



What About Television?

Richard Hines

Psalm 101:1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set no wicked thing [a work of Belial, a work of Satan] before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

We are living in a very intelligent age, and we need to be ready to give an answer to every man. It is not always enough to say, "This is wrong," and not be able to say why it is wrong. We need to know why some things are wrong. If something is right, it will stand, and if it is wrong, the truth will utterly destroy it. I fear that often people are left in confusion as to why we say certain things are displeasing to the Lord God. We should not be afraid to consider anything with an open mind; because if it is good and if it is right, then God's Word is not going to condemn it, neither the written law nor the spiritual law of God.

I think it is very important that we consider television and its effects, because it is one of the major issues of this day. There is no greater impact upon our land today than the media of television. There is nothing that has affected our country like television has. There is absolutely nothing that has affected the youth of this day as television has.

As an instrument, television is not wrong. Television is a wonderful invention. It is an amazing thing that over the air and over wires pictures and words can come. Therefore, it is not television, but the programming that is on television. It is the effect of television upon you and upon your children.

One man became tired of being a robot to television, so he unplugged it and took it down to the creek and dumped it in. Another man came along and said he should have apologized to the fish!

As Christian people, the greatest battle with television is when television takes its place in the home, when you open your door and bring a television set into your house and it becomes a daily part of your life. If you have children, it has a greater influence upon your children than you do.

It would be a false statement to say that there are no good programs on television. There are some good ones. There are some things on television that would be proper to watch and that would be of interest to watch. There are several things that Christian people can do if they do not become a daily routine in our lives. If it becomes a day-to-day routine to the point that it controls you and you do it over and over and over again and more important things are shoved aside and neglected, it is wrong for you and can hinder you spiritually.

When you bring television into your house, it becomes a part of your daily routine. It is not an influence that is an occasional one, but it is an influence that is a constant one. We need to remember that when a dangerous thing becomes a part of our lives, we become careless in its control.

I heard of a man who trained a python from the time it was just a little baby. It was a part of his daily life. He worked with it and trained it until finally he was able to put on an act. He traveled all over the country with this python. The climax of his act was the python winding itself around his body and putting

its head up over the top of his head—a very spectacular act! However, he became too accustomed to it, and he forgot the danger. In so doing, it came to the place where the natural instinct of that serpent forgot its master and crushed him to death right in the climax of one of his shows.

When you move a dangerous thing into your home and it becomes a daily part of your routine, you will lose the awareness of its danger to you and to your family. Its influence will cause you to become very careless in its control. There is hardly a person who has moved one into his home who will not testify that at first he was very careful in his control of it, but as it stayed there and he became more accustomed to it, he became more and more careless in endeavoring to control it.

Basically, child-care manuals devote little or no comment on the thought of television in the home. The only time Dr. Spock brings it up is when he deals with teenagers, and his advice is that as long as they get enough sleep and do their homework, do not worry about television in your home. That advice is not strong enough nor is it shrewd enough for Christian people!

Many people say that as long as you watch the right thing, TV is okay in your home. However, one of the strongest points against television is this: It is the fact that you are watching the television set. It is not alone what is on the television set. You are sitting down before a television, and you are spending hours watching it. When you are watching television, you are giving your devotion to an experience that gives you a great intake but demands little or no outgo.

Poor programming is a problem, but it is not the only problem. Statistics for 1970 show that children from ages 2 through 5 spend approximately thirty and a half hours weekly watching television. Considering that most children at that age need twelve hours of sleep, that leaves approximately eighty waking hours. Take ten or eleven hours of that time to eat, and it does not leave very much time for them to be doing something else, and about a third of their time is spent in front of a television set. Ages 6 through 11 spend twenty-five and a half hours; adults, twenty-three and a third; preschoolers, thirty-four and a half hours.

An average at one school showed the preschoolers spending as much as fifty-four hours a week watching television. When you consider fifty-four hours a week of a little child's time sitting in front of television, I would say there is a lot of influence there. Being conservative, we see that preschoolers are spending more than one-third of their time at the television shrine. That tells us that television is robbing the basic family relationship. Television has become for too many people a built-in baby-sitter for their precious children that God gave to them.

Television in America has become a narcotic. It is as though the children are drugged by it, and the parents receive a high by the children being so engrossed in television that they can have a few moments of quiet to themselves.

Many parents have testified that the only way that they can get their children's attention is to walk over and turn off the television. Parents can call them, but the children are in a trance-like state, and the parent is not heard until the set is turned off.

