

Blockbusters

Listed Scriptures

2 Tim 2:22; Prov 4:23; Col 2:8; Jas 1:21-27; Ps 101:3

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand that the images we see impact our minds and thinking.
- 2) To make a commitment to not watch non-edifying movies.
- 3) To find ways to use our spare time and money in more meaningful ways.

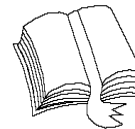
Memory Verse

“Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.” (Ps 119:37)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 13–Joel 1

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



James 4:8 tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. God is light. God is love. God is spirit. If God is drawing near to us, we will feel His light in our hearts. Sin and iniquity will therefore have no place to hide. When God fills us we will also feel His love. We will feel overjoyed being in His love. Moreover, when He is in us, His spirit will fill us and we will be filled with power, peace and joy. Thus, if God lives within us and we are completely filled by Him, then we can feel the peace of the heavenly kingdom in our hearts. “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). These are the benefits of drawing near to God. Let us draw near to the heavenly Father so we can receive this abundant blessing, casting away all evil thoughts and desires from our hearts.

W A R M U P



Give your students the Spiritual Vision Test to evaluate their spiritual condition. After they've taken the test, give them their diagnoses.

Spiritual Vision Test

Measure your spiritual vision with this test. Circle the letter that you agree with.

1. When you lay on your back in an open field and look into a cloud-filled sky, what do you see? (Ps 19:1)
 - a. A rainbow
 - b. A thundercloud

2. When you see a glass half-filled with water, do you consider it:
 - a. Half-full
 - b. Half-empty

3. When you see a driver cut you off, then direct an obscene gesture at you, what's your reaction?
 - a. A feeling of compassion for someone so driven by anger
 - b. To return an obscene gesture

4. What is your reaction when you're in a group that's passing along bad but true gossip about someone you know?
 - a. Suggest that there are two sides to every story, and that you're not in a position to judge.
 - b. Just listen—and be thankful you're not the subject of this gossip.

5. When you look at peoples' faults, what do you see first? (Mt 7:1-5)
 - a. The log in your eye
 - b. The speck in their eye

6. What kinds of movies do you like to see?
 - a. Movies about adventure or wholesome relationships
 - b. Movies characterized by sex or violence

7. Which would you rather watch?
 - a. Sunsets
 - b. TV

8. Which would you rather read?
 - a. The Bible
 - b. A novel

Diagnosis: For every a. answer you circled, give yourself two points. For every b. answer you circled, give yourself one point.

Score	Diagnosis	Treatment
14-16	You have Heavenly Vision. Thank God!	Keep looking at our Lord Jesus! (Heb 12:1f)
11-1	You have Spiritual Farsightedness.	You need to be more watchful (Mk 1:15).
7-10	You have Laodicean Vision. Your eyes are neither good nor bad. You run the risk of losing your sight altogether (Rev 3:14-16).	You need to "anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev 3:18).
4-6	You have Roaming Eyes. Your eyes are darkened because they have roamed from the things of God to the pleasures of the world.	You need to look to the light so you can regain your vision again. Look for the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet 3:13f).
1-3	You have Spiritual Glaucoma. You're spiritually blind. The darkness of the world is all around you (1 Jn 2:9-11).	"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Mt 5:29).

Adapted from Spiritual Vision Test, Discussion & Lesson Starters 2 for Youth Groups, Youth Specialties, Inc, 1997, U.S.A.

How did you do? Do any of you have Spiritual Glaucoma? I hope not! Sometimes though, we are blinded by the world around us without even realizing it. Today, we'll be looking into how many movies nowadays can spiritually blind us and what we should do about it.



Part 1

What's the Big Deal About Watching Movies?

From their inception, motion pictures and television have pushed the boundaries of morality in society farther from the standard of God's word. Nowadays many movies, even PG-13 ones, contain nudity, immorality, violence, and foul language. From the standpoint of a Christian who wants to obey the Lord's call to holiness, there is no real difference. Immodesty is immodesty. Cursing is cursing. Blasphemy is blasphemy. Extramarital sex is extramarital sex. If one movie contains a little less of these things than another movie, that does not make either movie acceptable before God.

