expensive purchase. They warn against making riches and possessions the governing desires of life. Celebrity worship often encourages precisely that misplaced affection. Admirers may become dissatisfied with their ordinary homes, clothing, automobiles, marriages, or employment because they continually compare their circumstances with carefully selected displays of extraordinary wealth. The comparison is frequently dishonest from the beginning because public images reveal only what the celebrity chooses to display. Yet the follower begins measuring personal success against a lifestyle that may be financially impossible and spiritually empty. **A millionaire's expensive furniture cannot purchase contentment, and buying a smaller imitation of his furniture will not manufacture it either.**

The financial consequences become especially obvious when devotion turns into reckless spending. Some fans purchase repeated editions of essentially identical merchandise, spend beyond their means attending performances, or sacrifice necessary obligations to maintain a sense of connection with a favorite personality. Others make extravagant purchases because a famous stranger publicly endorses them. Again, neither attending a concert nor purchasing memorabilia is automatically sinful. The issue concerns stewardship, motive, and proportion. First Timothy 5:8 establishes the seriousness of

providing for one's household, while Proverbs 21:20 contrasts wise preservation with foolish consumption. A Christian who struggles to meet necessary responsibilities while continually spending money to imitate celebrity extravagance should examine his priorities. The performer may receive another endorsement payment, but the admirer remains responsible for his own bills. **There is something especially foolish about going into debt to imitate a wealthy person who became wealthier by persuading you to buy the merchandise. The celebrity gets the commission, the customer gets the payment schedule, and everybody calls it inspiration.**

6. The Celebrity Exception: When Famous Sin Receives Special Permission

James 2:1 declares, “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.” James proceeds to describe a wealthy visitor receiving favorable treatment while a poor man is dishonored. The passage exposes sinful partiality within the assembly, where outward appearance and social standing become improper measures of personal worth. The immediate circumstances concern treatment of individuals in Christian fellowship, but the principle provides a searching warning against the double standards often practiced in celebrity culture. A famous entertainer commits conduct that Christians would condemn immediately in an ordinary neighbor, yet admirers produce elaborate excuses for the celebrity. The wickedness becomes understandable because the offender is talented. The dishonesty becomes insignificant because the performer is charming. The immoral conduct becomes a private matter because the individual's latest production was enjoyable. Apparently, popularity has become a moral discount card entitling its owner to favorable treatment whenever righteousness becomes inconvenient.

This double standard is especially obvious when Christians excuse behavior among favored public figures that they would strongly condemn in their own households. A parent may warn his children against drunkenness while celebrating entertainers who openly glorify intoxication. A believer may insist upon marital fidelity while defending a favorite celebrity's adultery as the understandable consequence of an unhappy marriage. Another may condemn profanity while eagerly repeating the filthy language of a fashionable performer. The inconsistency reveals that affection has begun interfering with judgment. Proverbs 17:15 declares, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.” The verse belongs to Israel's wisdom literature and condemns the corruption of moral judgment. It does not require Christians to treat every personal failure as equally serious or refuse mercy to repentant sinners. But mercy is not the same thing as declaring wickedness righteous. **A sin does not become a**

virtue when committed by somebody who can sell out an auditorium. The crowd may applaud the performer, but applause has never repealed the Scriptures.

There is also the question of celebrities presenting themselves as authorities concerning religion and biblical morality. A famous individual may publicly claim Christianity while teaching ideas contrary to Scripture. Another may reject biblical teaching altogether and encourage admirers to do likewise. The Christian should examine such statements by the written word rather than by personal attachment to the speaker. First John 4:1 commands, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The immediate passage concerns testing spiritual claims and false prophets, not treating every entertainer as a religious teacher. Nevertheless, when a public figure begins making doctrinal claims, those claims must be evaluated according to Scripture. The same principle applies to preachers, authors, musicians, and anyone else claiming spiritual authority. Fame does not establish sound doctrine, and obscurity does not establish error. **The truth is not decided by counting followers. If one man has the Bible on his side and ten million people have a famous personality on theirs, the arithmetic has not altered the authority of God.**

7. Keep Yourselves From Idols: Recovering the Proper Place of Human Admiration

First Corinthians 10:14 declares, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Paul wrote to believers in Corinth, where the influence of pagan worship and questions concerning participation in idolatrous practices created serious concerns. The surrounding chapter recalls Israel's wilderness failures as warnings and proceeds to discuss fellowship with idolatrous sacrifices. Verse 21 declares, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." These words concern actual religious fellowship and must not be carelessly transformed into a declaration that every sporting event, musical performance, or motion picture constitutes demon worship. Nevertheless, the command to flee idolatry remains directly applicable to Christians. The believer must refuse to grant created persons the devotion, trust, or authority belonging to God. Celebrity culture becomes spiritually dangerous when human admiration grows into misplaced worship. The issue is not whether the person is famous. It is whether the Christian has allowed fame to become an excuse for surrendering his allegiance to the Lord.

First John 5:21 concludes the epistle with a remarkably direct warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." John had just written concerning eternal life, the true God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 20 declares, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." The

warning against idols follows this declaration of truth. The contrast is significant. The believer possesses eternal life through Jesus Christ and should therefore refuse devotion to false objects of worship. The command does not establish a system in which Christians maintain salvation by successfully avoiding every misplaced affection. Eternal security rests upon Christ's finished work. But saved people are responsible to guard their worship and conduct. **John did not conclude his epistle by telling believers to keep themselves from unpopular idols while permitting fashionable ones. An idol remains an idol even when it has excellent publicity.**

Practical obedience begins with putting human admiration back into its proper place. Appreciate talent without worshipping the talented. Enjoy legitimate entertainment without surrendering moral judgment. Recognize admirable discipline, courage, and skill without pretending that the individual possessing those qualities must therefore be correct about every other subject. Refuse obsessive spending, unhealthy attachment, and the habit of excusing wickedness because the offender happens to be famous. Invest meaningful attention in actual family relationships, local church fellowship, and opportunities to serve others. Above all, allow the written word of God to govern convictions. Colossians 3:17 declares, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” That instruction reaches entertainment as surely as employment, conversation, and household conduct. **A Christian may enjoy a singer's voice, admire an athlete's ability, or appreciate an actor's performance without turning any of them into a substitute for the Saviour. Talent deserves appropriate recognition. Worship belongs to God alone.**

Celebrity culture thrives because it offers people attractive human figures around whom to organize admiration, affection, spending, and personal identity. The entertainment industry promotes its stars, advertisers purchase their influence, and audiences are encouraged to treat public recognition as evidence of exceptional wisdom. Yet the Bible consistently exposes the limitations of human greatness. The most talented performer remains a creature. The wealthiest celebrity remains mortal. The most admired public figure remains accountable to Almighty God. No collection of awards, followers, endorsements, or successful productions can change those realities. Christians should therefore resist the temptation to measure truth by popularity or morality by the conduct of famous people. A celebrity may possess genuine ability and deserve appreciation within the proper limits of that ability. But admiration becomes dangerous when it demands the surrender of biblical judgment. **The world is perfectly willing to sell you a hero. The Christian ought to be careful before purchasing one whose example requires him to apologize for the commandments of God.**

This warning must never be confused with the gospel of salvation. Avoiding celebrity worship does not earn eternal life, and admiring a famous entertainer does not automatically establish that a person is lost. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The sinner receives salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work, not through the accomplishment of a sufficiently respectable entertainment history. Nevertheless, grace does not eliminate the responsibility to walk in obedience. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That instruction includes the affections, loyalties, and convictions cultivated through entertainment. The Christian should not become self-righteous because he refuses to idolize celebrities, but neither should he use liberty to excuse devotion that belongs to God. **Salvation is not earned by refusing to bow before an idol. But a saved man has excellent reason to stop bowing before one.**

Exodus 20:3 remains a solemn declaration of the LORD's rightful supremacy: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Israel received that commandment within its covenant relationship with Jehovah, and the Church must not be confused with Israel under the law. Nevertheless, the New Testament confirms that Christians must flee idolatry and keep themselves from idols. The principle is as searching today as it was when men bowed before images of wood and stone. Modern idols may possess beautiful faces, extraordinary voices, impressive abilities, immense wealth, and astonishing public influence. They may appear on screens instead of temple altars and collect subscribers instead of offerings. But no human being deserves the worship and ultimate trust that belong to the living God. Christians should appreciate what is genuinely admirable without allowing admiration to govern their convictions. They should recognize talent without surrendering truth, enjoy recreation without becoming enslaved to personalities, and remember that every famous individual remains a mortal creature accountable to the Creator. **Fame does not establish righteousness, popularity does not establish truth, and a million admirers cannot transform wickedness into virtue. The golden calf may have acquired a microphone, a movie contract, and fifty million followers, but it is still a calf. And the God who said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” has not changed His mind because the idol learned how to entertain.**

9 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — When the Scoreboard Becomes an Altar: Sports, Obsession, and the Things We Worship

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 9:24–25 (KJV) — "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

There is something remarkably revealing about a man who can remember the batting average of a baseball player from thirty years ago, recite the statistics of every quarterback in his favorite team's history, explain the advantages of a particular defensive formation, and recall the final score of a championship game played before his children were born, yet cannot remember where the book of Habakkuk belongs in his Bible. He can identify every player on the roster, argue over questionable officiating decisions, and explain precisely why his team should have won a game it lost seventeen seasons ago. Ask him to explain justification by faith, however, and suddenly the conversation becomes complicated. Mention the judgment seat of Christ, and he looks as though someone has introduced an unfamiliar subject. But ask whether a particular athlete deserves another contract, and the man becomes a walking encyclopedia. Evidently, the human memory is capable of remarkable accomplishments when the heart considers the subject important. **The problem is not always that Christians lack the ability to learn Scripture. Sometimes the scoreboard has simply become more interesting than the Bible.**