Parents testify that their children who watch television are cranky, tired, ready to explode at the least little crossing, that they are filled with dissatisfaction. The only way, it seems, to calm them down is for them to eat or to drink or to be aimlessly jumping around without any desire to do anything of service to themselves. As you and your children are watching television, a mass amount of energy is flowing into you, while none is coming out, and this is the reason for crankiness.

When a child becomes irritable and cannot get along with the rest of the children of the family, mothers get concerned, ordinarily. Yet parents allow television to have the very same effect on their children, and they never pay any attention. How can we ignore such symptoms that are the result of slavery to television?

America is addicted to television, searching for a high that television is not able to supply. Television causes a craving for experiences that the viewer can never have. You cannot watch television for hour after hour and walk away from that screen and say, "That has had no effect on me." That is not true! It has its effect. It marks you in such a way that you have a craving within you for things you will never be able to have for yourself.

The thrill that television offers the public today is one of the reasons for the chaotic state our world is in. Children have seen so many thrills on television that they cannot be thrilled with any of the ordinary thrills. If there is anything spectacular, children today have already seen it on television.

Soap operas is one of the worst problems that is affecting marriages. Soap operas glamorize illicit sex, adultery, fornication, husbands and wives going their separate ways, wives that cannot get along with their husbands and who are neurotic and have to go to a physician or a psychiatrist. These things are made attractive to the point that the American people have the idea that unless they have trouble in their marriages, they do not have a normal marriage.

Ministers counsel people who come in from outside the congregation. Their marriages are torn apart. They are, all mixed up. They do not know which way to turn. Why does it happen? Do not tell me, precious friend, that you can look at these things on TV and not be affected! Like drugs or alcohol, television allows a blotting out of reality to a passive state. People sitting engrossed in front of a television set forget every important thing there is for them to do.

There is a great irresistibility to television. There is just something about the television screen, especially to nontelevision watchers, that when you walk by it, it attracts your attention. I doubt if there is a person who has not stopped and watched awhile. This irresistibility of television has left its effect on the home. Its danger is greatest when it moves in with you and is allowed to captivate you for hours at a time. Television is a part of America's life-style. When it can take two to five hours of your twenty-four-hour day, and eight of that day is spent on the job, it is in its zenith of danger. Television viewing is basically an unproductive experience. Television distorts the sense of time. It causes people to allow the clock to roll right around, and they do not even realize how many hours have passed away.

Television causes a weakening in the communication flow between husband and wife, and parents and children. It tears down the family structure. The Word of God tells us how the family is supposed to be structured, with the husband as the head of the house, the wife as the one that guides the house, and the children in subjection to their parents, but all of them bound together by the love of God.

Many in the world (not in the church) have testified of being slaves to television. Housewives neglect their housework as they spend the best hours of their day in front of the television set. It is no wonder that husbands come home from work and there is no hot meal on the table. Let us get back to some old-fashioned things! You wives ought to be ashamed if your husband has to come in the house after he has worked eight or ten hours and there is nothing on the table for him to eat! The wife is to look after her family and the needs of her household. There are a lot of them who are wasting hours of time sitting in front of a television. Their house is dirty. Their meals are not cooked. Their children are sent off to school with the clothes they wore the day before just because mother wasted so much time sitting in front of the box.

Too many husbands come home from work and on goes the television. Children come home from school and on goes the television. There they sit at the shrine of television with their meals in their laps because they cannot miss a minute of it.

One person referred to television as a cultural barbiturate. America is mainlining the tube. Children climb the walls when the TV set breaks. Fathers will go out and take their charge cards to get the TV set fixed if a ball game is going to be on it. If they cannot get it fixed in time, they will run down to the store and rent one. You tell me that America is not hooked?

Television in the home is a danger because of the fact that children imitate what they learn. They do what they see. We let our children go to someone's house and they come home acting like those children. (I'm sure their children go home acting like our children.) When children imitate what they see on television, what are they imitating?

Boys and girls used to imitate two basic things: the school system and the church. That is all they had to imitate. I can remember my mother telling us about going down by the creek and baptizing clothespins. I have seen my own children act out the church services and the things that happened. One will be the preacher and another will be the song leader, and they will have "church."

Some people say that television is good for education. However, evidence will show us that there is not a great amount of real learning derived from television. Children receive enjoyment from television, but not much valuable education.

I am not just giving you my opinions. I read a book entitled *The Plug-In Drug*. If you can get it out of your local library, it will be worth your while to read it. It has some good, strong, sensible things in it that we need to be aware of. Many things I am saying to you are from tests that have been conducted by those

who wrote that book.