It is crucial that we make wise choices regarding entertainment so that we will not stumble. The moral stances and opinions of the film industry (particularly Hollywood) are very different to, and often contradict, God's standards. If we want to be godly and innocent, then we must show it with our actions. If we say we want to be holy and set apart for God, then we must be careful what we ingest into our lives. As apostle Paul reminds us, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22).

When it comes to choosing movies, we must be wise in our decisions. Many movies today are filled with things that can be destructive to our resolve and convictions. Have we ever sat through a movie that made us cringe? Have we ever seen something on the screen that we wished we could erase from our memory? We must know our convictions and live with them. Don't let movies be the cause of our downfall! The following are four areas which we need to be aware of when watching movies.



A. Sexual Content (1 Thess 4:1-8)

Both society and media are saturated with sexual images, innuendo, and conversation. If we do not filter these out of our life, we will be affected. We may think that watching a movie with some sexual scenes will not affect us. But such images will stay with us and will pollute us. If we continue to watch movies with sexual

scenes in them, we will slowly be influenced. If we watch a movie with sexual images or innuendo and our heart is moved, then this is sin. We are basically paying money to tempt ourselves.

The effects of watching sexually explicit material could have a serious consequence on our faith. It could lead to: lust and inappropriate sexual arousal, guilt or shame; and questioning or rebelling against God's standards. When we watch a movie, ask ourselves if it crosses the boundary of truth. Are we watching the movie because of the sexual content? Be very careful! "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jas 1:14f).



B. Negative and Cynical Views of God

The film industry does not present a positive view of God or those who worship Him. When the film industry is trying to spread an offensive image of God, we should be offended. How can we sit through a movie when the actors curse using our heavenly Father's name? How can we sit through a movie that takes "the name of the Lord your God in vain?" (Ex 20:7). How can we claim to truly love the Lord when we are sitting through a film that mocks the One who has given His life for us?



C. Violence and Anger (Rom 1:28-32)

Watching a movie with graphic violence and anger will just feed our own violence and anger. Even though we may think it is just a harmless movie, it does affect our emotions. Look at the news nowadays. How many of the shootings and killings that go on are a result of violence seen on screen? "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal 6:8f).



D. Occult Movies

We should not sit through a movie that tries to convince us that supernatural forces other than God should be embraced or feared. Don't let our defense down. Don't think that since other people are doing it, it gives us the right to do it too. Don't be like Saul who inquired of a medium for help (1 Sam 28). Remember that we are

fighting a spiritual battle and we are serving the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore, we must have absolutely nothing to do with the evil spirits or those that are against our Heavenly Father.

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27).

Part 2



What Are Our Motives?

An important question that we have to ask ourselves is, “Why are we watching this movie?” What are our motives? Perhaps our reasons are:



A. Boredom

We feel bored so we want to go and enjoy ourself by seeing a movie. There is no harm in this. It really depends on the kind of film we choose to watch. However, the next time we feel bored, stressed, frustrated, or depressed, instead of going to the movies, try going to our heavenly Father. True satisfaction comes from Jesus Christ. “Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!” (Ps 90:14). The key to battling boredom is to keep ourselves busy with something meaningful that will strengthen our spirituality.



B. Stimulation

We may feel sometimes that we would like some excitement in our lives. So, we turn to movies. But have we tried frequent daily prayers instead? We will find that we receive much joy and satisfaction from it. The Holy Spirit will fill us with strength and stimulate us! It will renew our strength, mounting us up with wings like eagles (Is 40:31).

Part 3



Pursue Spiritual Sensitivity

Many Christians have allowed themselves to become desensitized to sin. They have become like a frog. If we drop a frog into a pot of boiling hot water it would

immediately try to jump out, but if we put the frog in the pot and gradually increase the heat, we can eventually boil it because it does not recognize what is happening to it. This is what has happened to the average Christian in today's wicked society. They have been influenced by the society around them. Instead of setting themselves apart from society, they have in turn lowered their Christian standards and morals to fit in with the world. This should not be the case.

