

Theology of Entertainment (part 2)

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[0 : 0 0] so yeah the bible often portrays sin it describes sin it tells us about sinful men doing sinful things we see david's failures we see judas's betrayal the world's depravity before the flood but you'll notice that the bible does nothing to glamorize that evil does nothing to make it something amusing modern media often normalizes sin it turns immorality into comedy and consequently it numbs our conscience so ask yourself does my entertainment cause me to laugh at things that grieve the lord do i find myself becoming numb to sin psalm 119 136 says my eyes shed streams of tears because people do not keep your law that should be our response to iniquity when we see it not amusement but grief sorrow people often ask where do i draw the line which usually means how close to the line can i get before i've crossed over it romans 14 5 reminds us that we should think very differently about this as believers we should think very different about this the deeper question is does my media stir a desire for holiness or does it dull my longing for god if it becomes a stumbling block i want your mind to continually go back to that radical remedy suggested by christ if your right eye causes you to sin tear it out better to live without that show or that platform or that device or that tv than to fall into sin so be discerning don't measure content by the world standard certainly evaluate it by god's word walk away from what hinders your sanctification pursue what's edifying because we're called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds not conforming to the the corrupt patterns of this world and everything that we feed into our minds is going to shape it one way or the other number four guard your time guard your time time is precious it's a gift from god and yet it's also one of the most wasted things in our day we can lose hours hours to social media to shows to to gaming perhaps these online endless rabbit holes we fall into for many people even believers this has become a very serious spiritual problem paul says in ephesians 5 15 and 16 look carefully then how you walk making the best use of the time because the days are evil that's urgent life in this fallen world is fleeting as we know every moment we waste on say trivial distractions that's lost forever you don't get that back how often do we say just one more episode just one more minute and then suddenly we've binged half a season and wasted half a day now this isn't just about efficiency of time it's it's about spiritual warfare the enemy doesn't always lure us with obvious sins that tactic probably wouldn't work most times

but if he can keep us busy with trivialities if we're distracted if we're unproductive in the kingdom well that's exactly what he wants modern entertainment caters to that it keeps us from prayer it keeps us from study it keeps us from family discipleship it keeps us from church involvement james writes you're a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes over and over again the bible reminds us life is short we're we're a vapor why would we squander our limited our most precious resource which is our limited time on things that won't even matter five minutes from now certainly not in eternity so we need to set boundaries very strict boundaries for ourselves we have to decide when and how long we're going to engage with entertainment some of us need to turn off notifications on our phones perhaps maybe remove certain apps others might need to limit screen time maybe at night so we can focus on our family and maybe family discipleship and worship now i be clear we don't want to be legalistic about this we're trying to be wise about this hebrews 10 24 calls us to stir up one another to love and good works and not neglect meeting together and if we fill all of our spare time with entertainment a lot of times we're neglecting fellowship within our own families perhaps with the church sometimes we neglect worship we neglect service we neglect service and that's well frankly unwise but also disobedient to the lord himself psalm 90 verse 12 moses prays teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom numbering our days implies living with a living with purpose we rest when it's time to rest we work when it's time to work we worship when it's time to worship every moment we have we recognize is from the lord and our schedules and how we divvy up that time is going to reflect what it is we truly value in our hearts so

if christ is our treasure our time will show it if the world is our treasure our schedules our lives will show it number five cultivate prayer and scripture as daily habits constant habits so we can't just remove worldly entertainment we have to replace it with something better and i think that's a biblical principle in matthew 12 jesus essentially warns that if a spiritual house is swept clean but then it's left empty what happens it's filled again with something worse if you cut out distractions but you don't fill that space with godly habits well what are you going to do just sit there and stare at the wall until you slip back into your old patterns the only way to renew our minds is through prayer and uh reading the bible and things such as this these aren't these aren't optional add-ons for christians they're essential for spiritual growth they're essential for spiritual warfare they're essential for deeper fellowship with christ and of course guarding our hearts against the worldly influences that are all around us yet many times we spend far more time on our phones in a day than we do in prayer