After testing, such as giving an old-time fairy tale and letting children watch it and then testing them, they found out that the children could not even give the main story line. In another test, preschoolers were shown how to perform twenty different acts, simple little things like moving a glass from one side to another and stacking up some blocks and putting a toy on the top of those. Then the preschoolers were asked to act out as many as they could of those acts they had seen on television. The best they could come up with were six out of twenty. They did not learn a whole lot.

One little boy was watching an educational program on television, and his daddy said to him, "Son, would you like me to explain it?" He said, "No, Dad, I'm just watching it." That is the attitude of too many people today. They are not looking for education from TV. It is just a passive experience.

What little bit of education there is on television specifically for preschoolers is merely a substitute for the teaching that mothers, who should be at home, should be giving to their children.

Collectively, there are not many parents who want to take the time to sit down with their little ones and teach them. I think we ought to give our children a good, broad teaching (not just about the things of God) before they get to school. Mothers ought to sit down and read them some books. Spend some time with them. Show them and tell them some things. Many parents are just simply too lazy to take the time to raise their children, and we are seeing the effects of that today.

It is a proven fact that as the lungs of a chain smoker differ from the lungs of a nonsmoker, so the brain of a twelve-year-old child who has spent hundreds of hours in front of a television set will differ from the brain of one who has spent little or no time in front of a television set. The difference between a nonsmoker and a chain smoker is the contamination in the lungs. What is the difference between the brain of a non-watcher and a watcher of TV?

It is in the preschool years that most children watch television for the longest length of time, and it is the preschool years that are the most formative years of their growth.

Proverbs 22:6 reads, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." You cannot show me a Scripture anywhere which even implies that you are to sit your child down in front of a television set and let Sesame Street or Captain Kangaroo train up your children in the way they should go. YOU train up your child in the way it should go. YOU spend the time. YOU quit being so lazy and so indifferent.

I shake when I think of raising children in the day and age in which we are living. It is a sad and sick age, in case you do not know it. People are absolutely sick with sin, and the corruption of sin has left its mark on our generation. Our children go out into that. We ought to teach them that God's grace is sufficient. The same power of God that kept their dad true to God when he went through high school will keep them in high school. They can come out steadfast and unmovable, abounding in the things of God.

Not long ago, I dealt with a teenage girl. I asked her about her problem. She said, "Brother Hines, it is television in my home." Why was that so bad? Because her mother professes to be saved. (Her father left them a long time ago.) That girl has a battle she should not have! (My children do not struggle with television in my home. They do not have to. There is not any there.)

Too many people become careless in regards to their children. To many adults, watching television is an unwinding time. However, children have a built-in need for mental and physical activity, and this need is lost or cancelled out at the shrine of television. Children need to be active, and they need to motivate themselves. They need physical exercise. They need their minds exercised. Sitting in front of a television set does not fulfill these needs for them. Children need to get outdoors. They need to play ball. They need to go fishing. They need to explore out in the woods.

You mothers and fathers need to take some time to do these things with your children. Play games with your children. Play ball with your children. Enjoy some good music with your children.

Let us consider the effect of television on reading. Before television came, there were many worlds that could only be opened by reading a book. There is nothing wrong with a good book if you do not neglect the Book of all books. You can sit down with a good book and you can go all over the world. You can go to Africa, Egypt, all across the United States. You can explore and be a part of things.

These same worlds that reading opens were worlds that preschool children are incapable of opening by

themselves. Preschoolers cannot read, so before television the only reading material they were affected by was that which was selected by the parents who would sit down and read to them. Consequently, they were not brought into violent, ungodly, corrupt things.

Now that television is here, the first thing little children who can barely walk learn is how to turn the channel. And as they turn the channel, they open up worlds of their choice. They look at whatever pleases them, and if they do not like it, they flip the channel. Parents will go to bed at night and leave the children up, and the children can turn on anything that set can bring into the house. Many times, because of television, children are influenced by the wrong things.

Because of television, teachers tell us that reading has become a bore to children. Teachers tell us that slow readers are hindered by television more than by any other thing. Teachers further tell us that even good readers are sometimes called lazy readers because they read the material, they know how to answer the questions, but they never really focus on the insight of the material that is before them. They cannot relate it.

Today, the most popular books are nonbooks. Nonbooks are books such as the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and sports books that are filled with facts and figures. They are the most popular books because you do not have to start at page one and read to page three hundred and fifty to finish the book. You can open the book at any page and read a fact. You can close it up and come back to it a week later and you have not missed anything. Among our youth today, those are their most popular books, because children do not want to, nor do they have to, put the effort forth to explore worlds unknown by reading a good book. All they have to do is turn on a tube.