Athletics are not inherently wicked. Running, swimming, playing baseball, competing in football, learning tennis, exercising the body, and participating in organized sports can provide legitimate enjoyment and valuable instruction. Competition may encourage diligence, teamwork, perseverance, respect for rules, physical discipline, and the ability to respond appropriately to both victory and defeat. Families may enjoy attending sporting events together, children may develop friendships through athletics, and adults may benefit from recreation that provides necessary relief from demanding responsibilities. Scripture does not command Christians to abandon these activities merely because worldly people also participate in them. The Bible itself uses athletic competition to illustrate important spiritual truths. The problem begins when a legitimate activity becomes an illegitimate master, when recreation becomes devotion, and when temporary athletic achievement receives the affection and attention that ought to belong to eternal matters. **A football is not an idol because somebody kicks it across a field. It becomes part of a spiritual problem when the man watching it has surrendered his judgment, priorities, and affections to the game.**

Modern sports culture has developed into something considerably larger than occasional recreation. Professional leagues command enormous audiences, athletic celebrities receive extraordinary admiration, gambling interests surround major events, and

supporters organize substantial portions of their lives around schedules established by teams they do not own and players they have never met. Parents may spend years sacrificing family time, financial resources, and spiritual priorities pursuing athletic opportunities for their children. Adults become genuinely angry over games they cannot control, and entire communities treat sporting victories as though the fate of civilization hangs upon the final score. Yet the apostle Paul presents athletic competition as an illustration of a greater spiritual pursuit. The Christian must therefore ask whether he is using sports as a lawful pastime or allowing sports to govern his life. Enjoying a game is not the same as worshipping a game. Supporting a team is not necessarily idolatry. But when a person's happiness, conduct, relationships, finances, and spiritual responsibilities are repeatedly subordinated to athletic entertainment, the issue has moved beyond recreation. **The scoreboard was designed to record the results of a game. It was never intended to become the governing authority of a Christian's life.**

1. So Run, That Ye May Obtain: What Paul Actually Taught About Athletics

First Corinthians 9:24 declares, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” Paul was writing to believers in Corinth, where athletic competition would have provided a familiar illustration of disciplined effort. The surrounding chapter concerns his apostolic ministry, his legitimate rights as a minister, his willingness to surrender personal privileges for the gospel's sake, and his determination to serve effectively. He had discussed his right to receive material support while explaining why he voluntarily refrained from exercising that right in certain circumstances. Verse 23 declares, “And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.” Then Paul introduces the race. The illustration concerns determined Christian service, not a system through which sinners earn eternal life. The apostle does not tell lost people to run fast enough to purchase salvation. He instructs believers to exercise the kind of purposeful discipline demonstrated by serious competitors. The runner has a goal, and Paul expects Christians to possess one worth pursuing.

Notice that Paul does not condemn athletic competition while drawing his illustration. He recognizes the effort required to pursue a prize and employs that reality to explain spiritual responsibility. The athlete prepares, practices, exercises restraint, and directs his attention toward the finish line. Paul says, “So run, that ye may obtain.” The command is not to wander around the track occasionally admiring the scenery. It calls for earnestness in the Christian life. Yet many believers demonstrate greater determination to follow professional athletics than to serve the Lord. They will rearrange schedules to watch a championship, endure considerable inconvenience to attend a game, and spend money obtaining the best possible view of an event. Those same individuals may treat prayer, Bible study, and

meaningful Christian service as optional activities to be considered when nothing more interesting is happening. Paul would have recognized the athlete's discipline immediately. He might have wondered why so little of it remained when the Christian turned his attention toward the things of God. **Some Christians are remarkably faithful to their teams and remarkably casual about the One who purchased them with His blood.**

First Corinthians 9:25 continues, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” The contrast is the heart of the illustration. The athlete pursues a temporary reward. The Christian serves with eternal accountability in view. Paul is not suggesting that athletic prizes are necessarily wicked or that winning a competition is shameful. He is comparing the temporary nature of earthly achievement with the lasting significance of faithful Christian service. The competitor exercises restraint because the objective matters to him. The believer should demonstrate even greater spiritual seriousness because his objective concerns eternal realities. There is something rather embarrassing about a Christian who admires an athlete for rising early, following a strict schedule, and sacrificing personal comfort, yet describes regular Bible study as an unreasonable burden. The athlete may sacrifice considerable pleasure for a trophy that eventually collects dust. **The Christian has eternal rewards before him, yet sometimes behaves as though the greatest accomplishment of life is remembering who won the championship.**

2. Bodily Exercise Profiteth Little: The Difference Between Useful and Ultimate

First Timothy 4:8 declares, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” The apostle Paul wrote these words to Timothy while instructing him concerning sound doctrine, godliness, and faithful ministry. Verse 7 commands, “But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” The contrast concerns the relative value of bodily exercise and spiritual discipline. Paul does not declare that physical exercise is worthless. He explicitly acknowledges that it possesses some profit. The mistake arises when temporary physical benefits are treated as though they possess the same enduring significance as godliness. A Christian may properly care for his body, maintain reasonable fitness, participate in athletics, and appreciate disciplined physical training. But he must not mistake physical development for spiritual maturity. **A man may possess extraordinary muscles while remaining spiritually weaker than a wet paper bag. The size of his arms does not establish the strength of his faith.**

The body deserves responsible care because it belongs to the life God has entrusted to the believer. First Corinthians 6:19–20 reminds Christians that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost and that they have been bought with a price. The immediate passage

concerns sexual purity and the proper use of the body, not a detailed athletic training program. Nevertheless, it establishes that bodily conduct is not morally irrelevant. Physical activity can assist with ordinary responsibilities, encourage discipline, and provide wholesome enjoyment. Sports may also teach children how to follow instructions, cooperate with others, accept correction, and persevere through difficulty. Those benefits should not be dismissed merely because competitive athletics can be abused. The Bible does not require believers to become physically inactive in order to demonstrate spirituality. But the same Scripture that permits attention to bodily responsibilities demands attention to greater things. The athlete who spends hours developing physical ability while neglecting his character has invested heavily in something that cannot compensate for what he has abandoned.

Paul explains why godliness possesses superior value: it has “promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” The spiritual life of the believer reaches beyond the present world. Physical strength eventually declines. Athletic records are broken. Championships are forgotten. Trophies change owners, and the most celebrated competitors eventually surrender their positions to younger athletes. There is nothing sinful about appreciating the temporary achievements of human ability, but there is considerable foolishness in treating those achievements as permanent treasures. Ecclesiastes 9:11 observes that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,” reminding readers that earthly outcomes are not always determined by apparent ability. The Christian should enjoy lawful physical activities without making them the foundation of his identity. **The strongest athlete in the stadium will eventually grow old, and the greatest champion cannot prevent the passage of time. A trophy may preserve the memory of a victory, but it cannot preserve the man who won it.**

3. Where Your Treasure Is: When the Schedule Reveals the Heart

Matthew 6:21 declares, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” The Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words during the Sermon on the Mount, addressing His disciples within the historical setting of His earthly ministry to Israel. The surrounding passage contrasts earthly and heavenly treasures and warns against attempting to serve two masters. Verse 19 commands, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,” and verse 20 directs attention toward treasures in heaven. The passage must not be carelessly transformed into a promise that Church-age believers can earn salvation by maintaining proper priorities. Nevertheless, Christ's statement concerning treasure and affection reveals a universal truth about human conduct. People naturally direct attention, effort, and resources toward what they consider valuable. A man's declarations may sound impressive, but his habitual choices often reveal what he genuinely treasures. **A person**

can announce that God comes first in his life while maintaining a calendar that repeatedly gives the Lord whatever time remains after entertainment has finished making its demands.

Consider the extraordinary arrangements people make for sports. Games are recorded, travel plans are changed, family gatherings are scheduled around major events, and considerable sums are spent on tickets, subscriptions, equipment, and merchandise. None of these activities is automatically sinful. Recreation costs money, and people may reasonably spend a portion of their resources enjoying legitimate activities. The concern arises when sporting events consistently receive priority over responsibilities that Scripture plainly establishes. A man may be unwilling to miss a televised game but think nothing of repeatedly neglecting Bible reading. Parents may insist that children attend every practice while treating spiritual instruction as something to pursue when circumstances permit. An adult may spend hours analyzing athletic performance while claiming that serious study of Scripture is too demanding. The contradiction becomes more revealing when the individual grows angry at anyone who questions the arrangement. **If moving a church responsibility requires no consideration, but moving a football game requires an emergency family conference, the household may have revealed which institution possesses the greater authority.**

There is also the question of emotional treasure. Some supporters experience extraordinary excitement when their team wins and prolonged bitterness when it loses. They may allow the outcome of a game to govern their conduct toward family members, coworkers, and strangers. A person who is cheerful after victory but miserable after defeat has permitted something outside his control to exercise considerable authority over his disposition. Philippians 4:11 records Paul's declaration, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” The context concerns the apostle's experience of both abundance and need, not the results of sporting events. Nevertheless, the principle concerning contentment challenges unnecessary dependence upon temporary circumstances. Christians may be pleased when their team succeeds and disappointed when it loses without surrendering their peace to the outcome. **A championship can provide an enjoyable evening, but it cannot purchase lasting contentment. If eleven men on a field can ruin your entire week, perhaps they have been given more authority over your life than they deserve.**

4. The Family on the Sidelines: When Children's Sports Become the Household Religion

Organized youth athletics can provide valuable opportunities for children to develop physical ability, learn teamwork, respect legitimate authority, practice perseverance, and

enjoy friendships. Parents who encourage participation are not automatically sacrificing their children's spiritual welfare. Nevertheless, youth sports can become an all-consuming family enterprise when competitive success receives greater attention than character, education, family relationships, and biblical instruction. Some children participate in multiple teams, travel extensively for competitions, practice throughout the week, and spend weekends moving from one athletic obligation to another. The family calendar becomes a complicated collection of practices, tournaments, transportation arrangements, and additional expenses. These commitments may be appropriate within reasonable limits, but parents should ask whether the child is genuinely benefiting from the arrangement or whether the household has begun serving the demands of an increasingly competitive system. **A child does not become more valuable because someone places his name on a traveling team roster, and winning a tournament does not automatically establish that his parents have raised him wisely.**

