

The Movies You Watch

From 1979 to 1985, the *Dukes of Hazzard* reigned as one of the most popular television shows. I remember my family gathering around the television each Friday night to watch a new episode. I can remember playing with a toy car that I envisioned as the "General Lee," (Bo & Luke Duke's famous souped-up Dodge Charger). I even could do a pretty good imitation of Sheriff Roscoe P. Coltrane's laugh. A few years ago a cable network aired reruns of that series and I watched a few episodes. When I watched, I thought *how could I have ever watched this? It's so lame.* Lame to what? The shows and movies of today? Think about it. Today's entertainment is filled with graphic and vulgar language, explicit sex, and extreme violence. The more "edgier" a movie is the better. You see, even in my short lifetime, standards have been lowered and we've all become desensitized to what Hollywood considers *normal* and *acceptable* behavior. We look at television shows and movies of the past and forget that they pushed the limits of moral standards of the time. It is scary to imagine what the future holds as producers continue to cross the line of decency and morality.

We must constantly remind ourselves of the need to use good judgment and discretion with what we watch. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2, NASU) Christians have been called to live godly lives, and we must be true to this calling, no matter the cost. The key to the renewal process is filling our mind with that which is uplifting morally and spiritually. Using good judgment with the movies and television shows we view will require some difficult decisions. While these may seem of little significance in the short term, we must keep God's will at the forefront of our lives. Who isn't familiar with these rationalizations? *Will this really compromise my Christianity? I can do it just a few times and I won't be hurt spiritually. It's not a big deal, besides all my friends want to see it.* And then the compromise is made, the questionable movie is watched, and one leaves the theater filled with regret.

Is this really that important? Solomon said, *For as he thinks within himself, so he is.* (Proverbs 23:7 NASU) What we put into our minds makes us who we are. In the New Testament, Paul wrote, *Finally, brethren, 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 NASU) Let's face it. There are just some movies out there that will do nothing good for one's soul. What spiritual benefit can be found in listening to someone repeatedly take God's name in vain? What spiritual benefit can be found in someone glorifying fornication? How can one grow spiritually while being exposed to the acceptance of immorality? Where what is not normal is portrayed as normal? It is one thing to be accidentally exposed to inappropriate things, but to willingly involve oneself in the digestion of ungodly behavior is another thing. Paul writes, *we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5 NASU). We, like David, must make a commitment to *set no worthless thing before my eyes* (Psalm 101:3 NASU).

But what about the ratings system? *I know I shouldn't see an "R" rated movie, but "PG" or "PG-13" is OK, isn't it?* Not necessarily. Traditional wisdom says that movies with the "PG" and "PG-13" ratings are not as vile and vulgar as movies with the "R" or "NC-17" rating. "Movies that ought to be "R" are squeezed down into "PG-13" in a cynical attempt to increase the potential audience," says Roger Ebert of *Ebert and Roper at the Movies*. In *PG-13 is the Secret to Movie Success*, an article in USA Today (07/02/03), Andy Seiler wrote "In *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*, Demi Moore lasciviously licks Cameron Diaz's face, the Angels bump and grind in a production number, and numerous double-entendres refer to group sex and hookers. That's not to mention a brutal attack by a former boyfriend on Drew Barrymore's character that was trimmed, according to Barrymore, to avoid an R rating." One person in this article was quoted, "The amount of violence and language you can get away with in a "PG-13" file is amazing." Remember these statements were made from those within the movie industry. If those of the world can easily identify inappropriate behavior and content that crosses the line, why should the New Testament Christian willingly subject himself to such? This is not to say that all "PG" or "PG-13" movies are inappropriate. Discretion needs to be exercised. Use the internet to look at movie reviews. Two good sources are Plugged IN at www.pluggedinonline.com and Preview Online at www.gospelcom.net/preview/. Also, use common sense. Usually, one can get a good idea of a questionable movie from the title and the way the movie is promoted.

Consider your influence. How can you have an example that glorifies Christ when tagging along with or inviting friends over to watch a movie filled with ungodliness? From reading the Scriptures, it is clear that New Testament Christians took a clear stand as to not compromise their influence. They were derided for it. *In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.* (1 Peter 4:4-5, NASU) Your reputation is important! The

scriptures teach that one's influence is of more value than a precious ointment or great wealth. Solomon said, *A good name is better than a good ointment*, (Ecclesiastes 7:1 NASU). In Proverbs he wrote, *A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold* (Proverbs 22:1 NASU). Just a few seconds of thoughtlessness can permanently damage our influence with someone outside of Christ.

Consider how you use your time. Entire blocks of time during the week can be chewed up by watching television, going to movies, and playing video games. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit research organization, found that by the time they graduate from high school, American teenagers will have spent 15,000 hours in front of the TV and only 11,000 hours in formal classroom instruction. College students were reported to watch an average of 5.5 to eight hours of TV every weekday. (http://badgerherald.com/news/2003/11/05/tv_watching_linked_t.php) Could your time be better spent? Are there priorities being neglected? Things being put off? Life is brief. While recreational pursuits are not sinful in and of themselves, too much of a good thing can be bad. We have a responsibility to make good use of our time. The Psalmist said, *Remember what my span of life is; For what vanity You have created all the sons of men!* (Psalm 89:47 NASU). In the New Testament, Paul reminded us to *make the most of your time, because the days are evil* (Ephesians 5:16 NASU).

Remember you made a commitment to live a godly life. *The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked* (1 John 2:6 NASU). We are imitators of Jesus, *Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1 NASU). We must never do anything that would compromise our stance with Jesus Christ. This involves large and small items that may confront us in life. There are examples throughout both old and new testaments where godly men and women refused to compromise to the demands of ungodliness:

Joseph – Genesis 39

Rahab – Joshua 2, 6

Daniel – Daniel 1

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo in Daniel 3

Stephen – Acts 6-7

Peter wrote: *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps*** (1 Peter 2:21 NASU).

As we go through life there will be tough choices to make. Do your very best to remain as pure as possible. Use your good judgment when deciding what movies to attend.

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