

**“WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS:
ARE YOU A ‘WORLDLY’ CHRISTIAN?”
I JOHN 2:15-17
Pastor Keith E. Gephart**

INTRODUCTION

What is “worldliness?”

Does I Jn. 2:15-16 help us in our definition.

Worldliness is much broader than amusements; it encompasses all of life in both thought and actions.

But today we focus on one very large aspect of “worldliness”—amusements whereby we entertain ourselves—and especially the media of entertainment. We could focus on the hatred of Christian values, liberal political views, the idolatry of beauty and celebrity, the disrespect toward authority—especially by children, or even the false religious hopes of science fiction. But today I will focus primarily upon the problem of morality and purity in the media—especially in movies and television.

I contend that we have become friends with the world—how then can we be friends with God (v. 15 and see James 4:4—“You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity/hostility with God. Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” We can’t have it both ways.

We bemoan the decadence of Hollywood—yet Christians fund Hollywood and make its continued decadence possible. I speak today to those who know that we must not be conformed to the world and who desire to live godly lives for Christ’s glory. To those who grieve over sin in both yourselves and in the world around you. Who hunger for righteousness and seek purity of heart. But I must protest what has become a common indulgence and an abdication to our enemy and to the world he governs and leads—accepting worldly entertainment and often calling good evil and evil good. Years ago Martin Luther said:

“If I profess with the loudest voice and with the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not professing Christ, however boldly I proclaim I am professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved. No matter how steady on all fronts beside, it is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that vital point.”

So, what are worldly amusements? They have one or both of the following:

- 1) They **promote an evil/unbiblical message**. Evil is shown as good and good often as evil. Sins are often celebrated: such as lying, stealing fornication, adultery.
- 2) **They use evil methods**. Performers behave in ways that are shameless and immoral. Wilson rightly says, “A story may lead to the conclusion that adultery is bad, but if we must wallow through a sea of flesh to reach this conclusion, the work certainly qualifies as worldly” (pp. 19-20).

Christians today live by a lower standard than previous generations “because we measure ourselves by the bottom, and the bottom keeps sinking lower. As long as we are above the most degenerate evils, we feel holy.” (p. 21).

The Key is, whose authority will we follow when it comes to entertainment choices? Will we submit to the Lordship of Christ in this area as well as in other areas of our lives?

LET US LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD:

- I. Remember Jer. 17:9—“the heart is deceitful...”
- II. I John 2:15-17—avoid the “lust of the flesh,” “lust of the eyes”, and “the pride of life”/boastful pride in possessions.”
- III. Phil. 4:8—Dwell on those things given in this verse.

IV. Eph. 5:3-7; 8-12. Principles we learn here:

1. There should not be even a hint of sexual immorality, any kind of impurity, or lustful impulses—greed among Christians (v. 3).
2. The same is true for speech and humor—no filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting that are not fitting (4).
3. People characterized by such things are excluded from the kingdom of Christ and God (v. 5).
4. Don't be deceived by empty words, for these very issues bring down the wrath of God (v. 6). Those who say otherwise are deceivers.

Note v. 4 especially; a note in the MacArthur Study Bible states: These 3 sins of the tongue involve “**any speech that is obscene and degrading or foolish and dirty, as well as suggestive and immoral wit**. All such are destructive of holy living and godly testimony.”

- Contemporary movies and TV programming all totally saturated with such!
 - When is the last time you exposed yourself or your children to such things? Why? For amusement sake?
 - Just because it makes us laugh does not make it alright.
 - Just because “it doesn't bother me” doesn't justify it. Remember, the heart is deceitful!
 - Even many “family” films are filled with such—including **Disney movies and programs**.
5. You are light, not darkness; walk as those in light in goodness, righteousness, and truth (vv. 8-9)
 6. You must learn what is pleasing to the Lord (v. 10)
 7. Do not participate in the deeds of darkness—**Rather EXPOSE them** (v. 11)
 8. It is disgraceful even to speak of such wicked things done by the ungodly (12).
 - **Now, if it is disgraceful even to speak of such sexual sins as fornication, adulteries, perversions, HOW MUCH WORSE TO ACT THEM OUT.**
 - **And how much worse to sit and watch others act them out!**
 - **THERE MUST BE NO COMPROMISE ON THIS!**
 9. We are not dealing with matters of Christian liberty or the “gray areas” not commanded in Scripture; these are issues clearly spelled out in Scripture. **The end of liberty is sin, lawlessness, and deeds of the flesh and worldliness.**
 10. If the Bible had nothing to say about such matters as *worldly amusements, modesty, lust, coarse jesting etc. then the matter would involve simply personal choice of the believer. But the Bible is quite clear.*
 11. It is our culture that has confused the issue, and many Christians and churches have compromised the clear commands of Scripture. **It is time to repent and go back to the Word of God as our authority.**

V. Is. 5:20—“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”

1. Any amusement is evil if it mocks or attacks virtue, glorifies sin, or puts a positive spin on transgressing the law of God.
2. “Woe” is the pronouncement of a curse from God.
3. How can we support such with our money and our time?
4. The continual position of entertainment today is that sex is open to all—before marriage, and that all should be able to observe the practices that God intended to be kept in secret between a husband and wife.
 - Many Christian leaders are distorting issues today. Many pastors are taking groups to movies that have the objectionable elements spoken of above.
 - Many pastors routinely use movie clips in sermons.
 - Many Christian reviewers of movies are compromising standards today and do not warn believers of the evil and dangers in many movies.