Ephesians 6:4 commands, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Paul addresses Christian household responsibilities, establishing that fathers have obligations extending far beyond providing entertainment and educational opportunities. The child's spiritual instruction cannot properly become an occasional activity squeezed between athletic competitions. Parents should also examine whether excessive expectations are creating unnecessary pressure, resentment, or bitterness. A child who enjoys playing baseball should not be treated as a family disappointment because he does not possess professional ability. A young athlete should not be made to believe that parental affection depends upon winning. Proverbs 22:6 instructs concerning the training of a child, and Ephesians 6 provides direct Church-age instruction. The objective is to raise responsible young people, not manufacture athletic trophies with human personalities attached. **If the child can identify every rule of his sport but has never been taught the gospel clearly, the parents may have confused athletic preparation with the more important responsibilities of raising him.**

The same concern applies when organized sports repeatedly interfere with family relationships and Christian fellowship. Some households rarely share an uninterrupted meal because everyone is traveling to practices or competitions. Others abandon nearly every opportunity for meaningful family instruction because sporting schedules have become untouchable. This does not mean that a Christian family sins whenever a legitimate athletic commitment conflicts with a particular church activity. Scripture does not provide a universal calendar requiring believers to attend every possible gathering regardless of circumstances. Hebrews 10:25 does, however, warn against forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, and parents should take their responsibilities seriously. Reasonable decisions require wisdom, not mechanical rules invented to burden every

family equally. The problem is a pattern in which sports invariably win and spiritual responsibilities invariably surrender. **Parents should remember that childhood championships eventually become photographs in a drawer. The character, convictions, and relationship with God cultivated during those years remain matters of far greater consequence.**

5. The Stadium Full of Idols: When Admiration Becomes Worship

Athletic ability can be extraordinary. Some competitors possess remarkable strength, speed, coordination, endurance, and discipline. Their achievements may deserve appropriate recognition, just as Christians may appreciate a gifted musician, skilled craftsman, accomplished physician, or diligent worker. Scripture does not condemn excellence merely because it attracts public attention. Yet modern sports culture sometimes elevates athletes into objects of excessive devotion. Supporters imitate their appearance, defend their personal conduct, repeat their opinions, and treat their achievements as evidence of authority concerning subjects entirely unrelated to athletics. A player may possess extraordinary knowledge of a particular sport while knowing very little about marriage, morality, religion, or the meaning of life. The Christian should not confuse athletic skill with spiritual wisdom. Psalm 146:3 warns, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." The immediate passage concerns the limitations of earthly rulers, but its warning against misplaced human trust remains applicable.

First Corinthians 10:14 commands believers, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Paul wrote to Christians living amid pagan religious influences, and the surrounding context concerns actual idolatrous practices and fellowship with pagan sacrifices. Appreciating a famous athlete is not automatically the same thing as worshipping an ancient idol. Nevertheless, misplaced devotion becomes a spiritual problem when admiration begins governing convictions and conduct. A Christian should not excuse dishonesty, adultery, cruelty, profanity, or other wickedness merely because the offender plays for his favorite team. Neither should athletic fame become a substitute for biblical authority. The man who insists upon sound doctrine from his pastor should not abandon every standard of judgment when a celebrated athlete begins offering moral instruction. **The ability to throw a football seventy yards does not qualify a man to rewrite the Ten Commandments. God has never appointed professional athletes as a new class of apostles because they can fill a stadium.**

Rivalry presents another revealing test. Friendly competition can be enjoyable, but some supporters treat opposing teams and their followers as personal enemies. They become abusive, threatening, dishonest, or deliberately cruel over the results of games. Ephesians 4:31 commands Christians to put away "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,

and evil speaking." Verse 32 directs them toward kindness and forgiveness. These commandments do not become optional when the referee makes a questionable decision. James 1:20 declares, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." A Christian may disagree with an official, criticize a team's performance, or enjoy harmless competitive banter without abandoning righteousness. But threatening another supporter, verbally abusing a child, or mistreating one's family because a team loses reveals an entirely different problem. **If a sporting event can turn a professing Christian into a foul-mouthed tyrant for three hours, perhaps the game is exposing something his Sunday appearance has managed to conceal.**

6. The Wager Behind the Whistle: When Sports Become a Marketplace for Covetousness

Modern sports entertainment increasingly intersects with gambling, wagering promotions, and financial speculation concerning athletic results. The Christian should examine these activities through Scripture rather than assuming that everything permitted by civil law is spiritually profitable. The Bible does not provide a verse explicitly naming modern sports betting, and responsible interpretation should acknowledge that fact. Nevertheless, Scripture contains serious warnings concerning covetousness, the love of money, dishonest gain, and irresponsible stewardship. First Timothy 6:9 declares, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The passage concerns the dangerous determination to pursue riches, not every legitimate financial transaction or ordinary commercial risk. Its warning becomes relevant when entertainment is increasingly marketed as an opportunity to obtain money through uncertain outcomes. **The same game that once provided an enjoyable afternoon can become a financial obsession when the spectator decides that watching is no longer exciting unless his money is endangered.**

Sports wagering can also change the spectator's relationship with the event itself. Instead of appreciating athletic skill, teamwork, and competition, the viewer becomes preoccupied with whether a particular player achieves the statistical result necessary for a financial return. He may become angry when an injured athlete cannot finish a game, not because of concern for the person's welfare, but because the injury ruins his wager. He may begin spending more than he can reasonably afford while convincing himself that the next contest will recover previous losses. Not every individual who makes a wager experiences these consequences, and Scripture does not justify inventing universal claims. But the possibility of financial harm and covetous attachment deserves serious attention. Proverbs 13:11 warns, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour

shall increase." The Christian should remember that a scheme promising effortless wealth is not necessarily wise because a famous athlete appears in the advertisement.

Financial stewardship also concerns the ordinary expenses of athletic devotion. Season tickets, travel, premium subscriptions, equipment, memorabilia, and youth competition fees can represent legitimate recreational spending when managed responsibly. But a Christian who neglects necessary bills, accumulates irresponsible debt, or fails to provide for his household while spending extravagantly upon sports has misplaced his priorities. First Timothy 5:8 establishes the seriousness of providing for one's own household. The issue is not whether a family may enjoy a sporting event or purchase merchandise bearing the name of a favorite team. It is whether entertainment has begun consuming resources needed for greater responsibilities. A believer should be capable of examining his spending without treating every financial question as an attack upon his personal freedom. **A man who cannot afford to repair his roof but somehow finds money for every championship ticket has developed an unusual interpretation of financial stewardship. The stadium may have a magnificent roof, but unfortunately it does not keep the rain out of his living room.**

7. Do All to the Glory of God: The Christian Who Knows Where the Finish Line Is

First Corinthians 10:31 declares, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The immediate context concerns Christian liberty, food associated with idolatrous sacrifices, the conscience, and the believer's responsibility to avoid unnecessarily harming others. Paul addresses practical decisions that might otherwise appear spiritually insignificant. Eating and drinking are ordinary activities, yet the apostle insists that even these matters should be governed by a desire to glorify God. The application to recreation is therefore appropriate. Christians are not required to turn every baseball game into a religious ceremony or insist that every athletic contest contain a sermon. They are required to govern their conduct as people who belong to Jesus Christ. A believer can participate in sports with honesty, kindness, self-control, gratitude, and appropriate restraint. He can compete vigorously without cheating, enjoy victory without arrogance, and accept defeat without becoming bitter or abusive.

The question of Christian liberty must also be handled accurately. Romans 14 warns believers against improperly condemning one another concerning matters of conscience, while First Corinthians 10 reminds Christians that not everything lawful is necessarily profitable. Some believers may prefer not to follow professional sports because they recognize that the activity has previously consumed too much of their attention. Others may enjoy games regularly while maintaining proper responsibilities and biblical convictions. Neither group possesses authority to invent commandments that God has not

given. The Christian who attends a sporting event is not automatically an idolater, and the Christian who refuses to attend is not necessarily more spiritual. The actual conduct, affections, and priorities matter. Colossians 3:17 declares, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” **The Lord does not forbid a believer from enjoying a ballgame, but neither does He surrender His authority over that believer during the fourth quarter.**

Paul concludes his athletic illustration in First Corinthians 9:26–27 by declaring, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” The immediate concern is disciplined service and the possibility of becoming disapproved in one's ministry, not the loss of eternal salvation through insufficient athletic effort. The believer's redemption rests upon Jesus Christ, while his service remains a matter of accountability. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That judgment concerns the believer's accountability before the Lord, not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Earthly athletes compete for temporary distinctions. Christians serve with eternal accountability before them. **A championship trophy may be impressive upon a shelf, but it will have very little to say when a believer stands before the Lord Jesus Christ to give account of the life he actually lived.**

The problem with sports obsession is not that athletics are inherently wicked or that Christians must abandon wholesome recreation. The problem is that a legitimate pastime can become a misplaced devotion when it begins controlling time, emotions, finances, family relationships, and spiritual priorities. Scripture recognizes athletic discipline and uses it to illustrate the Christian's responsibility to pursue things of greater significance. The believer should therefore enjoy sports within proper boundaries while remembering that entertainment is not the purpose for which he was redeemed. A game may provide excitement, fellowship, exercise, and temporary satisfaction. It cannot provide eternal life, forgive sins, establish righteousness, or replace faithful obedience to God. The Christian who remembers these distinctions can appreciate athletic excellence without worshipping it. **There is nothing wrong with cheering when your team scores. There is something seriously wrong when the scoreboard exercises more authority over your conduct than the Scriptures you profess to believe.**

The gospel must remain distinct from the believer's practical conduct. No sinner earns salvation by avoiding professional sports, refusing to gamble, maintaining perfect family priorities, or spending every available hour studying Scripture. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not

of works, lest any man should boast." The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Eternal salvation rests upon His finished work, received by faith, not upon personal achievement. Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not eliminate the Christian's responsibility to walk wisely. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. A saved man should therefore examine whether recreation has become his master. **Grace does not require a Christian to stop enjoying life. It teaches him to stop allowing temporary pleasures to govern the life Christ redeemed.**

Colossians 3:1–2 provides the proper conclusion: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Paul addresses believers whose lives are identified with the risen Saviour. His instruction concerns the proper direction of their affections. Earthly activities have their place, but they must never be permitted to replace eternal priorities. Enjoy the game. Appreciate the athlete. Encourage your children. Exercise your body. Celebrate an honest victory and accept a legitimate defeat. But remember that every championship eventually becomes history, every athletic career eventually ends, and every temporary trophy will someday lose its significance. The Christian has been called to something greater than spending his life cheering for accomplishments that cannot survive eternity. **You may know every statistic, remember every championship, and defend every decision your favorite team has ever made. But if the stadium receives your devotion while the Scriptures receive your leftovers, something has gone terribly wrong. The scoreboard can tell you who won the game. It cannot tell you whether you have wasted your life.**

10 of 10 — Entertainment and the Eye Gate — The Endless Stream and the Empty Soul: Redeeming the Time in an Age That Never Stops Watching

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:15–16 (KJV) — "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

There was a time when a man had to make a deliberate decision to entertain himself. He purchased a ticket, traveled to a theater, turned on a television at a particular hour, or selected a record from the shelf. Today, entertainment follows him into the bedroom, the bathroom, the automobile, the restaurant, the workplace, and sometimes even the church pew. He can wake up with a screen in his hand, eat breakfast while watching strangers

argue, spend lunch following celebrities, return home to several streaming subscriptions, and fall asleep while another program plays beside his pillow. The remarkable thing is that he can accomplish all of this while insisting that he never has enough time to read his Bible. Apparently, the day contains twenty-four hours for everybody except the Christian who needs fifteen minutes alone with God. He has time for another episode, another video, another game, another highlight, and another argument involving people he has never met. But ask him about his prayer life, and suddenly he becomes a very busy man.

