

Creating media-wise Christians

Dan Nelson - pastor

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How do you pick your media? Do you watch television?, rent DVD's?, go to theaters?, internet stream?, download podcasts? Will you see whatever is the newest release?, channel surf?, web browse?, or do you have a more sophisticated selection process? How do you filter? In an environment where billions of dollars are spent every year to capture your attention and stimulate your brain function, how do you discern what is appropriate for you and your family?

Movies communicate messages. It is well documented that thoughts and ideas from films affect people. These messages can help form or change an opinion, bring hope to someone feeling low, educate, solicit compassion, encourage action, cause someone to grapple with moral dilemmas, or renew faith. Often we feel deep emotion when watching certain types of movies. Sometimes we get scared. And yet other times we laugh and giggle, singing songs right on out of the theater.

I have a song stuck in my head right now as I write this. It is one of the theme songs to a movie we showed at the church today as part of our summer "Groovy Movie" family outreach. I think a lot of people are surprised by what we are doing and, once we explain what it is all about, really like the idea. I am not going to promote the event here. It is doing just fine on its own. What I do want to share with you is the importance of doing something similar in your own home.

While some might be expecting us to be showing religious videos or something, we are watching regular animated films from mainstream makers such as Disney and Pixar. But here is the difference; we are engaging in discussions before and after the viewing in order to identify key themes and messages carried in the story line. We evaluate the ideas presented in the script in light of Scripture. We talk about such traits as right and wrong, good and evil, sin and choices, obedience to parents, relationship building, friendships, forgiveness, trust, selfishness, contentment, etc. We talk through decisions made by characters in the story in light of responses we might choose to make in the same situation. In essence, we use media as a tool for intellectual engagement, moral decision-making, and personal application of the teachings of Christ. This is quite different from the drone information intake basin that most of us allow our brains to become. We are not couch potatoes anymore.

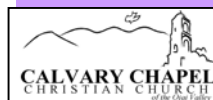
Filmmakers put lots of effort into creating a media "experience." The concept of merely creating viewers is not what is taught in film school these days. Their goal is to transport you into a scene or situation. Advanced technology, training and technique all aid in this goal of emotional engagement. The outcome is that you and I often experience the thrill of feeling like we are there. However, the downside is that the "experience" can produce negative effects in us when unfiltered, unmitigated and undiscerned. Many people are likely to imitate characters in the story at heightened levels than

ever before, often without realizing it, because part of the brain has been made to believe as though this has been "experience," i.e., you've been there before. Language and attitudes come out in relationships that have been derived from characters in a plot that you forgot you even watched.

The Bible exhorts us to use our time well, as wise people, not as fools, because there is a lot of evil in this world (Ephesians 5:14-15). I often will be engaged in a conversation with parents about their kids or couples regarding marriage. When there are behaviors that are destructive in these relationships, I usually will ask about certain lifestyle choices, such as media. It is amazing to me how many people don't make the connection between their input choices and output responses. Scripture teaches that if we intake things of God's Holy Spirit, holy and spiritual things will result in our lives. If we induct whatever the world has to offer, corruption will flow out (Galatians 6:7-8). For Jesus said that "out of the overflow of our hearts, our mouths will speak" (Luke 6:45). We use a coffee filter at home when making our morning brew. I don't want it all in my cup. What do you put in your cup?

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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