We need to have spiritual sensitivity. Spiritual sensitivity is the ability to perceive and respond, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to God's will, His love, and our wrongdoings. To be spiritually sensitive is to be alert. This comes about through prayer and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Here are some tips on pursuing spiritual sensitivity. Follow them carefully. Don't let ourselves slip into spiritual callousness.



A. Listen Carefully to the Lord's Instructions (Jas 1:21)

How do we listen carefully to God's instructions? By reading and meditating on His word. If we keep God's word in our heart, it will keep Him close to us and keep us far from sin. Ephesians 6:17 describes the word of God as the “sword of the Spirit.” We are fighting a spiritual battle. We need the sword, the word of God, to help us fight off lust and temptation. The Bible is our sword. Read it. Memorize it. Internalize it. Listen to it. It will train us in righteousness and help us attack our desires. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16f).

There was a sister who loved to watch movies. It didn't matter what type of movies they were, she would always go to the movie theater or rent them to watch at home. One day she rented a film which contained a lot of sexual scenes. Deep down inside her she knew she shouldn't watch it. There was a nagging feeling in her heart telling her not to watch it, as if God was warning her. But she shrugged off the thought, and consoled herself that it would be the last time. However, the very next day, this sister's eye developed a very serious sty. The inflammation was

so bad that pus ran out from it. This sister knew immediately that it was God's punishment to her. She repented before God and vowed never to watch such movies again.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4).



B. Knit Our Hearts to the Heart of God (Ps 73:28)

In whatever situation he was in, King David always looked to God for advice (2 Sam 5:19). Not only did he seek advice, he also waited for God's instruction and followed it. Likewise, in order to remain sensitive, we need to be in tune with God's heart. How do we remain sensitive? Psalm 51:7-10 says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." In order to be in tune with God's heart, we need to be cleansed by the Holy Spirit so that He can work within us, guiding our every step.



C. Open Our Eyes (Ps 101:3)

To be able to see as God sees, we need to have spiritual eyes. We need the Holy Spirit to direct and guide us into all truth. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (Jn 16:13). The Spirit can only guide and teach us when we are willing to submit to Him (Jn 14:26). We need to purify our hearts as Elder James commands in James 4:8. In order to do this, we need to purify our eyes as the two are inextricably connected: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Mt 6:22f).

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1

What are the four areas we need to be aware of when making entertainment choices?

2

What are the two main motives for watching movies?

3

What should we do to pursue spiritual sensitivity?

4

How does the word of God act as a sword?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: The Brownie Story

A father of two teenagers had a rule in the house that no one could watch R rated movies. One time, a really popular movie came out that all the youths were raving about. Even youths at church were talking about it. The teens really wanted to watch the movie, but it was rated R so they knew their father would not readily permit them to see the movie. To make a case, they decided to research and list all of the pros and cons of watching that movie. The pros were that it was a quality film made by a famous director, it starred famous actors, had a good storyline, etc. The cons were that it had some foul language, violence, and one sex scene (but mostly implied sex, which we see on regular TV). The teens presented their case to the father. To their delight, he said that he would think about it and let them know that evening.

That evening, the father called his kids downstairs to his study to hear the verdict. The kids came down and were pleasantly surprised to see their father with a plate of brownies. The father said to the kids, "I thought through your request to see the movie and I will allow you to watch the movie if you will simply eat a brownie." The kids jumped with glee. "But before you try the brownie, I'd like you to know that I made these from scratch, following a famous cookbook recipe and using the finest ingredients. The only thing is that I added a little bit of dog poop. I mixed it thoroughly into the batch, so you probably won't even taste it." The kids were grossed out with the thought of eating dog poop and would not dare to eat the brownie.

Questions to think about:

1. What case was the father trying to make with the brownies?
2. Do you think the kids went to see the movie? If not, what prevented them from going?
3. What does this tell us about watching certain movies, especially R rated ones?

