



“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

Media Manipulation

Central Truth: Christians must guard against unfavorable influence by secular media.

L205. Date: October 1995. **Text:** Ephesians 5:1-12.

Topic: Ethics; Morality.

Some cynic advised, “Believe nothing you hear and only half of what you see.” That counsel is becoming increasingly wise in our generation. Much of what you hear and see through the public media is contrary to Bible teachings and violates the Christian conscience. Why? The public media is largely under the control of people who reject biblical standards of ethics and morals. (Thank God for the Christians who are involved there, however.)

By “media” is meant methods of communication by words, pictures, acts, or objects. “Public media” refers to those who give the news or are involved in education and entertainment. Secular media bombards us with anti-Christian bias in much (but not all) of its productions. Secular humanism is the order of the day. The Christian must be on guard constantly lest he be brainwashed by the secular ideas that contradict the Bible.

The Secular Media Position

Watch your television with an objective mind and from a biblical viewpoint. On any evening of the week you may see the promotion of sexual license, the approval of sexual perversion, the promotion of humanism, and most of the errors of the New Age heresy. If that evaluation seems too harsh, watch your television with an objective eye.

The problem is that many of the people in power purposefully use the media to sell their opinions and to influence public opinion. They do that by the choice of subjects, the extent of coverage, and the method of presentation.

Note, for instance, the network coverage of pro-abortion and pro-life news. The term “pro-choice” is commonly applied to abortionists, while “radical right” is often applied to conservative Christians who say a mother does not have the right to kill her unborn baby in the womb. Again, in a recent political campaign the liberal candidate was given more time and more favorable coverage than the conservative candidate. That is media manipulation.

The leadership of the media does not feel accountable to public opinion. It refuses to receive counsel from conservative Christians. Only when there is a boycott of their sponsors' products will they pay attention. Even then, some programs are aired at a loss of revenue because of their efforts to change public attitudes.

Many in positions of power in the news and entertainment fields will continue to move further and further from conservative Christian positions. (1) Subjects on talk shows include sexual immorality, sexual pervers, adopting children, etc., with no indication that it is either right or wrong. (2) Themes of movies shown in the theaters or on television grow worse and worse. It is the goal of some to have “R” -rated movies on public television as soon as possible. (3) Political conservatives and Bible- preaching ministers are presented as radicals of the “religious right” who seek to force their opinions on others. But you do not hear references to the “liberal left” or to the “radical left” when immorality and perversion are presented. (4) Sinful lifestyles, which are strictly forbidden in the Bible, are presented as right and proper. That is media manipulation.

The Christian Position

Pause at this point and read Ephesians 5:1-12. There is the lifestyle of the people of God. How does that differ from what you see and hear in public entertainment and news programs? Following the eight principles listed in that passage will help you to be “salt” and “light” in a generation which has lost its moral moorings.

Follow God (verse 1). In the same sense in which a child obeys his parents, you have the opportunity to obey God. Keep your attitude in agreement with His attitude. Do not let a secular society turn you away from Him who loves you as a heavenly Father.

Live in love (verse 2). But remember that love can be tough. It is not weakness. You can take a stand which says, “I love you too much to agree with this course which will bring great harm to you.” Jesus was sympathetic to sinners, but He made no compromise with sin. Remember this principle: *“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked”* (1 John 2:6). The world is very attractive. But the Christian is to love God rather than the world. To love the world is to show that the love of God is not in you (1 John 2:15).

Keep pure sexually (verse 3). Sexual vice, unchastity, and every kind of impurity are to be diligently shunned by the Christian. Such things should not be the subject of conversation (except in warning, as in this study). God's saints live on a higher plane and in a different lifestyle from that. They must guard what comes into their minds lest they be tempted in that area.

Practice decent conduct (verse 4). Dirty stories, coarse jokes, suggestive jesting, and shameful conduct have no place in the Christian's thoughts or acts. Be warned *“every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”* (Matthew 12:36). Members of your body are not to be used as weapons of sin in the spiritual warfare, but as weapons of righteousness (Romans 6:19). How can a pure heart produce impure thoughts and words and deeds when *“a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”* (Luke 6:45)?

Value Christian citizenship (verse 5). You are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. You have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). Live like it! You are a citizen of a heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom at the same time. Your citizenship there enables you to be a better citizen here. Let your heavenly citizenship show.

Shun any deception (verse 6). Many different influences will bear upon you. Shallow arguments of empty words, making groundless promises, can lead you astray. But do not let anyone persuade you to turn from Bible standards, however plausible his arguments may be. Jesus warned that such false teachers would arise (Matthew 24:24). His warning prepares you to resist them. Hear this word from God: *“He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight”* (Psalm 101:7). Hold to the truth as revealed in the Bible as you would hold a priceless treasure.

Keep separate from the world (verses 7-11). You are not what you were. You are a new creation in Christ. God himself lives in you by His

indwelling Holy Spirit. You no longer live, but Christ lives in you. God calls, *“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean”* (Isaiah 52:11). Keep the commandments of the Lord. *“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (Romans 13:14).

Reprove wrong (verses 11, 12). Rather than taking part in the evil deeds, show them up for what they are and expose their foulness. Thus you will shine as a light in the world which lies in darkness. Share the warning that judgment is coming (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Leave no one unprepared if you can influence him to turn. And never let public opinion run you from following God's principles of Christian conduct.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the “media”?
2. What is “media manipulation”?
3. Why is so much of the public media contrary to the Bible?
4. How can a Christian keep from being influenced by it?
5. What guidelines should govern the Christian watching television?
6. How can we hold media leadership accountable?
7. How can you keep pure in an impure society?
8. How can you show love while opposing wrong standards?
9. How can you influence those you love to keep pure?
10. What is God's standard for Christian conduct?