Modern entertainment has accomplished something previous generations could scarcely have imagined. It no longer requires the audience to seek it out continually because the machinery is designed to keep offering more. Finish one program, and another begins automatically. Watch a short video, and another appears beneath it. Follow one subject, and the system recommends twenty additional subjects. Every selection becomes an opportunity to extend the viewing session. The screen does not need to announce that it wants the next hour of your life. It simply provides enough material to make surrendering that hour feel natural. Meanwhile, children grow older, marriages require attention, responsibilities remain unfinished, and opportunities for meaningful service quietly pass away. The entertainment may be innocent in itself, but the hours consumed are real. A man may watch nothing particularly wicked and still waste an astonishing portion of his life doing nothing particularly profitable. **The devil does not have to fill every screen with pornography and blasphemy if he can keep a Christian sufficiently distracted to neglect everything that matters.**

This final investigation concerns the cumulative danger of entertainment that gradually becomes the governing influence of daily life. Television can teach worldly morality, movies can glorify sin, music can cultivate corrupt affections, gaming can dominate the schedule, pornography can encourage secret lust, violent spectacles can entertain cruelty, comedy can destroy reverence, celebrities can capture misplaced devotion, and sports can become objects of extraordinary loyalty. Yet even entertainment containing none of those particular evils can become destructive when consumed without discipline. The issue is not merely what Christians watch, hear, or enjoy. It is what those activities are permitted to replace. The apostle Paul commands believers to redeem the time because the days are evil. That instruction exposes the fundamental question of this entire series: Is entertainment serving a legitimate purpose within the Christian's life, or has the Christian gradually rearranged his life to serve entertainment? **A man does not need to commit some spectacular public scandal to waste his opportunities. He can simply spend his life watching somebody else live.**

1. Redeeming the Time: The Commandment That Modern Entertainment Would Prefer You Forget

Ephesians 5:15 declares, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” The apostle Paul is addressing saved members of the Body of Christ concerning their practical Christian walk. The surrounding chapter commands believers to follow God as dear children, walk in love, refuse the unfruitful works of darkness, and conduct themselves as children of light. Verse 14 declares, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” The language calls for spiritual seriousness rather than careless living. Paul then commands believers to walk circumspectly, meaning they must conduct themselves with careful attention and sound judgment. This is not a method of obtaining eternal life. Ephesians 2:8–9 has already established salvation by grace through faith apart from works. These are instructions concerning the conduct of people who belong to Jesus Christ. The believer has been redeemed, and his daily life ought to reflect the claims of the One who redeemed him.

Verse 16 continues, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Paul does not say to redeem the time because Christians might eventually become famous, wealthy, or professionally successful. He connects the commandment with the evil character of the present age. Opportunities for obedience, service, witness, family instruction, and spiritual growth must not be treated as inexhaustible possessions. The believer has a limited earthly life in which to serve the Lord. James 4:14 asks, “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” That is a devastating comparison for anyone convinced that tomorrow will always provide another opportunity to accomplish what he refuses to undertake today. A man may waste an entire evening and promise to recover the time next week. But next week does not return the hours already spent. **Time is the one possession every person is continually spending, whether he intends to spend it or not. The only question is what he receives in exchange.**

Ephesians 5:17 adds, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Notice the connection between redeeming time and understanding God's will. Christians frequently speak about discovering divine guidance while neglecting commandments already plainly written in Scripture. They want to know where God intends them to be five years from now but demonstrate little interest in obeying Him during the next five hours. The Bible commands prayer, godliness, honest labor, family responsibility, Christian fellowship, and faithful service. These duties do not become mysterious because an individual would rather watch another episode. Legitimate rest and recreation have their place, but wisdom requires recognizing when lesser activities are displacing greater responsibilities. A Christian who claims that he cannot find time for Scripture while

spending several hours every evening watching entertainment has not necessarily encountered a scheduling problem. He may have encountered a priority problem. **The calendar often reveals what the mouth is unwilling to confess.**

2. I Will Set No Wicked Thing Before Mine Eyes: Guarding the Entrance to the Heart

Psalm 101:3 declares, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” David's declaration belongs to a psalm concerning righteous conduct, household integrity, judgment, and his responsibilities as king in Israel. Verse 2 states, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” The historical setting must be respected. David was not issuing instructions concerning internet subscriptions or establishing Church-age doctrine. Nevertheless, the practical principle remains unmistakable. A man has a responsibility to exercise judgment concerning the influences he deliberately welcomes into his life. David did not promise that he would never encounter wickedness. He declared that he would not intentionally establish it before his eyes. That distinction matters. Christians cannot avoid every corrupt advertisement, objectionable conversation, or unexpected encounter with worldly conduct. But they possess considerable freedom to decide what they repeatedly seek, purchase, subscribe to, and enjoy.

The modern screen has made that responsibility both more difficult and more important. Entertainment platforms can present new material continuously, often according to subjects previously viewed or selected. A person interested in one innocent subject may be offered related material that gradually moves toward foolishness, sensuality, controversy, or outright wickedness. Not every recommendation system operates identically, and technology is not a supernatural creature secretly possessing moral intentions. These systems are built and operated by human beings, frequently with commercial objectives that reward continued engagement. Nevertheless, the Christian must recognize the practical danger. The next video is not necessarily more profitable than the previous one simply because the application recommends it. A man who permits automated suggestions to determine his entire evening has surrendered a remarkable amount of personal judgment to machinery that has never read Ephesians 5. **An algorithm may be excellent at discovering what holds your attention while knowing absolutely nothing about what deserves your attention.**

David's words also address the danger of attachment: “It shall not cleave to me.” Entertainment can become familiar enough that a believer begins defending material he previously recognized as objectionable. He likes the characters, enjoys the music, appreciates the performers, or becomes emotionally invested in the story. Eventually, the enjoyment becomes more important than the biblical questions surrounding it. A Christian

should therefore examine not only whether particular content contains explicit wickedness but also whether he has developed attachments that interfere with his judgment. Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The heart is not supposed to become an unattended storage room for every influence the world chooses to distribute. Biblical discernment requires deliberate selection and the willingness to reject what is unprofitable. **The eye gate was never intended to operate as an entrance without a guard. If everything is permitted through the gate, the owner should not be surprised when the house becomes crowded with unwanted guests.**

3. I Will Not Be Brought Under the Power of Any: When Entertainment Becomes the Master

First Corinthians 6:12 declares, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul was addressing the Corinthians concerning Christian liberty, the proper use of the body, and the danger of sexual immorality. The surrounding verses make clear that the apostle was not authorizing conduct explicitly forbidden by God. Verse 13 declares, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” Verse 20 commands believers to glorify God in their bodies and spirits because they belong to Him. The principle is therefore not unlimited personal freedom. It is liberty governed by the authority of Christ. Something may be lawful without being profitable, and a lawful activity may become destructive when it gains improper control over the individual. Recreation is included within that practical consideration.

The test of mastery is often revealed when a person attempts to stop. Can the television be turned off without resentment? Can the phone remain untouched during a meaningful conversation? Can a family enjoy supper without everybody examining a separate screen? Can a Christian leave a streaming program unfinished because another responsibility requires attention? Can a child accept reasonable limits without displaying uncontrolled anger? None of these questions establishes that every lengthy viewing session is sinful. There are legitimate occasions for relaxation, extended recreation, and family entertainment. The difficulty arises when the individual repeatedly proves unwilling to exercise restraint. Proverbs 25:28 declares, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” The man who cannot govern his own appetites is spiritually vulnerable, regardless of how sophisticated his electronic equipment has become. **A device does not need chains to hold a prisoner when the prisoner has decided that he enjoys captivity.**

Some believers will insist that their entertainment is harmless because they can stop whenever they choose. That declaration deserves no argument if their conduct

demonstrates genuine self-control. But if every attempt to establish limits is abandoned, every interruption produces irritation, and every responsibility becomes negotiable whenever entertainment is available, the claim begins sounding rather hollow. Galatians 5:13 declares, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Christian liberty is not an excuse for self-indulgence at the expense of others. A husband may legally own a television while sinfully neglecting his wife. A parent may lawfully enjoy recreation while failing to instruct his children. A worker may possess every right to purchase electronic entertainment while behaving irresponsibly toward his employment. The issue is not the mere existence of the activity. It is the conduct surrounding it. **When entertainment begins demanding obedience, consuming responsibilities, and resisting reasonable restraint, the Christian should recognize that the servant has begun acting like the master.**

4. All Things Edify Not: When Amusement Consumes What Should Have Been Built

First Corinthians 10:23 declares, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." The surrounding chapter concerns Christian liberty, idolatrous associations, conscience, and consideration for other believers. Paul addresses the difference between possessing legitimate freedom and using that freedom wisely. The word "edify" concerns building up rather than tearing down. The Christian is not commanded to make every recreational activity a formal Bible study, but he is instructed to consider whether his choices are genuinely profitable. Something may provide temporary amusement without contributing meaningfully to spiritual growth, family relationships, or legitimate restoration. That does not automatically make the activity sinful. But when amusement continually displaces everything more important, the cumulative result becomes a serious concern. A person can spend an entire day doing things that are not individually forbidden and still accomplish almost nothing that ought to have been done.

