

# Question Time: How Do We Discern Media to Which We are Exposed?

--- by Elder Eric English

I recently elected to watch a popular movie with a PG-13 rating, believing it to be a funny adventure/romantic comedy. There were certainly humorous scenes in the movie and a lot of action as the main stars traveled in search of lost treasure. However, I was shocked to find such a high level of cursing and violence and such a low level of clothing on the “heroes.” My biggest mistake in this situation was not in choosing to go see this movie, it was in making the choice without any discernment or research about the content first.

## Media Bombardment!

Our society today offers its citizens more choices of information exposure than ever before in the history of mankind. Never have we had so many options for participating in so many different forms of entertainment and information content. It can simply be overwhelming if we don't elect to manage that to which we are exposed. Much of it is not uplifting to us in our Christian walk.

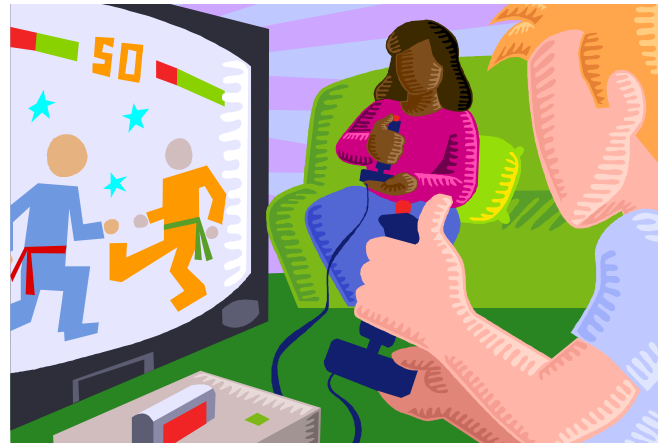
Areas of media consumption include: Movies, TV, Music, Books and Magazines, Video Games, Websites, and even communication devices like cell phones.

## Mirror, mirror, on the wall . . .

Our society is reflected in the media that is presented to us. However, many in the media industries attempt to use their “bully pulpit” to promote anti-Christian themes and concepts. There are clear bents towards violence, unbridled sexuality, and disrespect towards all things holy in much of the media content distributed these days. As Christians, we don't want to reflect the culture around us by conforming to it, but rather we are counseled to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

## It's NOT about what we can get away with . . .

I've had several people ask me what I think about different movies, TV shows, or music and whether this, that, or the other is okay to experience. I've noticed that we as Christians too often approach discernment in this area from the wrong direction. Our questions should not be about how far we can push the limit, how close we can get to the edge, or how much we can expose ourselves to without being dragged down. We need to look for things that will uplift, encourage, and motivate us to go further upward towards the Lord and further inward towards His Kingdom.



## Our own movie debut . . .

Using the resources such as those at the bottom of this article, we can develop techniques for evaluating various media. Then we can decide whether to participate in them or not.

Here is another very good way to evaluate what we witness: Imagine that you are sitting down in a private movie screening of your life with your closest friends, family, and the Lord by your side. The projector starts to roll and what comes up on the screen is the movie that you're thinking of watching or the TV show that you're considering. Perhaps it is playing the website at which you're looking or the music to which you've been listening. Are you feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed as those closest to you witness these things? Are you being convicted of loving the Lord with all your mind (Matt. 22:36) or are you shown to be a conformer to this world (Romans 12:2)?

## Choose ye this day

We must equip ourselves to discern light from darkness and truth from error in our culture and seek God's strength to choose the right. In this area of life, as in all areas, the key to disciplining ourselves towards making the correct choices lies with advanced decision making. Waiting until a temptation presents itself is always much harder to turn away from if we haven't already made up our mind in advance how we will react to it. Let us be diligent in seeking the Lord's direction—not how much He will permit, but how we can choose to please Him.

## Resources to help with investigation in advance:

There are several books at any local Christian bookstore on the topic of media discernment.

Focus on the Family's website—  
<http://www.family.org/entertainment/MediaWise/>

Media reviews from a Christian perspective—  
<http://www.pluggedinonline.com/>

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