or in the word perhaps we spend more time on our phones or watching tv in a day than we do in prayer or reading the word all week long and then we wonder why do i feel so spiritually dry why do i feel so distant from the lord so first we need to cultivate a consistent prayer life of course first thessalonians 5 17 says pray without ceasing that means prayer should be an ongoing posture it should be our first response always and not our last resort we need to make time for it each and every day psalm 5 3 says oh lord in the morning you hear my voice if the first thing you do when you get out of bed or maybe before you get out of bed is grab your phone reverse the priorities start with prayer second we need to commit to daily bible reading i'm not exaggerating when i say god's word is our lifeline it's how we know his truth it's how we feed our souls it's how we are shaped for holiness psalm 119 105 says your word is a lamp to my feet you can walk through stumbling into walls in the darkness or you can grab his word study it meditate on it frequently daily and have a light for your feet now i've heard many people say and i've said it to myself on occasion i just can't find time for regular bible reading but i've certainly found time for other things i've found time to watch something on tv i found time to scroll on my phone or peruse the internet so it's not really a time issue it's a heart issue if you're not hungry for god's word it's probably because you are filling your soul with junk food so pick a plan you know some read the entire bible in a year others go slower the method isn't nearly as important as the consistency also in psalm 119 it's asked how can a young man keep his way pure and the answer is by guarding it according to your word if you want to resist worldly distractions well replace it immerse yourself in scripture and third i think it's a very valuable thing to memorize scripture you know if you have time to check your phone while you're standing in line somewhere waiting to check out or whatever then you have time to rehearse a verse in your mind right colossians 3 16 let the word of christ dwell in you richly well that doesn't happen if our minds are full of nothing but notifications or cat memes or whatever either your mind is being shaped by god's truth or it's being shaped by these shallow distractions there's there's not a lot of middle ground there so those who neglect prayer and they neglect the word they grow weak they're prone to be conformed to this world and to wonder but those who feed daily on god's word and they stay in prayer they'll be strong in the spirit pray fervently read faithfully memorize diligently and these habits have a way of anchoring our hearts in god's unchanging truth which is precisely what we need number six practice discernment in community stressing the in community part god never intended for us to walk the christian life alone

yet there are many things particularly here the the entertainment struggles we may have we try to handle these things in private thinking it's it's a personal matter right well that can be dangerous not everyone's the same but it can be dangerous for some of us sin flourishes in secrecy if we're not actively involved in biblical community within our families within the church where we're sharpening one another we're exhorting one another we're holding each other accountable we're far more susceptible to drifting into compromise or drifting into sin galatians 6 2 bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of christ hebrews 3 13 exhort one another every day that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin sin can be subtle can be sneaky and our digital habits for many of us are already very deeply ingrained and so we might think we're in control but over time maybe we notice these patterns are leading to a real spiritual apathy if not worse so first we need to be honest about our struggles if we're binge watching tv shows that dull our spiritual appetites well confess that to someone confess it to someone you're close to at least if your phone kills your time in scripture and in prayer ask someone for help what does james say james 5 16 confess your faults confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed that can be a biblical path to freedom second seek accountability ask a friend ask a mentor ask someone to

check in on you regularly if you keep falling into the same trap spending hours in worthless content or stumbling into sin or watching things that we should never be watching invite someone to help you stay vigilant again Jesus said that right eye causes you to sin tear it out obviously we're not meant to do that literally but the principle is true and it's radical if an app or a platform or a show or tv whatever keeps tripping you up remove it rather than we be inconvenienced in some way than entangled in sin and third we need to cultivate meaningful fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ you know or with our families I talked about this last time but how often do we gather with people and then we end up you know turning on the football game or watching some show or just sitting there scrolling our phones side by side that's not real fellowship biblical fellowship is active it's Christ focused it's purposeful read Acts 2 how the early church devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to fellowship to prayers to the breaking of bread I mean that's real community so instead of defaulting to tv or games open the word together discuss a sermon read a read a a spiritual Christian book together pray for one another again we're called to stir up love and good works so obviously that's that's not the same as sharing digital distractions with one another the point is we may struggle to fight these temptations alone isolation often leads to deeper compromise so seek out believers who can walk with you