Consider the effect upon ordinary relationships. A father returns home from work and immediately disappears into his television. His children would like to speak with him, but the program is more interesting. His wife needs his attention, but another episode has already begun. A mother may similarly become absorbed in social media while important household conversations are neglected. Children can become so accustomed to constant electronic stimulation that ordinary family interaction seems inconvenient. These situations are not inevitable consequences of technology, and families differ in their habits and needs. Nevertheless, the obligations established in Scripture remain. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Those responsibilities cannot continually be postponed because entertainment happens to be available. **A man may possess the largest television in the neighborhood while his family struggles to obtain five minutes of his undivided attention. That is not technological progress worth celebrating.**

The same principle applies to Christian fellowship, useful labor, and the cultivation of spiritual understanding. Colossians 3:16 commands, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” That requires more than occasionally hearing a religious phrase between advertisements. Scripture must be read, considered, understood, and allowed to govern conduct. Yet uninterrupted attention can become difficult when a person continually interrupts serious activities to examine notifications, messages, and entertainment. This is not a claim that every electronic device damages concentration or that believers must abandon technology. It is a recognition that deliberate study requires deliberate attention. The Christian cannot continually divide his mind among competing amusements and expect the same result as sustained consideration of God's word. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. **A man who can concentrate for three hours upon a complicated sporting contest should not pretend that fifteen minutes of Bible study represents an impossible demand upon his intellectual abilities.**

5. Whatsoever Is Not of Faith Is Sin: Liberty, Conscience, and the Danger of Invented Commandments

Romans 14:22–23 declares, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” The passage concerns disagreements among believers regarding food and the esteem of particular days. Paul instructs Christians to exercise charity, avoid unnecessary disputes, and refuse to act contrary to conscience. The word “damned” in this context concerns condemnation connected with knowingly acting contrary to faith in the disputed practice. It does not teach that a saved member of the Body of Christ loses eternal salvation by eating the wrong food. Nor does the passage establish that whatever one Christian personally dislikes must be prohibited for every other believer. The apostle is addressing responsible liberty and the danger of violating conscience. Those distinctions are essential when considering entertainment.

Some Christians have attempted to solve every entertainment question by constructing extensive lists of forbidden activities without establishing those prohibitions from Scripture. One condemns every television program. Another forbids all secular music. Another insists that every video game is inherently wicked. Still another treats attending a

sporting event as evidence of spiritual compromise. Such claims may reflect sincere personal convictions, but sincerity does not transform a personal standard into a universal commandment. Colossians 2:20–23 warns against religious regulations that possess an appearance of wisdom while failing to provide genuine victory over the flesh. The believer should not surrender biblical discernment to a collection of man-made rules merely because those rules sound severe. **A preacher may thunder against every amusement he personally dislikes, but the volume of his voice does not add another chapter to the King James Bible. God's commandments are sufficient without human inventions attached as supplementary legislation.**

The opposite error is equally dangerous. Christian liberty cannot make fornication, blasphemy, filthy communication, covetousness, or deliberate wickedness acceptable simply because a believer claims personal freedom. Romans 14 addresses disputable matters; it does not repeal clear biblical prohibitions. Christians must distinguish what Scripture explicitly condemns from matters requiring personal discernment. One believer may wisely avoid a particular streaming service because of objectionable content or previous difficulties exercising restraint. Another may use that service selectively without violating conscience or neglecting responsibilities. The first should not automatically accuse the second of wickedness, and the second should not despise the first for exercising caution. Yet both must remain subject to the authority of Scripture. First Corinthians 10:31 declares, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” **Liberty is not permission to silence the Bible, and conviction is not authority to rewrite it. Christian maturity requires knowing the difference.**

6. Laying Aside Every Weight: The Race That Cannot Be Run While Carrying Everything

Hebrews 12:1 declares, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” The verse follows Hebrews 11, where the inspired record recounts the faith of men and women who endured extraordinary trials while trusting God. The immediate setting concerns perseverance in faith, and the following verse directs attention toward Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith.” The passage does not teach that Christians must abandon every lawful pleasure to earn salvation. Neither should the cloud of witnesses be carelessly represented as a stadium full of departed saints continually watching every earthly activity. The emphasis is upon the testimony provided by their faith and the necessity of enduring the race set before the believer. The instruction to lay aside both weight and sin contains an important distinction.

A weight is not necessarily identical to an explicitly forbidden sin. In an athletic contest, a runner may possess something perfectly lawful that nevertheless hinders his performance

when carried during the race. The illustration provides a searching principle concerning the Christian life. Some activities are wicked in themselves and must be rejected because Scripture condemns them. Other activities may be lawful but become unnecessary burdens because they consume time, distract attention, or interfere with important responsibilities. Entertainment frequently falls into this second category. A program may contain nothing particularly objectionable, yet the habit of watching several hours every evening may prevent a believer from accomplishing things that matter considerably more. A Christian may possess legitimate liberty to enjoy an activity while recognizing that he personally needs to restrict it. **The runner does not need to prove that a heavy suitcase is sinful before deciding that carrying it through a race is foolish. Sometimes the problem is not wickedness but unnecessary weight.**

Verse 2 supplies the proper direction: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." The Christian race is not supposed to become a contest in which believers boast about who owns the fewest electronic devices or watches the smallest number of television programs. The objective is faithful perseverance with attention fixed upon the Lord. The Christian should therefore examine what hinders that pursuit. Does an entertainment habit interfere with prayer, Scripture, family responsibility, honest labor, or service? Has recreation become an excuse for avoiding difficult but necessary duties? Does the individual repeatedly surrender opportunities for spiritual growth because another pleasant distraction is available? These questions require honest judgment rather than mechanical rules. Hebrews 12 does not command believers to throw away every possession that might occupy their attention. It commands them to lay aside what hinders the race. **A man can spend his entire life collecting amusements and discover at the finish line that he has been carrying everything except the responsibility he was supposed to fulfill.**

7. Taking Back the Home: When the Word of God Regains Its Proper Place

Christian parents have a serious responsibility to govern the influences entering their homes without producing unnecessary fear, hypocrisy, or resentment. Ephesians 6:4 declares, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This instruction concerns the household responsibilities of believers under grace. Parents are not commanded to raise children who never encounter the world, never enjoy recreation, or never ask difficult questions. They are responsible to provide instruction, correction, guidance, and a consistent example of Christian conduct. Modern entertainment requires thoughtful attention because children can access an enormous variety of material through devices that fit inside their pockets. The appropriate response is neither complete parental indifference nor the assumption

that every technological invention is an instrument of Satan. Parents should know what their children are watching, establish reasonable boundaries, explain biblical principles, and remain personally involved in their lives.

Parental example is especially important because children recognize hypocrisy with remarkable efficiency. A father who spends every evening absorbed in television while angrily restricting his children's recreational time has created an obvious contradiction. A mother who continually examines social media while insisting that her children put away their devices during family conversations is communicating a similarly confusing message. Parents possess legitimate authority to establish different boundaries for children and adults, but authority does not exempt them from personal responsibility. Colossians 3:21 warns fathers against provoking their children to anger, lest they become discouraged. The Christian home should not become a place where every reasonable pleasure is treated as suspicious while adults indulge their own habits without restraint. Instead, families should cultivate wholesome recreation, meaningful conversation, shared responsibilities, Scripture reading, and opportunities for fellowship. **Children need more than parents who know how to confiscate a telephone. They need parents who demonstrate that real life contains something more valuable than whatever appears upon the screen.**

The practical recovery of time begins with deliberate choices rather than impressive declarations that disappear after two days. A Christian can establish regular periods for prayer and Bible study, determine reasonable limits for entertainment, complete necessary responsibilities before indulging in recreation, and reduce unnecessary interruptions during family activities. He can examine subscriptions that provide little benefit, remove applications that repeatedly encourage objectionable material, and refuse the assumption that every notification demands immediate attention. He can also learn to enjoy quiet moments without constantly reaching for another source of stimulation. None of these practices constitutes a new commandment binding every believer to an identical schedule. They are examples of wisdom applied to ordinary circumstances. Psalm 90:12 declares, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” The psalm belongs to Moses and reflects the brevity of human life under God's sovereign authority. Its practical lesson remains searching. **A man who numbers his days carefully will be considerably less eager to spend them carelessly.**

Conclusion: When the Screen Goes Dark, What Will Remain?