Part B: Case Studies

Case 1

Brock, a church brother, confides that he has been watching adult movies on cable television late at night. Recently, he has had difficulty praying because scenes from the movies flash in his mind every time he closes his eyes. He has completely stopped reading the Bible and has lost interest in attending church services. He knows what he is doing is wrong, but he lacks the strength or the will to stop. ("Overcoming Temptations and Sin," *A New Life in Christ, Workbook for New Believers*, True Jesus Church, 2000)

Questions to think about:

1. What practical advice could you give him? What could you share from personal or others' experience that could help him?
2. What other action might you take?

Case 2

Olivia loves to watch movies. Every opportunity she gets, she will try to get other people to watch movies with her. She likes all kinds of movies. However, Olivia also loves to come to church to worship God, pray, and study the Bible. Recently, Olivia was put in charge of the Religious Education Department at her local church. She has been doing an excellent job. In fact, Olivia is one of the most respected teachers among her R.E. students.

One Sabbath Day, following church services, Olivia took all the children from her class to see a very sexually explicit and violent blockbuster movie. There, she reminded the children that they should not use movie stars or the plots in the movies as models for their spiritual life.

But over time, one of her students, a young sister in the eighth grade, decides that it would be a good idea to get a boyfriend. The young sister recalls how the good-looking hero in the movie had intimate relationships with a number of beautiful women. The young sister is excited about experiencing what it's like to have a boyfriend. So the young sister decides to start chasing one of the best-looking guys at her school. Eventually, this young sister gets this popular guy at her school to go out on a date. As time goes on, this guy wants to spend more and more time with the young sister. In fact, he wants to spend so much time that this young sister can no longer come to church on the Sabbath. Olivia, her R.E. teacher, is concerned about this young sister's faith. She calls her student and asks her if she wants to go see a movie with her on Saturday night. The young sister accepts

Olivia's invitation and they go see a popular romantic comedy. ("Repentance," *A New Life in Christ, Workbook for New Believers*, True Jesus Church, 2000)

Questions to think about:

1. What problems can you see in this story?
2. Can you find any biblically-based sin in this story?
3. What needs to be done to rectify the situation?

Part C: The 23rd Channel

The TV is my shepherd. I shall not want;

It makes me lie down on the sofa;

It leads me away from the faith; It destroys my soul.

It leads me in the paths of sex and violence for the sponsor's sake.

Yea, though I walk in the shadow of Christian responsibilities, there will be no interruption for the TV is with me;

Its cable and remote control, they comfort me.

It prepares a commercial for me in the presence of my worldliness;

It anoints my head with humanism and consumerism, my coveting runneth over.

Surely, laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house watching TV forever.

Source: Dr. Neil Chadwick

Questions to think about:

1. How does this contrast with Psalm 23?
2. What message is the author trying to get across with this poem?
3. Do you agree with this psalm?

Part D: TV or Not TV

Fill in the questionnaire below with members of your group. Be ready to share your completed questionnaire with the rest of the class.

1. How many hours a week do you watch TV? (average of each member of the group)
2. What one program are you most likely to watch each week? (list one for each member)
3. In what area of your life has TV most affected you?
4. If there were no TV, how would your life be different? What would you do with-

- out TV?
5. Can you think of any instruction given in the Bible that applies to your television viewing? Try to come up with several.
 6. Could watching TV ever be considered a sin? When?
 7. How can a person set guidelines for his own viewing? Write three rules that you think would be generally helpful for everyone.
 8. Think of some better ways you could use your time and money. For example, instead of going to the movies, you could set aside the money for the churches in Africa.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 388: Near to the Heart of God.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all your works" Ps 73:28.

Lord, we ask You to help us make wise choices that protect us. May Your thoughts and attitudes be ours and may we always be close to Your heart so that we can view things the way you view them. Grant us eyes so that we can clearly discern between what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, and what You take pleasure in.

Lesson 10

Loneliness

Listed Scriptures

Lk 22:39-46; Gen 28:11-22; 32:22-30; Ps 66:17-20; Is 49:15f; Heb 13:5

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand what causes loneliness.
- 2) To remember that God is our friend and constant companion.
- 3) To learn to find strength and comfort in the words of God.
- 4) To find ways to help our friends and church members who are suffering from loneliness.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." (Deut 31:6)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Joel 2-Amos 1

BIBLE BACKGROUND

There is no Bible Background information for this lesson.

