



INTRODUCTION

How can we rightly enjoy entertainment to the glory of God?

I. Addressing Legalism

1. Consider the Story

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

"...don't feel that you need to add a Bible verse to every one of your pleasures. You shouldn't feel guilty if you can't readily identify the specific attribute of God that is communicated in your enjoyment of something. Sometimes a pleasure is just a pleasure. Period. Full stop. God is honored in your enjoyment of it, [and] in your gratitude for it.... So just receive the gift as one of the many pleasures at his right hand" (Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth*).



2. Consider Others

We must avoid judging those who are more lenient than we are and despising those who are more strict than we are.

3. Consider Ourselves

We are to be informed primarily by Scripture, not manmade standards—either religiously based or culturally based.

II. Addressing Licentiousness

4. Consider Ourselves

“[S]oftcore is now what hardcore was a few decades ago [It shows] up on mainstream media all day long, in the pornification of everything, including television, rock videos, soap operas, advertisements, and so on” (Dr. Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself*).

“Once a story has sustained our attention long enough, we may begin to emotionally resonate with [the] story’s characters. Narratologists call this ‘transportation,’ and you experience this when your palms sweat as James Bond trades blows with a villain on top of a speeding train” (Paul J. Zak, Director of the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont Graduate University).



Questions to help you discern if the sexualized material in your entertainment is affecting you:

1. Do you find yourself automatically (or maybe involuntarily) seeking pleasure or excitement by returning to sex scenes in your mind—even if only for a few seconds at a time?
2. Do you ever imagine yourself in those scenes with those actors, receiving sexual pleasure from them?
3. Do you use sex scenes as a jumping off point to imagine new sexual scenarios (with or without the actors in the original scene)?
4. Do you ever seek sexual release by replaying those scenes in your mind and acting out on them in some way?
5. Do you compare the looks and/or sexual acts of movie characters with those of your spouse, leading to disappointment and frustration?

“Cultural engagement (and enjoyment) can easily become a cover-up for indulging sinful desires, an excuse to watch trashy movies. We must never forget that worldliness is easy, that plundering the Egyptians is hard, and that many an Israelite has convinced himself that he is absconding with the world's wealth when he's merely in the process of going native” (Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth*).

5. Consider Others

Jennifer Lawrence on shooting her first sex scene (for the 2016 film *Passengers*):

I got really, really drunk. But then that led to more anxiety when I got home because I was like, “What have I done? I don't know.” And he [Chris Pratt] was married. And it was going to be my first time kissing a married man, and guilt is the worst feeling in your stomach. And I knew it was my job, but I couldn't tell my stomach that. So I called my mom, and I was like, “Will you just tell me it's OK?”



Pop quiz: which of the following quotes about filming sex/nude scenes do you think are from porn stars, and which are from mainstream film/TV stars?

1. "It's very traumatic, it really is. It never gets easier."
2. "I know how many of the women in these scenes (and probably men too, you just don't hear from them) have talked about throwing up in the bathroom between scenes, crying, stressing out constantly, etc. . . . I know no other culture more willing to use people and throw them away."
3. "The industry has a way of making you bitter – it teaches you not to trust people and it ages you."
4. "If I never had to do it again that would be the best thing. You're worried about what the other person is feeling, you're worried about what the crew are thinking, whether they're really uncomfortable, whether you're uncomfortable. You're just thinking, 'God let this be over.' [These scenes are] generally just mortifying or humiliating."
5. "You can't really get over the embarrassment. I know [some] people...do things like drinking shots before filming, but I handle them by not really watching them afterwards."
6. "I was absolutely terrified and had no idea what was going on. I cried afterwards because I was thinking, 'This isn't acting, what am I doing?'"

6. Consider the Story

Charles Spurgeon, commenting on Christians pursuing entertainment (the theater, particularly):

"My dear friend, the enjoyments which are prepared for Christians are many and great, but they never include sin and folly. Do you call vice and folly amusements? When I go down into the country, I see farmers carrying out great pails of hogwash for the swine, and I never grudge them their dainty meal. I do not protest against their having a full trough twice over. But do I partake with them? Certainly not! I have no taste for that. Do I therefore deny myself? Certainly not! It never struck me that there was anything desirable in their rich mixture. I have no doubt that it has a fine flavor to the creatures for whom it is prepared. It certainly seems to be appreciated. If [those in the world] enjoy the pleasures of the world and sin, let them have them... They have nothing else to enjoy. They have no paradise for the everlasting future. They have no Christ and Saviour to lean their heads upon. Let them have that which makes them happy while they can be happy. But when I am talking to the children of God I adopt another tone, since for you these things have no charms if you have truly tasted the high delights of fellowship with God. . . . I am sure you will not find that you are losers by giving up worldly pleasures. . . . There is a safe and sweet pleasantness in holy living, and the pleasantness lies very much in the fact that an abounding peace springs from it. God grant us grace to keep in these peaceful paths, even though others should call us Puritans and ridicule our holy fear of sin."



Recommended further reading:

- *Worldly Amusements*, Wayne A. Wilson
- The online writings of E. Stephen Burnett at *Speculative Faith, Christ and Pop Culture*, and *Christianity Today*
- My website: www.capstewart.com
- Good summary article on the “law of love” principle: *Here’s the problem with just closing your eyes during the sex scenes (Reformed Perspective magazine)*
- *The Things of Earth*, Joe Rigley