

Sessions – TV Culture – myfishbites.com

Hello and welcome to my session peeking into the murky world of TV! Well, we're gonna look at TV and our lives as Christians! So sit back and don't flick channel..

INTRO

Defining what we are looking at. Here's my equation we'll be deciphering.. TV culture + Christians = a mess ?

TV COMPILATION

Go grab a few shows off TV. Be as varied as you can. Get around 5 mins of footage. If you don't have access to editing stuff or a camcorder with DV in/out then here's my advice. First, decide which programmes you wanna grab off TV. Try and do this in one day. Get news, morning TV, cookery, an old film, kids TV, afternoon CBBC type TV, Simpsons, a bizarre documentary, Eastenders, other soaps, The Bill, late evening stuff, a late movie etc. Then hit record/stop on your DVD recorder or similar.

Then show this video as part of this session. Tell people to watch it closely.

Or – a few 'lowlights' from one week's soaps:

- money changes hands in return for a baby being given away by the mother
- father and son fight in pub, woman injured, people lose home, loan sharks on hand
- homeless student starts stealing, others exact punishment, man refuses to plead guilty to manslaughter, bloke beaten up in prison, woman collapses after fight with sister
- gay couple have problems, fights over who fancies who, who's moving in with who, lots of sex
- non-married couple have baby, but find out real father is someone else, girl gets chlamydia, marriage break down, kidnap, affair

You – can also get hold of a couple of TV or soap magazines – and show them round or read out edited lowlights. You may also want to ask people why soaps are so popular. The reason is mainly people looking to escape what they perceive as mundane lives and to look for something beyond them, outside of themselves. Other reasons are to enter into stories and situations and people's lives in a safe way.

Ask – how does the outworking of church life affect and relate to this kind of hope and desire people have? Jesus offers us something beyond ourselves and it's a message of hope, not of mess, like soaps. And we are also a living, dynamic community within church (or should be). So Jesus and his model, the church, have a lot to offer. How do we harness this so people can realise it? Maybe advertise on TV slots during soaps!!

FACTS

- Young people watch 18,000 adverts each year (who says adverts don't work..)
- Kids watch 3 hours of TV a day on average
- The average 6 year-old spends more time watching TV in their life than talking to their parents
- 50% of British 5-6 year-olds have a TV in their own room. 30% are able to watch the TV unsupervised after the 9pm watershed
- By their teens, young people will have watched over 8000 murders on TV and 100,000 random acts of violence

- The average child reaches the end of their school age having watched 5000 hours of TV
- By the time they leave school, the average young person has spent more time watching TV than in the classroom
- By age 70, the average person will have spent between 7-10 years watching TV

Challenge – we are taught by some people to tithe (give to God) our money. Often people say 10 percent. Are we ‘tithing’ to our TVs (or computers, Playstations etc)? If so, this is idolatry and we need to make a big change.

Challenge – can we come up with a system to monitor and then reduce our TV watching habits? What about giving ourselves a time limit each week and sticking to it if we can!!

THE TV PRAYER (unknown source, any clues anyone?)

Our TV which art in heaven
 Hallowed be thy name
 Thy cable come
 Thy still be fun
 At noon as it is at seven
 Entertain us today all day til bed
 And forgive us all as we forfeit our weekend
 And lead us into sedation
 But deliver us from re-runs
 For thine is the sitcom, the drama and the gory
 Forever and ever
 Amen.

- [For a zipped PowerPoint presentation of this – click here](#)

QUIZ, QUESTIONS

You can test people’s knowledge of the programmes you’ve shown. Or test them on the clips you have just shown them. Alternatively, or in addition, get together some questions regarding TV and entertainment. Hey, you can even test yourself on some of this!

BIBLE QUIZ

Here’s where we test some Bible knowledge! No Bibles allowed, funnily enough!

- [For a zipped PowerPoint presentation of this quiz – click here](#)

1. Where was Jesus born?

(Answer: Bethlehem)

2. Who followed King David as King of Israel?

(Answer: Solomon)

3. How did Elijah die?

(Answer: He didn’t, he was carried off into heaven, 2 Kings 2.11-12)

4. Which Psalm starts, 'The Lord Is My Shepherd'

(Answer: Psalm 23)

5. What was the Apostle Paul's name before his name changed to Paul?

(Answer: Saul)

6. Which ex-prostitute is remembered in Hebrews 11 for her faith?

(Answer: Rahab)

7. Which 2 Old Testament cities did God destroy with fire from heaven?

(Answer: Sodom & Gomorrah)

8. In Acts, 2 believers were killed by the Holy Spirit for lying. Who?

(Answer: Ananias & Sapphira)

9. In Ephesians 6, what are the 2 weapons of attack in our spiritual armour?

(Answer: The Word of God and Prayer)

10. Which Apostle was the first Christian martyr, stoned to death?

(Answer: Stephen)

THE PURPOSE

It is quite likely that many Christian young people know their TV questions better than their Bibles. The same is probably true for most Christians. Is this right? Is this the best use of our time? What does the Bible have to say?