- VI. I Thes. 4:3-5
1. God demands sanctification or holiness of us, i.e. that we abstain from any sexual immorality (3).
 2. We must have control of our “vessel”—our bodies in holiness and honor (4).
 3. We must not allow the expression of “lustful passions”—whether in direct participation of such sins, or even as observer participants in entertainment.
 - We must remember that in Paul’s time there were such forms of entertainment in the Circus and Theater.
 - The immorality was the same kind we see today.
- VII. Eph. 5:26-27—the Lord’s goal for His bride—the church (us)
1. He desires us to be made holy, set apart for His use, made clean and pure.
 2. He will present us in purity to Himself in all glory one day—holy and blameless.

The bottom line is that our moral standards must be based on the Bible. Movies, television, and the arts must earn my attention and involvement by fully respecting my Biblically informed moral standards.

We face a serious battle today with a powerful, well-armed enemy; principalities and powers are behind Hollywood!

WHAT ABOUT “TASTEFUL NUDITY?”

Are we just being prudes? Forget about Puritans and Victorian prudery and modern frankness & sexual freedom.

Once again, let the Bible speak.

- A. Man in his sinless state was naked and without shame (Gen. 2:22-25)
- B. After man fell into sin, he became ashamed because he knew he was naked (Gen. 3:8-11).
 1. Note that Adam’s first effort was to cover himself—but it was “works righteousness” and rejected.
 2. God responded by making garments of skin for Adam and Eve—he clothed them (21).
 - He did not say, “Oh, the body is a beautiful thing. Don’t feel ashamed.”
 - Through the rest of Scripture, nakedness is considered a shameful condition—with only one exception: **marriage**.
 - Why did God make them coverings? Is He a prude? What is His hang-up?
 - No, He invented the body and sex, but He knows fully what our fallen condition has done to us.
 3. Clothing is a covering of their shame; public nudity is an effort to deny human guilt and suppress the shame God wants us to have. Shameless display is an attempt to deny the need for redemption.
 4. Privacy is necessary since we have become lustful and covetous and tend to use other people.
 5. Our purity is often polluted by our eyes (I Jn. 2:16)—especially with men.
- C. Noah became drunk after the Flood and his nakedness was shamefully exposed (Gen. 9:21-23).
 1. Ham’s shameless attitude, along with his staring and mocking of his father led to his being cursed.
 2. Shem and Japheth would not look on their father’s nakedness and covered him—they were blessed.
- D. God “invented” pants for the priests of Israel—Cf. Ex. 20:26 (so that your nakedness will not be exposed) with Ex. 28:42—linen breeches for priests from loins to the thighs.
- E. Job 31:1—Job’s covenant with his eyes.
- F. Pr. 6:25—the “evil woman”—don’t desire her beauty in your heart (your thought life); compare v. 27—can you take fire into your bosom and not be burned?
- G. Mt. 5:28—adultery by merely looking on a woman with lust for her; see v. 29 also—“if right eye offend you....”
- H. I Tim. 2:9—women must wear “proper clothing—modest and discreet.” With respect and discretion, having men’s eyes in mind; don’t dress to inflame man’s lusts! To dress immodestly before men outside marriage in private is sinful—a violation of a divine command!
- I. Are nonsexual nude scenes harmless? Ask King David that question! (Bathsheba)

- “The fact is that cinematic nudity is a major cause of lust throughout our culture” (Wayne Wilson, p. 102).
- “We have invited the devil into our homes and our hearts because he is funny, witty, charming, and comes holding Oscars in one hand and Emmys in the other. Paul’s conclusion in Ephesians 5:7 is “Do not be partakers with them.” (Ibid.)

CONCLUSION

What to do?

1. The most important is obeying **Romans 12:1-2—Seriously with no reservations!**
2. You must be willing to do whatever it takes—no matter how drastic. The issue is that important!

Specific choices you should make:

- 1) “Bring all of your amusement choices directly under the Lordship of Christ. Hint, **He is not impressed with Academy Awards!** Remember Rom. 12:9—“Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good.”
- 2) Pray about each entertainment choice. If you still make a mistake, you can walk out or you can turn it off!
- 3) Either have advanced content information, or use some service that removes objectionable material. Remember though, even if all of the nudity, sexuality, senseless violence, and foul language are removed, the philosophy and tone of the movie could still be anti-biblical and anti-Christ. [e.g. “Screen in”; Critics Inc.—“Kids-in Mind”; Pure Flix; Plugged-in; Clear Play [supposed to clear out objectionable elements]; Vidangel [monthly service plus use of either Amazon or Netflix]; Focus on the family; even Rotten Tomatoes].
- 4) Take Jesus with you. Would He be there? Would He tolerate what is being shown?
- 5) Remember whose money you’ll be spending.
- 6) Avoid the TV mistake. Do you really think that TV is better than the movie theater? No TV in kids rooms, etc.
- 7) Avoid movie package systems that peddle smut along with a few good offerings.
- 8) Guard carefully your kids’ phones and other media systems—use Covenant Eyes or some similar safeguard; use it for yourself also!