The modern world has created an extraordinary supply of entertainment, but it has not created additional hours in which to enjoy it. Every person still receives the same twenty-four hours in a day, and every earthly life continues moving toward its conclusion. Streaming subscriptions will remain available after a believer's opportunities for service

have passed. There will always be another sporting event, another video, another movie, another game, another celebrity scandal, and another argument involving people who have never heard his name. The entertainment industry is perfectly capable of continuing without him. His children, however, will not remain young indefinitely. His marriage will not flourish through continual neglect. His responsibilities will not accomplish themselves. His opportunities to witness, serve, study, encourage others, and redeem the time will not remain available forever. James 4:14 reminds us that life is a vapour appearing briefly before vanishing away. **The world has enough entertainment to occupy a thousand lifetimes, but God has given each of us only one earthly life in which to serve Him. That ought to settle the question of priorities before another episode begins.**

Yet this warning must never be confused with the gospel of salvation. A sinner cannot purchase eternal life by abandoning television, avoiding movies, restricting music, refusing video games, or eliminating every questionable form of recreation. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood paid the price for sin. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The believer's eternal security rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not upon a perfect record of entertainment choices. Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not make faithful Christian service unimportant. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That judgment concerns the believer's accountability before the Lord and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. The Christian will not purchase redemption through his works, but his service and faithfulness remain matters of eternal significance. **A saved man may never lose the eternal life Christ purchased for him, yet he can squander opportunities that will never return. Grace removes the fear of earning salvation; it does not remove the responsibility to live for the Saviour.**

Ephesians 5:15–16 remains the final commandment governing this entire investigation: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The Christian should not respond by treating every amusement as wicked or by pretending that legitimate rest and recreation have no proper place in life. He should respond by restoring biblical authority over his choices. Guard the eyes. Examine the entertainment. Refuse the glorification of wickedness. Govern the appetites. Protect the household. Redeem the hours. Give the word of God its rightful place, and remember that eternal priorities deserve more than whatever attention remains after the world has finished entertaining you. The screen is not your Saviour, the entertainer is not your shepherd, the algorithm is not your conscience, and the next episode is not your calling. One day, every television will be silent, every subscription will be worthless, and every earthly opportunity will have reached its conclusion. What will matter then is not how

much entertainment you consumed but whether you lived faithfully before the Lord who redeemed you. **What you watch is watching you back—not because the screen possesses a soul, but because what continually captures your attention can begin shaping your affections, governing your choices, and consuming your life. The tragedy is not that the world has found a thousand ways to entertain a Christian. The tragedy is that a Christian can become so entertained by the world that he forgets why God left him here.**

Conclusion — Entertainment and the Eye Gate: What You Watch Is Watching You Back

One day, the television will go dark, the music will stop playing, the final game will end, the last movie will finish, and the endless stream of entertainment that consumed so much of mankind's attention will become utterly irrelevant. The celebrity whose every movement commanded millions of admirers will be forgotten. The athlete whose victories once brought entire stadiums to their feet will have played his final contest. The comedian whose filthy jokes filled auditoriums will no longer have an audience, and the fictional characters who occupied countless evenings will disappear into the memories of people who spent portions of their lives watching them. But the life that was spent will not return. The hours surrendered to entertainment cannot be recovered, the neglected responsibilities cannot always be repaired, and the opportunities that passed while attention was fixed upon a screen will remain in the past. James 4:14 declares, “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” That ought to settle something in the mind of every Christian who believes his earthly life has an eternal purpose. **The world has enough entertainment to keep a man occupied until he dies, but it does not possess a single program that can give him back the years he wasted watching.**

Throughout these ten studies, we have examined the entertainment that enters through the eyes and ears, occupies the imagination, influences the affections, competes for attention, and sometimes gains remarkable control over daily conduct. We have considered television, movies, music, video games, pornography, violent entertainment, filthy comedy, celebrity worship, sports obsession, and the endless digital stream that offers another distraction whenever the previous one finishes. The central concern has never been that enjoyment is inherently wicked or that every Christian must abandon recreation to demonstrate holiness. Such teaching would require commandments that God never gave. The concern is that many believers have become remarkably careless about what they

deliberately welcome into their lives while remaining convinced that entertainment has no meaningful influence upon them. They recognize the danger of false doctrine when it comes from a pulpit but sometimes fail to recognize the same doctrine when it arrives through a beautiful song, an attractive actor, or a cleverly written storyline. They would not permit a stranger to instruct their children in immorality, yet they willingly purchase entertainment that presents immorality as something admirable. **The devil does not have to defeat a Christian in an open argument when the Christian has already agreed to enjoy the devil's philosophy as recreation.**

David declared in Psalm 101:3, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” Those words were spoken within Israel's historical setting by a man responsible for governing himself, his household, and his royal administration. They are not a direct commandment concerning modern electronic devices, but the practical principle could scarcely be more appropriate. David understood that righteousness involved what he deliberately permitted within his sight and household. Verse 2 declares, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” The home was not exempt from the authority of God simply because public observers were absent. That is a lesson many Christians desperately need to recover. It is possible to maintain an admirable religious appearance while permitting influences within the home that openly contradict the convictions professed at church. A man can carry a King James Bible under his arm on Sunday morning and spend the remainder of the week entertaining himself with material that ridicules nearly everything written inside it. The contradiction does not disappear because the entertainment was purchased legally. **A Christian cannot protect his household merely by locking the front door while deliberately inviting corruption through every electronic entrance in the building.**

The Lord Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 6:22–23, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” The immediate context concerns the treasures of the heart, the proper direction of one's affections, and the impossibility of serving two masters. Christ was not delivering a sermon about television, but He was exposing the spiritual importance of what captures and governs the inner life. Verse 21 declares, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” That statement reaches beyond entertainment into the governing priorities of human existence. What a person treasures will frequently command his attention, influence his decisions, and occupy his thoughts. The modern entertainment industry understands the commercial value of attention, but Christians should understand its spiritual significance. The eye is not an independent instrument disconnected from the heart. What a believer deliberately watches, repeatedly admires, and voluntarily entertains may influence what he eventually regards as acceptable. **A**

screen cannot force a Christian to love wickedness, but a Christian can certainly cultivate foolish affections by repeatedly entertaining himself with what God condemns.

Television and motion pictures have demonstrated how effectively storytelling can communicate moral instruction without announcing that any instruction is taking place. A sympathetic character commits adultery, and the audience is encouraged to regard the betrayal as a beautiful romance. A dishonest man deceives others, and the script presents his conduct as cleverness. A rebellious individual rejects legitimate authority, and the audience is instructed to admire his independence. Meanwhile, a character representing biblical morality may be portrayed as ignorant, cruel, intolerant, or incapable of understanding ordinary human experience. Isaiah 5:20 declares, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" The original warning was delivered against the moral corruption of Judah, but God's condemnation of reversing righteousness and wickedness remains unmistakable. A fictional narrative may truthfully portray sin without endorsing it, and Christians must preserve that distinction. But when entertainment deliberately asks the audience to celebrate what Scripture condemns, biblical judgment must prevail over emotional presentation. **The villain does not become righteous because he receives the best dialogue, and adultery does not become honorable because the music sounds romantic. God has never submitted His commandments to a Hollywood script committee for revision.**

Music presents another searching examination because words accompanied by melody can remain in the memory long after an ordinary conversation has been forgotten. A Christian may sing along with messages celebrating fornication, drunkenness, adultery, revenge, covetousness, or blasphemy while insisting that he would never personally encourage such conduct. Yet Ephesians 5:19 instructs believers concerning "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16 connects Christian singing with the word of Christ dwelling richly in believers, teaching and admonishing one another in wisdom. These passages do not establish that every modern instrument, rhythm, or musical genre is inherently wicked. Nor do they prohibit wholesome songs about ordinary human experiences. They establish that music is capable of communicating spiritual instruction and that Christians should examine what their songs are teaching. A beautiful melody may accompany truth or falsehood. An impressive performance may communicate sound doctrine or moral corruption. The musical arrangement does not settle the matter. **If a Christian would not tolerate a preacher encouraging fornication, blasphemy, and drunkenness from the pulpit, he should consider why the identical message becomes acceptable when**

delivered through headphones. Putting wickedness to music does not convert it into worship.

Video games have exposed another danger: the ability of lawful recreation to become a controlling influence. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul was addressing Christian liberty and the proper use of the body, not establishing a direct commandment against electronic games. Nevertheless, his refusal to become enslaved to anything provides a searching standard for examining recreation. A man may enjoy an occasional game without sinning, but he should recognize the problem when gaming repeatedly interferes with employment, family relationships, necessary sleep, financial stewardship, and spiritual responsibilities. A teenager who spends hours mastering imaginary challenges while refusing ordinary duties is not demonstrating impressive diligence. He is demonstrating that diligence has been directed toward the wrong objective. An adult who cannot stop playing without becoming angry has surrendered something more important than his free time. **There is no great spiritual accomplishment in conquering a fictional kingdom while allowing your real household to fall apart. The highest score on the screen cannot compensate for the lowest level of responsibility in your own life.**

Pornography presents the matter with even greater seriousness because it deliberately cultivates sexual lust outside the boundaries established by God. Job declared, “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). The Lord Jesus Christ addressed deliberate lust in Matthew 5:28, and Paul commanded believers to flee fornication in First Corinthians 6:18. These passages must be understood in their proper doctrinal settings, but they leave no room for treating deliberate sexual corruption as innocent recreation. There is a difference between unexpectedly encountering an objectionable image and intentionally searching for material designed to cultivate lust. There is a difference between temptation and willing consent. There is also a difference between genuine repentance and merely becoming more skillful at concealing wrongdoing. The believer who recognizes a sinful habit must deal honestly with it, seek appropriate accountability where necessary, and refuse the excuses that preserve opportunities for further indulgence. Nor should the person who has fallen be encouraged to surrender to hopelessness. The blood of Jesus Christ remains sufficient, and the grace of God instructs believers to pursue holiness. **A locked door may conceal a computer screen from the neighbors, but it cannot conceal deliberate wickedness from the God who created the eyes looking at it.**

Violent entertainment and filthy comedy have demonstrated how easily amusement can alter a person's response to conduct Scripture treats seriously. Psalm 11:5 declares that the LORD condemns the wicked and the lover of violence. Proverbs 3:31 warns against envying the oppressor, while Proverbs 24:17 warns against rejoicing when an enemy falls. These passages do not condemn legitimate self-defense, responsible military service, lawful justice, or every truthful portrayal of conflict. They expose the danger of developing an appetite for cruelty. The same principle applies when comedy transforms wickedness into material for applause. Ephesians 5:4 warns against filthiness, foolish talking, and unsuitable jesting, while Proverbs 14:9 declares, “Fools make a mock at sin.” Scripture does not condemn wholesome laughter, clever observations, or sharp wit used to expose hypocrisy. But laughter does not establish moral innocence. A cruel act remains cruel when presented as a practical joke, and blasphemy remains blasphemy when delivered by a talented comedian. **The crowd may roar with laughter while the Christian's conscience ought to be sounding an alarm. A laugh track has never possessed the authority to pardon what God condemns.**

