

Guidelines for Entertainment

1) What are some biblical principles that should guide my entertainment choices?

A) Beware of anything that makes you calloused to sin or lessens your hatred of evil.

(1) Paul warns us several times in the New Testament to “hate what is evil” and “avoid every kind of evil” (Romans 12:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). He repeats this command because the world surrounds us with all sorts of wickedness and perversion. As humans, our natural tendency is to “get used to” whatever we consistently encounter in our environment. The enemy knows this and tries to make us as calloused to sin as he can. As Alexander Pope said in his 1732 *Essay on Man*, “Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace.” It is difficult to hate what you are used to.

(2) It’s easy to tell when a movie or book has too much violence or cursing. But are you also noticing when your entertainment choice is pushing a worldly philosophy or value system? Ungodly attitudes and belief systems can be as damaging to our minds as the more obvious sensual allurements.

B) Beware of anything that bothers your conscience.

(1) In his first letter to Timothy, Paul urged him to hold on to “faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (1 Timothy 1:18–19). Paul also told the Romans “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:22–23). The main thrust of Paul’s message is that we shouldn’t do anything that we believe is wrong. This principle clearly applies to those “gray areas” of life which are not specifically mentioned in Scripture. We need to be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and respond in obedience when we feel checked about a certain activity or form of entertainment. Keep your conscience clear!

C) Beware of anything that would make another believer stumble.

(1) Romans 14 is a thought provoking chapter on the impact that our actions have on other believers. Paul says, “let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way” (Romans 14:13, NASB). He also says, “It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles” (Romans 14:21, NASB). This is an important factor that should be taken into account when we participate in various kinds of entertainment. We need to be sensitive to the concerns and weaknesses of those around us. There are times when it is necessary to limit our own desires in deference to someone else. Don’t be irritated or frustrated with them—be kind and remember that one day, someone may have to be sensitive to you.

D) Beware of anything that appeals to or affects your areas of weakness.

(1) We all have areas of weakness and most of us know what they are. Unfortunately, the enemy knows them too, and the temptations we face are always tailored for a perfect fit. James, the Lord’s brother, said, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (James 1:14, NASB). Entertainment, probably more than anything else, has the ability to appeal to our areas of weakness. Because of this, it is imperative that we filter our activities through the grid of what is spiritually healthy for us. Know your weaknesses and don’t let the enemy trap you!

E) Beware of anything that portrays sin as amusing or glorifies evil.

(1) Paul urged the Romans to stop being “conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, NASB). The world is constantly trying to squeeze us into its mold, and one of its most effective tools is sugarcoated sin. How many of us have read a book or watched a movie where the rebellious attitudes of the hero are presented as funny? Often disrespect for authority is portrayed as cool and immorality is shown as comical. There are even TV shows that glorify witchcraft and homosexuality. It’s important that we avoid this kind of entertainment because the enemy will use it to influence and shape our perspective of sin. God doesn’t think sin is funny—to Him it’s deadly serious.

F) Beware of anything that stimulates wrong thoughts or attitudes.

(1) At first glance this principle seems impossible to put into practice. After all, we're surrounded by the world's pollution everywhere we go. But the fact that the enemy is peddling his perversion in the streets is no reason to invite him into your home. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul told them "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NASB). The various ways we choose to entertain ourselves should pass the test of this verse. Remember, God isn't trying to prevent us from enjoying life. He's trying to protect us from activities that will stimulate wrong thoughts or attitudes. Sin begins in the mind—avoid anything that gives it a chance to get started.

G) Beware of loving pleasure more than loving God.

(1) In his last letter to Timothy, Paul warned him that in the last days difficult times would come. "For men will be...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4, NASB). Entertainment, even in its most wholesome form, can be used by the enemy to take God's rightful place of supremacy in our lives. A hobby or sport can gradually take up more and more time in our busy schedules until it squeezes out our time with God. Some of our favorite activities can become idols if we allow them to be more important to us than God. God has given us so much to enjoy. Let's make sure we don't worship the creation more than the creator.

(2) A good test of whether or not a certain entertainment has become too important in your life is to ask yourself this question: If God were to tell you to stop doing that particular activity, would you welcome His guidance with gratitude, or would you resent His command as an intrusion?