who will speak truth to you who will hold you accountable to the best of their ability that's really how God designed the church so are we living in that design or are we trying to face temptations on our own number seven this might seem like a strange one but respect marriage and our families one of the saddest realities of our time is the breakdown of the family it often happens very gradually not through overt rebellion necessarily but through constant distraction busyness and so on many households are full of people who are physically present but relationally absent if I can call it that pattern parents and kids they sit down in in the same room but they're all lost in their own screens husbands and wives they may share a meal they may share a bed but they rarely speak to one another and the enemy takes advantage of that God's word's very clear on marriage husbands should live with their wives in an understanding way first Peter 3:7 Ephesians 5:25 says husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church of course Christ's love was sacrificial it was very focused do we ever see Christ being distracted by trivial things a man who barely engages with his wife because he's glued to his phone or glued to his tv is failing in that calling wives are called to respect their husbands Ephesians 5 well that respect can't really develop if the relationship is starved of genuine interaction marriage demands attention it can't flourish if constant entertainment is stealing all of our time stealing all of our attention that should be meant for that other person the same goes for parenting Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord that requires active teaching requires consistent correction and it requires setting a godly example those kids they watch everything you do and they learn from it for better or worse yet what do many of us do speaking to fathers in particular we let screens do the heavy lifting kids absorb more from youtube these days than they do from their own parents Proverbs 22:6 says train up a child in the way he should go but how are parents going to do that if the home is dominated by phones and tvs or if children see parents always using media themselves without restraint well they're going to follow that pattern Paul said be imitators of me as I am of Christ so parents should do the same they should model wisdom in their own media habits because the kids are going to pick up on that so we have to set boundaries in our homes you know maybe you have to start small no phones at the dinner table maybe no tvs in the bedrooms I don't know I don't know how extreme you need to take this but set times where there is no media set times where the family will come together

[20:13] in prayer and bible reading Deuteronomy 6 parents are told to talk about God's commands when you sit in your house that can't happen if everyone's in their own digital bubbles and families they collapse under the weight of distraction but it doesn't have to be that way God's word gives us clear direction so it's just a matter of will we follow it or will we let our marriages and our families slip away while everyone's just staring at a screen number eight overcome the fear of missing out FOMO as it's called a big trap in our digital age is the constant pressure to stay connected and informed people panic at the thought of missing something maybe it's a headline maybe it's a trending topic maybe it's whatever people are talking about on any social media app and this genuinely creates anxiety and distraction for people real spiritual weakness and I've seen it primarily in younger people but I think adults they face it a slightly different way sometimes it's one of the reasons we can't turn off the news right we have to know what's going on all the time

I always liked it was a secular book but there was a book I read a few years ago called stop reading the news and he had you know lived a year without turning on the news obviously you're going to hear news but I like the example he gave in that book he said people will say you've got to consume the news you have to know what's going on what if there's a volcano that's going to erupt near your house you need to know this and his response was well if a volcano is about to erupt near my house I don't think I'll need the news to tell me that's obviously an extreme case but you get what I'm saying scripture calls us to a different perspective on this this fear of missing out Colossians 3 verse 1 seek the things that are above where Christ is if we're most worried about missing the latest online buzz we're seeking the wrong things the fear of missing out this FOMO it's not just a cultural quirk this is a real spiritual issue or certainly can be because it shows that our hearts are more attached to this world and trivial things than God's kingdom in Luke 10

Jesus addressed Martha you were anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary the problem wasn't that Martha was serving and doing what she was doing but she was busy she was preoccupied in mind and perhaps heart while Mary chose to sit and simply listen at Jesus' feet many of us get so caught up in the news or in social media that we're neglecting real communion with Christ we don't want to miss what's happening in the world but we end up missing out on that better portion which is our fellowship with the Lord truth is the world's stream of content never ends you'll never be fully up to date it can't happen and I say fine that's okay God is sovereign