In the United States, people have shifted from reading to viewing, and it has had its effect upon the educational system. Many people graduating today cannot read. It affects creative writing ability. It affects the development of the mind, and so forth.

Television has its effect because of the violence that is thereon. Thank God for the minority groups today who are fighting the violence on TV and fighting it hard!

Juvenile delinquency and arrests increased sixteen hundred per cent from 1952 to 1972. By 1964, according to the National Association for Better TV and Radio, on the major networks, 200 hours of TV time a week were devoted to crime and violence.

If you give the children a choice and ask them which they would rather watch, "The Little House on the Prairie" or a police story, what do you think they want to watch? They want something that has some action, violence, murder.

The truth today is that the American people want violence. Too many people want violence because it is better able to captivate their children, and they want the program that will hold their children spellbound so they do not have to be bothered by them.

A group of people were tested and asked, "What is your chance of falling prey to a violent crime? Is it 50 to 50, 10 to 1, or 100 to 1?" Those who were TV viewers all said their chances were 50 to 50. However, it is not that bad. It is 100 to 1 that you would ever fall victim to a violent crime. (It was the light TV viewers who gave the correct answer.) Violence on TV has brought American people to the place they feel that violence is a more real part of life than what it really is. (Nevertheless, it is a serious problem. I do not want to be misunderstood.)

People are able to look at violence, murder, and merciless acts of every nature and it has no effect upon them. It just makes them think that the whole world is sick. However, the whole world is not sick. A lot of it is, but all of it is not.

Many young people who are arrested today say, "I saw it on television." There are two major problems that we deal with in regard to the youth today. One is television and the other is drugs.

Television has had its effect upon our law enforcement agencies. Programs such as "Chips" have so glamorized police authority that unless there is a lot of going through the fields and back on the highway, skidding of the tires, blowing of the sirens, and flashing of the lights, law enforcement agents feel they are not really doing their job. I do not know if you can understand this point or not, but it is one you need to understand.

We were in a town not long ago, and as we were pulling out of a parking lot, a truck came down the

highway with two police cars behind it, going just as fast as they could go. Two more policemen in an automobile came up from the other direction, turned around in the middle of the highway right in front of some cars and almost caused a wreck, went out in the field, nearly turned over, came back, and began to chase the truck back toward the city. The family and I went back to see what was going on. By the time we got to where it was, the police had rammed the truck head-on and totaled a police car. There were eleven police cars there, sheriffs, state police, and local police. About five of them had come through the main part of town, ran people off the road all the way up, and finally stopped the young man who had stolen an old, beat-up pickup truck. Because of all that action, I thought the boy must have done something much worse than what he did.

A man walked up to one of the state police in a nice way, and I appreciated what he said. He said, "I was up in the city, and these men ran me off the road. They almost caused accidents. Was it necessary to subject all the citizens to this just to stop one kid that is only fifteen years old?"

Television has affected the medical profession. There are so many doctor and nurse programs on television that nurses and doctors have come to believe that rather than their profession setting the standard for television, they need to set their professional standards according to what is seen on TV.

I have a sister-in-law who is an operating room technician. She will tell you that many nurses and doctors are not happy unless someone is having an affair. It is more of a playground than it is getting the physical needs supplied. And you people are afraid to trust the Lord!

American people are so easily influenced, and ever so gullible. It seems that everything has to be spectacular. A lot of neurotic women and men feel that they have not fulfilled life's purpose unless they have lain in the hospital for a few weeks.

Television has glamorized the most tragic situations of life. You see things on television you would never see otherwise.

Television with its violence has caused sensitivity to the most important facts of life to lose its importance. People have lost respect for life. People today can commit unspeakable crimes and feel absolutely no guilt and no remorse. Do you really want to know why? Because from the time they were little children they sat in front of a television and saw human lives taken, one right after the other, until they came to a place where they considered themselves old enough to handle a gun or a knife or to strangle somebody, and they do it without any remorse or guilt. You do not see criminals today weeping over what they did, do you? They do not feel it in their hearts anymore, and it is because of the effect of having seen it and seen it on television.

When we see mercilessness in a child, we become worried about that child. At least, I do. It is a dangerous sign. A perverted generation today can do all sorts of hideous things and it does not have any effect upon them at all. They do not have the feelings of conscience that God would put within them, and it is because they have seen it and they have seen it all their lives. Television instills these things in a child's heart.

If you did not have a television, what would you do? Husbands and wives, you might discover each other! Television is a thief. Consider the good times that television steals.

