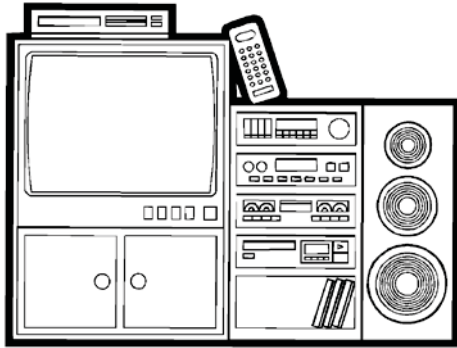


Entertainment or Eternity

My Journey

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Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. He. 12:1-2a.

I grew up in a conservative Christian home where we had no TV. My parents were very careful that the world's influences would not get a foothold in our hearts and lives. Occasionally we might go over to a friend's house and watch some simple child's movie, but very, very seldom. Our minds were not thinking about movies and TV, and we never thought that they could become a major pitfall.

Then we moved and became involved in full-time Christian ministry. This group would sometimes have an evening of relaxing for the staff by showing wholesome, Christian movies, which we joined them for. They also had several Christian movies in their libraries, and my brothers and I began to watch these fairly often. Sometimes our family would watch "good, old-fashioned" movies too, now.

And ... it became an addiction to me, although I didn't realize it at the time.

When I was about thirteen, the Lord began to work in my heart, and I felt in my soul that the movies I was watching were hindering me and pulling my heart away from seeking the Lord. By now we were watching secular movies as well. It was a great struggle for me at this time, because I didn't want to watch movies, and I would resolve not to ... but then I would fall, and my soul would come away feeling so empty and vain. All I could think about after watching a movie would be about whatever I had just seen, and I could not enjoy reading my Bible or praying, neither could I fix my mind on things of God.

Yet, in His mercy, while yet in my unregenerated state, the Lord delivered me from the powers of entertainment for a time and granted me a few years of freedom from this bondage and just a beautiful time of seeking His face.

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Ps. 27:8

Then a couple years after the Lord saved me and I was born again, I began to think it was okay to watch certain movies, as long as they were "Christian" and had no bad language or immodesty. But that was a downward path for me, because over time I compromised more and more. Finally, I told the Lord I would watch only good movies, and at the very first wrong thing, immodesty, or bad language, etc., I would get up and leave and not watch it.

But that didn't work. I would be too interested in what was happening and would overlook a little ungodly music or a bad word, and just try to act as if I hadn't heard it. Then, afterwards, I would feel so condemned and empty. My life with the Lord was not solid, and I began to lose convictions, moving more and more into the world. I believe this was a major hindrance—along with other things—and kept me from running the race and fighting the good fight of faith. I had allowed Satan to begin choking out the things of God in my life.

Several years back from this time, I had read A. W. Tozer's book *The Menace of the Religious Movie*, but now I was choosing to ignore truth and rigging up excuses for my sins.

I would make promises to God that I couldn't keep, because they would allow me to make provision for the flesh. However, whenever I made provision for my flesh, I would always fall and fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Then over a Thanksgiving holiday, some of us went to visit my brother who was working on a ranch out West. While we were there, they watched a few movies, and I kind of watched from the background, trying to read or something so I wouldn't be so involved. But then they decided to watch this other certain one, so I went and sat with the others to watch it. My youngest brother said, "You won't watch this one."

Defiantly, I replied, “Why not?” My flesh rose up, and I didn’t want to be told what I was or wasn’t going to do. So I decided that I was going to watch it just to prove I could do whatever I wanted.

As I watched, several times I felt very strongly that I should get up and leave. But I stayed—stayed to the very end of the long, wicked movie.

It finished. I sat there thinking, “What have I done?!” The Lord smote my heart, and I wept. I was sick—sick of my flesh, sick of my sin, sick of my hypocrisy, sick of the world, sick of wanting to be acceptable to those who valued independence from God to do whatever self desired, sick of my independence, sick of losing my soul.

I clearly saw that I was on the road of rejecting God’s grace, saying “no” to the soft, still voice of His Spirit, and choosing to enjoy the “pleasures” of sin for a season and thus to lose out in *eternity*.

I went to the room I was staying in and repented, pleading for forgiveness and cleansing. God’s mercy is so amazing! I would have told myself that I had had plenty of opportunities and now I had sealed my choice. I would have strongly told myself of all my great wickedness. But the Lord’s mercy is so far beyond my human comprehension, and He forgave me and comforted me when I would have been expecting harsh rebuke and chastisement. He is so kind. Yet, had I continued in this sin, I know His kindness would be His righteous anger towards me.

Then I made a vow to Him that never again in my whole life would I watch another movie—Christian or otherwise, for any reason. I am too weak to say yes to some and no to others. It must be no to all. Do I want to lose my soul and my God for empty, evil vanity that will soon pass away?

I have watched documentaries or videos on animals, but I’m hesitant to even do that anymore, because I’m afraid I may lead others astray. Say, for example, that I show a little video about animals to some friends, and they become interested in watching motion pictures and start watching other things too.

It’s a terrible road to go down. I praise Jesus for His great mercy in setting me free, but yet I fear lest I become a castaway in turning my heart away from Him and giving it to the world, the flesh, and the devil. I am helpless, yet He is all my Strength and Help. In Him is victory and freedom.

I know of Christians who never watched movies, but Satan caught them by subtility as he did me and, little by little, led them so far that now they easily watch two movies every evening and don’t care what wickedness is in it.

May the Lord find us faithful and may we pray for each other that we might be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. That we might be slaves of Christ and His righteousness, because His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

The Lord also convicted me of wasting His time in reading books as well. What will matter in eternity? That I was able to relax and read a “good” book, or that I was busy about my Father’s business, whether in prayer, meditation, study of His Word, learning from the lives of men and women who loved Him and were faithful to the end, and such things?

I still find so many times when I’m not redeeming the time, and even with movies and fruitless books weeded out, there is yet so very much more that needs weeded out. So much more time that I yet need to redeem and stop wasting. Some may think it’s too extreme, but I just wonder if we’ll think so in eternity.

Oh may we pray for each other and not faint by the way!

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for

whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after; if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Ph. 3:7-14

Entertainment is on the cross and eternity is in view! Oh Lord, may it be so! ~