Celebrity culture and sports obsession reveal how entertainment can gradually acquire the characteristics of misplaced devotion. Exodus 20:3 declares, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” while First Corinthians 10:14 directly commands Christians to flee idolatry. Appreciating a talented performer, successful athlete, or accomplished individual does not automatically constitute worship. Yet admiration becomes spiritually dangerous when a famous person's opinions begin governing convictions, when wickedness is excused because the offender is popular, or when devotion to an entertainer becomes more important than faithfulness to God. Sports can encourage discipline, teamwork, physical fitness, and legitimate family enjoyment, but they can also consume extraordinary amounts of time, money, and emotional attention. Paul used athletic competition in First Corinthians 9 to illustrate the Christian's responsibility to pursue eternal rewards rather than temporary distinctions. The contrast remains searching. **A man may remember every championship, defend every athlete, and know every statistic while remaining almost completely ignorant of the Scriptures he claims to believe. Fame does not establish righteousness, athletic achievement does not establish spiritual wisdom, and a stadium full of cheering spectators cannot transform a temporary trophy into an eternal reward.**

The endless stream of digital entertainment brings these concerns together because it allows distraction to occupy nearly every available moment. Streaming subscriptions, mobile devices, social media, recommendation systems, and continuous programming have made it possible to move from one amusement to another without deliberate interruption. A person may finish an evening having watched nothing particularly offensive

while accomplishing almost nothing useful. That distinction matters. Not every wasted opportunity involves an explicitly wicked activity. Sometimes the difficulty is that lawful pleasures have been permitted to consume time needed for greater responsibilities. Hebrews 12:1 commands believers to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The passage distinguishes hindering weights from sin while directing attention toward faithful perseverance. The Christian may therefore need to restrict an activity without declaring the activity inherently wicked for everybody else. **A runner does not have to prove that a heavy suitcase is sinful before recognizing that carrying it through a race is foolish. Some entertainment must be rejected because it is wicked. Other entertainment must be limited because it has become a weight.**

The Christian home deserves particular attention because children learn not only from formal instruction but also from the example established by their parents. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That responsibility cannot be transferred entirely to a Sunday school teacher, a Christian school, or an occasional family devotion. Parents should know what their children are watching, understand the moral messages contained in their entertainment, establish reasonable boundaries, and explain those boundaries from Scripture rather than merely issuing unexplained prohibitions. But they must also examine their own conduct. A father who spends every evening watching television while angrily condemning his children's electronic habits has established a remarkable contradiction. A mother who constantly examines social media while insisting that the children give her their undivided attention has provided a lesson they will recognize immediately. Different responsibilities may justify different rules for adults and children, but parental authority does not remove the obligation to demonstrate self-government. **Children need more than parents who know how to take away a telephone. They need parents who demonstrate that real life contains something more valuable than whatever is happening on a screen.**

Marriage likewise suffers when entertainment becomes a substitute for ordinary affection, meaningful conversation, and shared responsibility. Ephesians 5:25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Colossians 3:19 instructs husbands to love their wives and not be bitter against them. These commandments concern real conduct, not merely respectable public appearances. A husband cannot continually neglect his wife while insisting that his entertainment habits are nobody else's concern. A wife likewise should not permit constant amusement to displace the responsibilities and consideration appropriate to marriage. Legitimate recreation can strengthen family relationships when enjoyed together within reasonable boundaries. The problem arises when everyone occupies the same house while living

inside a separate electronic world. A family may possess several expensive screens, excellent internet service, and unlimited access to entertainment while becoming increasingly unfamiliar with the ordinary concerns of one another. **It is possible to have a house full of communication devices and a family that hardly communicates. The machinery works perfectly; the relationships are what need attention.**

Yet we must not make the mistake of treating every form of entertainment as sinful merely because some people abuse it. Romans 14 provides important instruction concerning matters of conscience and the danger of improperly judging brethren over disputed practices. One Christian may wisely avoid a particular program because its content troubles his conscience. Another may exercise discernment concerning the same category of entertainment without violating an explicit biblical command. Scripture does not authorize either believer to invent universal commandments where God has not spoken. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." Christian liberty must be governed by biblical truth, personal responsibility, and consideration for others. The believer who insists that every amusement is permitted because he is under grace has misunderstood liberty. The believer who invents new commandments against every amusement he personally dislikes has misunderstood authority. **God did not give Christians liberty so they could excuse the flesh, and He did not give preachers authority so they could manufacture commandments. The Bible is sufficient without either corruption.**

This distinction is especially important because religious legalism can become just as destructive to sound biblical judgment as careless worldliness. A man may construct an impressive list of prohibited activities and then congratulate himself for possessing superior holiness. He refuses television, avoids secular music, condemns every sporting event, and treats recreational enjoyment as though it were the first stage of apostasy. Yet the same man may cultivate pride, bitterness, dishonesty, covetousness, or an unkind spirit while imagining that his entertainment restrictions make him righteous. Colossians 2:20–23 warns against man-made religious ordinances that possess an appearance of wisdom while failing to provide genuine victory over the flesh. Holiness is not established by inventing regulations God never commanded. Nor should personal convictions become instruments for condemning every brother who does not adopt them. The Christian must be careful not to replace genuine obedience with an outward system of religious appearance. **A man can throw away his television and remain thoroughly worldly. The absence of a screen does not automatically produce the presence of spiritual maturity.**

Neither should Christians imagine that entertainment becomes doctrinally sound merely because somebody places a religious label upon it. Christian films, music, documentaries, television programs, and online ministries must also be examined according to Scripture. A beautiful religious production may teach baptismal regeneration, salvation by works, replacement theology, or other doctrines contrary to the rightly divided word of truth. A song may contain moving religious language while communicating almost nothing about the gospel of Jesus Christ. A preacher may possess exceptional speaking ability while teaching error. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to study and rightly divide the word of truth, while First Thessalonians 5:21 declares, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The Christian should therefore refuse the assumption that religious entertainment automatically deserves trust. Sound doctrine must remain the standard. A moving performance does not establish truth, and a popular religious personality does not possess authority to correct the King James Bible. **A false doctrine does not become sound because the preacher delivers it with tears in his eyes, and a religious movie does not become biblical because somebody remembered to include a church steeple in the scenery.**

At the foundation of every proper Christian response stands the finished work of Jesus Christ. No sinner can earn eternal life by maintaining a flawless entertainment history. Refusing pornography, avoiding blasphemy, exercising self-control, restricting television, and maintaining responsible family priorities cannot remove a single sin from the record of a lost man before God. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures. Salvation rests upon the Saviour, not upon personal achievement. The believer's eternal security is not threatened every time he makes a foolish entertainment choice. Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not eliminate the responsibility to walk in obedience. Titus 2:11–12 declares that God's grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. **Grace does not teach a saved man to make peace with the wickedness from which Christ redeemed him. It teaches him to live in a manner consistent with the redemption he has received.**

That brings us to the solemn matter of accountability before the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This judgment concerns the accountability of believers and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. The Christian's eternal salvation is not purchased through his works, but his service and faithfulness remain

matters of eternal consequence. First Corinthians 3:13 declares, “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.” A believer may possess eternal life through Jesus Christ while wasting opportunities that will never return. He may never lose the salvation Christ purchased for him, yet surrender time that could have been invested in prayer, study, service, witness, family instruction, and obedience. **The judgment seat of Christ will not be impressed by how many television series a Christian completed or how many championship statistics he memorized. The issue will concern what he did with the life entrusted to him.**

What, then, should a Christian actually do? He should examine his entertainment honestly before the Lord, compare its content with Scripture, and refuse what plainly glorifies wickedness. He should establish sensible boundaries concerning time, money, and attention. He should protect his children without cultivating hypocrisy, maintain meaningful relationships rather than disappearing into electronic isolation, and make deliberate room for Scripture reading, prayer, Christian fellowship, honest labor, and appropriate rest. He should recognize that wholesome recreation can refresh a person for useful service while excessive entertainment can become a means of avoiding that service. He should not spend his days accusing every other Christian of having inferior standards, nor should he become defensive whenever someone raises a legitimate concern about his own habits. The answer is not fear of technology or hatred of enjoyment. It is responsible Christian conduct governed by the written word of God. **A Christian does not need to destroy every screen in his house to demonstrate spiritual seriousness. He needs to demonstrate that the screen does not possess authority over the man who owns it.**

There is also a positive responsibility that must not be overlooked. God has given Christians opportunities to enjoy wholesome fellowship, encourage one another, appreciate the beauty of creation, cultivate useful abilities, participate in lawful recreation, and experience the ordinary blessings of life with thanksgiving. First Timothy 6:17 speaks of “the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” The immediate instruction warns the wealthy against trusting uncertain riches and directs their confidence toward God. It does not authorize sinful pleasure, but it does remind believers that enjoyment itself is not the enemy. A Christian family can laugh together, enjoy good music, appreciate a meaningful story, attend an athletic event, and participate in recreation without surrendering biblical convictions. The important distinction is whether the activity serves a proper purpose under the authority of Scripture. Joy is not worldliness, rest is not laziness, and recreation is not automatically compromise. **The Christian life should not be an endless funeral procession conducted by people who believe that every smile is**

suspicious. But neither should it become an endless amusement park where the commandments of God are treated as inconvenient safety regulations.