Daniel 4:35 he does according to his will and none can stay his hand you know our identities they're not wrapped up in being well informed our identities are in Christ John 1 to all who did receive him he gave them the right to become children of God that's who we are that's what's most important never mind the latest trend Paul warns 2nd Timothy 2:4 no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits well what are we but soldiers of Christ in a very real spiritual war we can't afford to be weighed down by an obsession with worldly and frankly trivial updates our focus is on the king and his kingdom so let go of the fear of missing out stop living in this frantic pursuit of trivial updates your purpose isn't to stay in the loop it's to stay faithful and God's plan certainly does not hinge on our constant connectivity our place in his kingdom is secure in Christ and that's what matters number nine we may not get through all twelve today but number nine use technology for kingdom purposes so technology isn't inherently bad like any tool it can be used for good or it can be used for evil the same platforms that flood the world with sin can also proclaim the gospel to countless people the question is whether we're using the technology to advance

Christ's kingdom or to merely indulge ourselves Paul even in prison rejoiced in Philippians 1 that the gospel was being preached now if he could rejoice that Christ was proclaimed under very questionable motives by the people who were preaching Christ we should see the potential of technology to spread biblical truth right in Acts 1 Jesus told his disciples that they were to be witnesses to him to the ends of the earth and modern technology allows us to do that it allows us to spread sound teaching to encourage believers all over the world to chat with missionaries to receive those updates to share the gospel all around the globe but we need to check our motives don't we do we really use the technology for these kinds of ministry for this kind of service or is that our excuse to spend three hours on social media and five minutes sharing a

[27:14] Christian post of some kind as I've quoted many times throughout this series Paul says whatever you do do all to the glory of God all everything that includes our screen time if we're serious about honoring Christ online we'll share his truth we'll build others up we'll encourage them we'll use these tools for the gospel but if our digital life is mostly wasted on random distractions well that's not ministry and it would be a lie to call it ministry Paul says test everything hold fast what is good 1 Thessalonians 5:21 technology can be used for growth or can be used for spiritual dullness it's not really going to be neutral in most cases so we have to ask ourselves is our time spent online reflecting a heart for

Christ's mission for his kingdom or is it mostly mindless we need to use these platforms to build up not tear down of course and seizing every opportunity to speak the truth to a world that desperately needs to hear it well number ten and we'll end with this one today reflect often on eternal realities modern entertainment fixes our attention on what's temporary and it tends to obscure it tends to hide the eternal from view we always get locked into the here and now craving instant gratification and forgetting that as we talked about before life is very fleeting but the Bible implores us to keep our eyes on eternity Colossians 3:2 set your minds on things that are above not on things that are

on the earth that's again not a suggestion that that's a command to us as God's people we're not supposed to live in this age as though this present age is all there is yet most entertainment is about immediate thrills craving what is passing away rather than what is everlasting

James 4 14 again we're a mist that appears and then vanishes Everything in this world every show every viral clip every trend will eventually vanish and many of us are investing huge chunks of our time to keep up with this worldly stuff and yet investing so little time on things that matter in eternity that's a terrible inversion of priorities 2nd Corinthians 4 verse 17 Paul says this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory as we look not to things that are seen but to things that are unseen the things that are seen he says are transient the things that are unseen are eternal everything here is temporary so why are we clinging to these things when we stand before Christ we won't care that we missed a show or some online drama we will care whether we grew in holiness whether we served others whether we prayed faithfully whether we shared the gospel our regrets will be the time we wasted on nonsense the world wants you to waste your time the devil wants you to be distracted but the bible continually calls us to live in light of eternity recognizing that our true home is with the Lord and so that's where we invest our time in him in eternity that's how we stay focused by staying focused on the age to come confident that Christ's kingdom will be fully realized in the new age and this world with all of its fleeting pleasures will pass away along with it let's pray heavenly father we thank you for the glorious realities that you have shown to us as your people that there is an eternity to come that we have been saved from this dying passing world but we certainly need your help in the week ahead and in the years ahead that we would not be distracted by so many things in this life that have such an alluring quality flashing screens and notifications and funny things and entertaining things

Lord we we want our hearts and our minds to be focused on eternity and ultimately on you so help us to break down those broken cisterns and to drink from the living water Lord we need your grace to accomplish this in Christ's name I pray amen