Give out pieces of paper and get people to write or think about answers to these questions:

1. Do you know TV better than your Bible? Why?

2. When you have a spare 10 minutes, what do you do? Why?

3. What does the Bible have to say about TV do you think? Write down and/or find some Bible verses

Derek Prince says this: "If you want to improve your spiritual life, swap two things: the amount of time you spend watching TV and the amount of time you spend reading your Bible."

Discuss!

SKETCH

If you want, do a sketch about TV culture or something. Or show a Simpsons clip, perhaps the one where Homer illegally gets cable TV. If you're disturbed enough to want to use our sketch – visit Sketches > Soaps.

ADVERT QUIZ

If you can, video some adverts but make sure they're edited so that they don't give away what the adverts are for. Get people to shout out what the adverts are. Many will know most of the adverts – I guarantee!

If you can't do this, get some straplines (the slogans) from companies and get people to say who the companies are.

- [We have a zipped PowerPoint presentation of straplines which you can use or amend](#)

Point – If people making violent films or video games say that they don't have any impact on us then why do we have adverts? Surely we have adverts to make us do something – buy goods, not buy goods etc. And they work. Therefore watching violent movies will surely also have an impact on us. As will watching anything that we know we shouldn't watch

Challenge – If Jesus were alive, would he watch the TV programmes you do? If Jesus was with you, would you watch the programmes you watch? Why or why not?

SOME GOOD BIBLE VERSES TO HELP

Romans 12.1-2: (paraphrased):

Brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great kindness, I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to God. Your offering must only be for God and must be pleasing to him. This is how you should offer your worship to God. Don't change to be like the people of this world, but be changed by a whole new way of thinking, God style. Then you'll be able to decide what God wants for you and be able to test and then go for God's very best and perfect will for your life.

Philippians 4.8 (The Message):

Summing it all up friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.

- [These two Bible verses and Matthew 15 below are available on zipped PowerPoint – click here](#)

A TYPICAL EPISODE OF..

Give out a whole bunch of storylines from series on TV – mainly soaps if possible (find them from magazines, or online from the websites of soaps).

Then get people into groups and ask them write down outlines of what happened in the episode they've been given, or get them to act out the storyline – without the sex and bad language please! They can report back on the general 'message' and 'tone' of the episode/storyline.

NEXT, repeat this exercise with the lyrics of a popular tune or ten. So, find the lyrics of the top 10 songs on the internet and then get people into groups. They get a different song each and, again, have to report back on the general 'message' and 'tone' of the song.

The point – These things are full of sin. They are full of bad stuff. Most soaps (like many songs in the charts) are pushing the boundaries, trying to out-do one another in terms of what's offensive, dirty, violent, sexual and more.

The second point – When you take an exam, you revise to get information in your head. In your exam, you then write down or speak the stuff that you have (hopefully) revised. What goes in comes out. If you don't revise, you don't have much to write or say. The Bible says, in Matthew 15.17-19 (The Amplified Bible):

'Do you not see and understand that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the abdomen and so passes on into the place where discharges are deposited? But whatever comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this is what makes a man unclean and defiles [him]. For out of the heart come evil thoughts (reasonings and disputings and designs) such as murder, adultery, sexual vice, theft, false witnessing, slander, and irreverent speech.

So, the very programmes you may be watching are totally incompatible with what Jesus wants for your life. You have to know what's going on in the world but you don't have to plug into it. Remember – OF the world, NOT in the world.

The challenges – how can we be faithful to God and the Bible and avoid polluting our minds with the dross in the media?

1. Is watching Eastenders, Hollyoakes, Coronation Street a Godly thing to do? (My great uncle called Coronation Street his fix of 'culture'!)

2. So you watch TV cos you say you want to relax and there's nothing else to do. Really? What else could you do? (Christian speakers on tape, videos or DVDs that are OK, Christian music that's cool and good, nothing, prayer, Bible reading!)

2. What strategies can you come up with to deal with your TV watching bad habits? (turn it off, watch something else, set times, get new habits, new hobbies, go out more, get involved in worthwhile stuff, chuck the TV..!)

SOME SUGGESTIONS

1. WISE UP. Your choices impact your life. You can't breathe Jesus if your inhaling sin. Don't just sink, think about what you watch or listen to and make changes.

2. COMMUNICATE. If you're struggling with something, seek God and talk to someone you trust. Assess what you watch and listen to against the principles above from Philippians 4.8.

3. GET CONNECTED. To a church, to a mentor, to God, to your Bible. Check out what God says. Obey what God says. God invented music, media. Human minds have polluted it. Don't get polluted, get media savvy. Don't be a green activist – be a 'white' (holy, pure) activist, for God.