The passing of time makes these matters increasingly urgent. Psalm 90:12 declares, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Moses wrote those words while considering the brevity of human life beneath the sovereignty of God. The practical lesson is as searching now as ever. The Christian does not know how many more opportunities remain before his earthly service concludes. He does not know how long his children will remain under his instruction, how many conversations he will enjoy with aging parents, how many occasions he will have to encourage someone struggling, or how many opportunities will arise to communicate the gospel. Yet entertainment continually offers another episode, another song, another game, and another distraction as though time were an inexhaustible possession. The believer must remember that yesterday cannot be redeemed by tomorrow's promises. Today must be used wisely while it remains available. **A man who continually announces that he will begin serving God when life becomes less busy may eventually discover that he spent his entire life making appointments with a tomorrow that never arrived.**

Romans 12:2 commands believers, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The Christian should not permit the surrounding culture to determine his convictions simply because its entertainment is attractive, popular, or endlessly available. The world will continue presenting fornication as freedom, covetousness as ambition, blasphemy as humor, vengeance as justice, celebrity worship as admiration, and unrestrained amusement as the highest form of personal happiness. The believer must recognize those messages for what they are and measure them against Scripture. He need not become ignorant of culture, incapable of enjoying legitimate art, or fearful of every new invention. He must simply refuse to surrender the authority of God's word to the opinions of entertainers. **The world does not have to persuade a Christian to burn his Bible if it can persuade him to stop believing the parts that interfere with his pleasures. A Bible left unopened while the television preaches every evening is not exercising much practical authority in the household.**

This entire series has confronted the difference between possessing entertainment and being possessed by it. The television may belong to the Christian, but does the Christian govern what appears upon it? The music may be stored on his device, but does he examine the message it communicates? The game may be purchased with his money, but does he control the time it consumes? The celebrity may never have heard his name, but has that celebrity somehow acquired authority over his moral convictions? The sports team may

provide harmless recreation, but does its performance determine his conduct toward the people who actually share his life? And the endless stream of digital content may be available every moment, but must every available moment be surrendered to it? These are not complicated questions requiring a new revelation from heaven. They are ordinary matters of biblical judgment. First Corinthians 6:12 supplies the principle: “I will not be brought under the power of any.” **If a Christian cannot put down what he claims is merely a pastime, he should seriously consider whether the pastime has become something more powerful than he is willing to admit.**

The final standard must always remain the authority of the written word of God. Psalm 101:3 concerns the deliberate refusal to welcome wickedness before the eyes. Proverbs 4:23 commands diligence in guarding the heart. Philippians 4:8 directs believers toward truthful, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy things. First Corinthians 10:23 distinguishes lawful conduct from genuinely profitable conduct. Romans 14 warns against violating conscience and improperly condemning brethren in matters where Scripture has not established universal prohibitions. Hebrews 12:1 commands the laying aside of unnecessary weights and besetting sin. Ephesians 5:15–16 commands believers to walk wisely and redeem the time. Taken in their proper settings and applied responsibly, these passages provide substantial instruction for governing modern entertainment without inventing a single additional commandment. The Christian does not need a separate Bible for television, another for music, another for gaming, and a revised edition for social media. **The King James Bible already contains the principles necessary for judging human conduct. The machinery may be modern, but the heart operating it remains the same fallen human heart Scripture has been exposing for centuries.**

And now the matter becomes intensely personal. It is easy to criticize Hollywood, condemn corrupt music, expose filthy comedy, and complain about the foolishness of celebrity worship. It is considerably more difficult to examine the entertainment habits of one's own household. It is easy to identify a wicked message in a program somebody else enjoys while defending the questionable material in one's own favorite entertainment. It is easy to warn children about spending too much time on their devices while personally surrendering every available moment to a different screen. Biblical preaching must not become a convenient instrument for examining everybody except ourselves. Second Corinthians 13:5 declares, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” The immediate passage concerns the Corinthians' response to Paul's apostolic authority and their own profession, but the responsibility to deal honestly before God should certainly prevent the believer from hiding behind religious appearances. **The preacher can expose the wickedness of the world, the parent can correct the foolishness of the child, and the Christian can condemn the habits of his neighbor. But**

eventually somebody must have the courage to look at his own conduct and ask whether the Scriptures he professes are actually governing his life.

The title of this series carries a warning that deserves to remain with the reader long after the final paragraph has been forgotten: **What You Watch Is Watching You Back.** That statement does not mean a television possesses a soul, that a computer screen has spiritual eyes, or that an entertainment system literally examines the viewer's heart. It means that what a person repeatedly welcomes into his attention can influence his affections, habits, expectations, and moral judgments. The entertainment may be fictional, but the time spent enjoying it is real. The characters may be imaginary, but the philosophies communicated through them can be genuine. The victories may be digital, but the responsibilities neglected while pursuing them remain entirely earthly. The celebrity may be a stranger, but the devotion given to that person can become deeply personal. And the repeated exposure to wickedness may occur through entertainment, but the resulting willingness to excuse that wickedness is a matter of conscience before God. **The screen does not need to become a living creature to exercise influence. It only needs a willing viewer who has stopped examining what he is allowing into his mind.**

Ephesians 5:15–16 supplies the final charge: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The Christian has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, given eternal life through faith in the Saviour, and called to walk in a manner consistent with that redemption. He has a Bible to study, a gospel to proclaim, responsibilities to fulfill, relationships to honor, a local church to support, and opportunities for service that will not last forever. He may enjoy lawful recreation, appreciate wholesome entertainment, and use modern technology for profitable purposes. But he must never allow the world to determine his convictions or persuade him that the pursuit of amusement is the purpose of life. The television will eventually go dark. The music will stop. The game will end. The crowd will disperse. The famous will be forgotten, and the final credits will roll. But the Christian will still belong to the Lord who redeemed him, and his life will still have been spent one day at a time. **Guard the eye gate. Guard the heart. Redeem the time. The world does not need to steal your Bible if it can keep you too entertained to read it. And the devil does not need to destroy your testimony in one spectacular act of rebellion if he can persuade you to waste your entire life doing nothing of eternal value. When the last screen goes dark, make certain you have something more to show for your years than a lifetime of watching somebody else live.**



VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES

ENTERTAINMENT AND THE EYE GATE

What You Watch Is Watching You Back

Psalm 101:3 — "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." | Ephesians 5:16 — "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."



1 TELEVISION & THE EYE GATE



Psalm 101:3; Matthew 6:22–23; Proverbs 4:23

- Deliberately setting wickedness before the eyes violates God's command.
- The screen can become a teacher of sin, shaping thoughts, attitudes and desires.
- Guard the heart, for what we watch influences what we love.
- Distinguish accidental exposure from the conscious choice to view.

2 HOLLYWOOD'S OTHER GOSPEL



Isaiah 5:20; Romans 12:2

- Modern entertainment often calls evil good and good evil.
- Adultery is portrayed as romance, rebellion as virtue, and biblical convictions as narrow or hateful.
- The villain is frequently recast as the hero.
- Depicting evil in a story is not the same as approving, celebrating or excusing it.

3 MUSIC & THE HEART



Ephesians 5:18–19; Colossians 3:16; Philippians 4:8

- Songs teach through their lyrics, themes and constant repetition.
- Reject music that celebrates fornication, drunkenness, rebellion or blasphemy.
- Test the message and the spirit of what is being promoted.
- The issue is not every instrument or style, but whether the music builds righteousness or stirs up sin.

4 GAMING: PASTIME OR MASTER?



1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:23

- Gaming can be lawful recreation, but it can also become a controlling bondage.
- Examine whether it leads to neglected work, family responsibilities or loss of needed sleep.
- Self-control and profitable conduct are required.
- Fictional depictions in games are distinct from real acts, though the content still shapes the heart.

5 PORNOGRAPHY & SECRET LUST



Job 31:1; Matthew 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5

- Deliberate pursuit of sexual images is a direct cultivation of lust.
- Job made a covenant with his eyes, and Christ condemned lustful intent in the heart.
- God's will is purity, faithfulness and honor in the body.
- Confession, guarding access, accountability and genuine restoration are God's pattern for forgiveness and healing.

6 VIOLENCE FOR APPLAUSE



Psalm 11:5; Proverbs 3:31; Romans 12:19

- God judges those who love violence and warns against envying violent men.
- Distinguish truthful portrayals of war, history and justice from delight in cruelty for entertainment.
- Lawful self-defense, legitimate military service and just punishment are not the same as celebrating suffering or personal vengeance.

7 COMEDY & FILTHY JESTING



Ephesians 5:3–4; Proverbs 14:9; Colossians 3:8

- Laughter can be good, but foolish talking and jesting that are vulgar, filthy or blasphemous are condemned.
- Avoid humor that promotes profanity, sexual filth, mockery of God or the humiliation of others.
- Jokes do not make wickedness righteous.
- Choose humor that is clean, wholesome and in keeping with a Christian testimony.

8 CELEBRITY WORSHIP



Exodus 20:3; Romans 1:25; 1 John 5:21

- Fame can quickly become a modern idol when loyalty, attention and imitation go beyond appreciation.
- Appreciate talent without adopting a famous person's morals or lifestyle.
- Fame and follower counts do not give biblical authority on morality, marriage, family or truth.
- Do not place excessive confidence in human beings.

9 SPORTS & MISPLACED DEVOTION



1 Corinthians 9:24–25; 1 Timothy 4:8; Colossians 3:2

- Athletics can encourage discipline, perseverance and physical fitness.
- The danger comes when sports control schedules, emotions, spending and personal identity.
- Avoid obsession with teams, money and constant competition.
- Remember the contrast between the corruptible crown of this life and the incorruptible reward in Christ.

10 THE ENDLESS STREAM



Ephesians 5:15–16; Hebrews 12:1

- Streaming, autoplay and constant scrolling can quickly devour finite hours.
- This constant stimulation can crowd out prayer, Scripture reading, family time and meaningful service.
- Lay aside the weights that hinder, redeem the time and exercise self-control.
- Make deliberate choices to prioritize God, family, Scripture and fruitful service.

BIBLICAL COMMANDS



CLEARLY FORBIDDEN SINS THAT MUST BE AVOIDED

- **LUST** — Matthew 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 — Sinful desire and deliberate sexual impurity.
- **BLASPHEMY** — Ephesians 5:4; Colossians 3:8 — Speech or entertainment that mocks God or holy things.
- **FILTHY SPEECH** — Ephesians 4:29 — Vulgar, corrupt or degrading talk and humor.
- **COVETOUSNESS** — Colossians 3:5 — Craving and envying what God has not given.
- **CRUELTY** — Psalm 11:5; Proverbs 3:31 — Taking pleasure in violence, suffering or the harm of others.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

LAWFUL RECREATION THAT REQUIRES WISDOM AND A CLEAR CONSCIENCE



- Scripture does not forbid every form of entertainment, recreation or leisure.
- Believers are free to enjoy many lawful things, but they must be guided by wisdom, self-control and a clean conscience before God. — **Romans 14:22–23**
- The test is not merely "Is it allowed?" but "Is it profitable, edifying and right for me?" — 1 Corinthians 10:23
- Christian liberty is not a license to feed sin, but the freedom to enjoy God's good gifts responsibly.

SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH — Ephesians 2:8–9 | **GRACE TEACHES GODLY LIVING** — Titus 2:11–12

GUARD THE EYE GATE • GUARD THE HEART • REDEEM THE TIME