One of the last polls taken states that ninety-eight percent of American homes have television. (One poll said there is no use putting a percentage on it; everybody has a television. That is not quite true, is it?)

In 1964, the year young people who started out with TV got to college, the STAT testing scores were down. The best students were the little- or non-television watchers.

Many young people illustrate their drug trips as if they were on TV: "It flashed the pictures and I was actually doing what the pictures said." And you tell me television does not have an effect?

I saw a cartoon with a man beside his automobile fixing a flat tire. He had the car jacked up, and he was swearing, getting ready to change the tire. There was a child sticking his head out the window, and he said, "Dad, why don't you just switch the channel?" Dad said, "I can't; this is real life."

Television causes our youth today to think that if they do not like the way life is treating them, they will just change the channel. Therefore, when life dishes out something difficult, they cannot face it. Why is it? Because everything has been fantasy and has been blown up and glamorized on television.

The average family today is zapped by the influence of television. I trust that it is not influencing your

home as a part of the church!

People (even ministers) who call at a home where a television is are considered second to the TV. There is nothing any harder than to visit somebody and try to talk to him about the things of the Lord and have a TV blaring. Most people do not even have the courtesy to cut it off long enough for a person to talk to them a few minutes. You go visit a friend or a relative, and they do not want to turn off the TV. They say, "I am glad to see you! Here, sit down until this is over, and as soon as this goes off we can have a nice little visit." So you have one of two choices: turn around and go back home, or sit down and watch it with them. You are second choice to a television. That is too bad, isn't it?

Women watch the soap operas, and they are brainwashed into thinking that a good marriage is when the sexual relationship is good and love is completely wiped out of the picture. Dedication, devotion, and all the old-fashioned qualities that have held people together for 25, 30, 50, and 60 years are completely neglected and forgotten. If a sexual relationship is all you have in your marriage, you are in trouble!

It is true that we are sheltered as Church of God people, and it is true that too much sheltering is not really good. There are some things that we will never be aware of if we do not have a television. I realize that. I am being factual with you. I did not get to see the men go to the moon. I would have liked to. It is true that there are a few (a very few) good programs on television. It is true that a good ball game can be fun to watch. It is true that news is much more real on television than it is in the newspapers.

It is also true that when David said in Psalm 101, "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes," he meant NO wicked thing. I do not think we can sincerely narrow that Scripture to television alone. I think that means ANY wicked thing: *True Confession*, *True Detective* magazines, or any other wicked thing. We should not set any work of Satan before our eyes. TV is not the only wicked thing that can be set before your eyes.

It is true that a lot of people would declare to us, "I can have a TV and I can control it." It is also true that that is not true. You are not an exception! (I realize there are some circumstances, such as divided homes, which might create problems, but we are preaching the rule.)

If something is true, it is true. If it is right, it is right. If it is wrong, it is wrong. There is no use in the congregation living one thing when the pastor is preaching something else. If something is important enough that your pastor preaches it, it is important enough for you to live it.

Television is a serious problem. I have only skimmed across the top. It is unbelievable the effect television has had on us as a nation, as a people, in our school systems, and so forth. With what good it has done, it has done a lot more bad.

It is a fact that people who are really saved do not need a TV in their home. It is a fact that a busy child of God does not have time enough to watch TV to make it worth its cost. It is also a fact that you get enough to last a lifetime of television's influence the few times you are subjected to it.

It is also a fact that if you have a television, it is a controller of you, of your family, and of your home. When you move it into your home, you are moving the sinful world into your house. Jesus said that we are in the world, but we are not of the world. When you go out and buy a television set and bring it into your home and set it down and it becomes a part of your day-to-day routine, you have invited the world into your home. You are subjecting yourself and your children to a continual influence that will absolutely harm you spiritually. It will have its effect upon you seriously. (If you have a television set and you get rid of it, I believe you will find that you have a greater victory in your life than you ever had before.) When you invite it in and it does not have to be there. God does not have to give you power to control something that you have invited in.

No Time for God

What fools we are to clutter up our lives with common things and leave outside our heart's gate the Lord of life, and life itself. No time for God, and soon to say, no time to eat and sleep or love or die. Take time for God, or you shall dwarf your soul; and then when the angel of death comes knocking at your door, a poor misshapen you will be to step out and face eternity. Someday you will lay aside this mortal self and make your way to a world unknown, and when you meet Him face to face, will He, should He, have time for you?

Consider these thoughts, would you? If you have a TV in your home, I challenge you to pray about it. Ask God, "Lord, does this please You? Do You want it here?" Would Jesus have one?



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