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The Brainwashing Machine

Central Truth: A heavy diet of television hinders a believer from godly thoughts and activities.

L22. Date: April 1984. **Text:** Philippians 4:5-9; Romans 12:1, 2.

Topic: Television.

Television is the most powerful and influential agency at work on our minds today. We remember 10 percent of what we hear but 60 percent of what we see. We understand 20 percent of what we hear and 80 percent of what we see. Television includes both hearing and seeing. That is what makes it so powerful and influential.

In just thirty years American society has gone from almost no television to almost total television. Children under five years of age average spending 23.5 hours watching television each week. Today's high school graduate has watched at least fifteen thousand hours of television. That is more time than the student has spent in any other activity except sleep. During those hours of watching television the youth has seen 350,000 commercials and witnessed 18,000 killings. That is what is happening in American society since television has become so common.

Television is now more influential in the lives of young children than ministers, teachers, policemen, and parents. The tragedy is compounded when it is realized that much of the material presented on television is sick when judged by Bible principles. Our country is in danger because of those facts.

I, THE PROBLEM WITH BRAINWASHING

Television aims to get attention and to entertain. Most programs do not attempt to teach. Moral ideals commonly presented are much below the Christian standard in sex and violence.

A. Television produces violence. There is no “official” proof on this point, but it is a fact of life that children copy what they see and hear. That is a particular problem in violence in cartoons. Some criminals have admitted they copied their crime after something seen on television.

B. Television teaches immorality. There are sensual suggestions and there are actual scenes of prurient materials. The “soap operas” are generally immoral and unfit for Christians to watch. A survey of 420,000 people made by a church in Tennessee (Joelton Church of Christ, Joelton, Tennessee) identified the most morally offensive programs as *Soap*, *Three's Company*, *Dallas*, *Saturday Night Live*, *The Newlywed Game*, *The Dating Game*, and *Three's a Crowd*. Do you suppose Christians watch those shows?

One network is attempting to air “advocacy entertainment” in which it attempts to persuade people to adopt the program's moral viewpoint. That is dangerous.

C. Television is anti-Christian. Christianity is misrepresented and often ridiculed or ignored. In April 1980, 300,000 Christians gathered in Washington, D.C., but not one network carried it on the evening news. When 3,000 lesbians met, they received national coverage. That indicates a bias against Christianity by the television networks.

D. Television hinders education. The Associated Press reported from Sacramento, California, that students who watched six or more hours television per day scored 12 percent lower on math than those who watched one hour or less per day. Many parents have required “no television” for their students in order to raise grades.

E. Television is controlled by anti-religion forces. There are very few Christians in the upper levels of the national media. The moral tone of the programming, therefore, is not Christian. Programs featuring family situations are not biblical since three fourths of them show role-reversal in husband and wife. Television is anti-family in view of Bible principles concerning the home.

One church had a week called “Turn-the-Television-Off Week.” One parent reported, “We actually sat and talked! For the first time I can remember our children sat in the floor and played games together.” Yes, television is being permitted to hurt the home life and damage religious faith. Any honest evaluation will conclude that those are the results.

II. THE ALTERNATIVE TO BRAINWASHING

Christians must take a stand. Television can work no more harm in your family than you permit it to work. Philippians 4:5-9 gives some

principles which are helpful in controlling the bad influence of non-Christian television.

A. Exercise self-control in what you watch and do: *“Let your moderation be known unto all men”* (verse 5). No one can force you to watch programs that are not wholesome. Exercise control over the television set; do not permit it to control you.

B. Be conscious of the presence of God: *“The Lord is at hand”* (verse 5). He is a God at hand, not a God afar off (Jeremiah 23:23) because He is *“not far from everyone of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:27,28). Know that God is there seeing you as you watch various programs on television. Do you watch television aware that God knows?

C. Do not yield to anxious care: *“Be careful for nothing”* (verse 6). Many people become dissatisfied with their circumstances in life when they see the free-loving, high-spending, and exciting life-styles of people on television. There is a tendency to forget the watch care of God over His own (Matthew 6:25-34). There is a danger that the television life-style of *“surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life”* (Luke 21:34) will fill the Christian with unchristian desires and concerns.

D. Practice living a life of prayer: *“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (verse 6). Jesus said people *“ought always to pray”* (Luke. 18:1). The apostle Paul taught *“that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”* (I Timothy 2:8). Whatever hinders the Christian from living a life of prayer is harmful to him. *“Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually”* (I Chronicles 16:11).

E. Live in a spirit of peace: *“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (verse 7). Be careful what you put in your mind, through television or otherwise, because the spirit of perfect peace rests upon those whose minds are stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3). Whatever takes your mind from God is harmful to you.

F. Fill your mind with good thoughts: *“Whatsoever things are true. . . honest. . . just. . . pure. . . lovely. . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (verse 8). The Christian must not watch television programs, listen to music, or read books and magazines which take his mind from things which are true, honest, just, etc. How does your television watching fare when placed against that standard? Does it produce honorable thoughts which God approves?

G. Follow the example of Spirit-filled Christians: *“Those things,*

which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (verse 9). As a child imitates his parents, so a Christian can follow the example of another and profit from it (Ephesians 5:1). Those who are "*followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*" (Hebrews 6:12) find their lives greatly blessed as a result. Television will influence a person to love the world and the things that are in the world (I John 2:15-17) because it is world-centered in its emphasis. Television life-style is not the life-style of the Spirit-filled Christian.

III. THE VICTORY OVER BRAINWASHING

Romans 12:1, 2 sets forth four principles which, if followed, will deliver anyone from addiction to television. (Many people are addicted, finding it uncomfortable to be in a room with a television set when it is not on.) Here are the four steps to victory.

A. Present your body to God (verse 1). That means to present each member of the body: eyes, ears, mind, and all. One can rarely do productive work for self or others when sitting "glued" to the chair watching a program. The Christian is to present each member of his body to God as a weapon for righteousness in the spiritual warfare and permit no member of his body to be engaged on the side of sin (Romans 6:11-14). *'The body is. . . for the Lord'* (I Corinthians 6:13).

B. Be separate from the world (verse 2). Friendship with the world is enmity with God. "*Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*" (James 4:4). There are desires within the flesh of the Christian which are contrary to spiritual things. They must not be encouraged by stimuli received through the eyes and ears. "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ In God*" (Colossians 3:2, 3). The Christian cannot afford to sing the same songs, read the same materials, and watch the same television programs as the non-Christian. To do so is to be "*conformed to this world.*"

C. Renew your mind (verse 2). The "*renewing of your mind*" means to have a complete change and transformation — new ideals, new attitudes, new subjects for meditation — in one's thought life. There is no renewing of the mind when the Christian fills his mind with secular and unspiritual things. He is to "*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Ephesians 4:24). The mind sets the direction of life. The Christian must guard what comes to his mind.

D. Follow the will of God (verse 2). The best thing that could happen to any person is for the will of God to be done totally in his life. He will find the will of God is “*good, and acceptable, and perfect.*” “*Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good*” (Psalm 143:10). Look back at those four principles. Follow them and you can have victory over the enslaving demands of television entertainment.

IV. THE PROTECTION AGAINST BRAINWASHING

“*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (Proverbs 4:23). That text is the best protection against the brainwashing effects of secular television programming. It recognizes that the “*heart*” (mind, emotion, will) is the inmost part of man's being. It determines the direction and quality of his life. “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matthew 12:34).

Therefore, the Christian must be diligent to protect his inner spirit against perverse influences. He must guard the eye-gate and the ear-gate to his spirit. Even the Christian can be “programmed” to accept what is wrong if he is exposed to it often enough. He must keep his mind turned toward God by refusing to accept non-Christian things into his thoughts and by renewing his mind with the things of God. According to one's thought life, that is the quality of his spiritual life.

Here is the Bible principle which can be applied to all aspects of sin which appeal to one in this life. “*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*” (Romans 12:21). Do not align yourself with the devil's weapons in the spiritual warfare. “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*” (II Corinthians 6:17,18). Will you apply that principle to your television watching?

QUESTIONS

1. Why is television a spiritual problem to many?
2. How is its anti-Christian bias evident?
3. What principle do you see in Philippians 4:5?
4. How does Philippians 4:8 stand against much television programming?
5. What warning in 1 John 2:15-17 applies to television today?
6. How can you obey the injunction of Colossians 3:2?
7. How do many television programs hinder obedience to Romans 12:2?

8. How can you obey Proverbs 4:23?
9. How can II Corinthians 6:17, 18, be applied in your life?
10. How can this study help you be a better Christian?