

## SEE NO EVIL: CAN CHRISTIANS WATCH ANYTHING ON NETFLIX?

1. Policy: By beholding we become changed (1 Peter 1:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 4:8)
2. Principle: In the world not of the world (1 Peter 1:14; John 17:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Stats; Quote)
3. Person: Live as holy examples worth following (1 Peter 1:15; John 17:19; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:8,12)

Netflix is well on its way to having it all according to Hank Stuever, Washington Post TV Critic in the August 22, 2017 Washington Post article I read this week. In its quest to replace the old means of watching TV and going to the movies, the streaming behemoth seeks to offer at least one of every sort of show a viewer might like, pushing toward a goal of 50 percent original programming ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/tv/in-its-bid-to-be-everything-netflix-is-still-missing-one-thing-an-identity/2017/08/22/2bb74290-82d9-11e7-b359-15a3617c767b\\_story.html?undefined=&utm\\_term=.336876fa0173&wpisrc=nl\\_headlines&wpmm=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/tv/in-its-bid-to-be-everything-netflix-is-still-missing-one-thing-an-identity/2017/08/22/2bb74290-82d9-11e7-b359-15a3617c767b_story.html?undefined=&utm_term=.336876fa0173&wpisrc=nl_headlines&wpmm=1)).

Originally founded in on August 29, 1997, it initially specialized in providing DVDs by mail but Wikipedia says since 2007 it mostly provides streaming media via the internet and video-on-demand. The California company expanded internationally, with streaming made available to Canada in 2010 and continued growing its streaming service from there; by January 2016, Netflix services operated in over 190 countries.

Netflix entered the content-production industry in 2013, and has greatly expanded the production of both film and television series since then, offering "Netflix Original" content through its online library of films and television. In 2016, Netflix released an estimated 126 original series or films, more than any other network or cable channel.

As of July 2017, Netflix had 103.95 million subscribers worldwide, including 51.92 million in the United States (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netflix>). And that's just Netflix. There is HBO Go and Hulu and most recently Disney is starting their own version of streaming content. We live in a day and age where we have unparalleled access to media.

According to the folks at [CommonSenseMedia.org](http://CommonSenseMedia.org) (one of the websites I recommend on a handout John Hood and I prepared for you to take home after church today full of resources and tools to evaluate media so make sure you get one of those after church), Media and technology are at the very center of all our lives today -- especially our children's.

They say kids today spend over 50 hours of screen time every week. The media content they consume and create has a profound impact on their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Therefore, learning how to use media and technology wisely is an essential skill for life and learning in the 21st century.

Now more than ever, they need a trusted guide to help them navigate a world where change is the only constant. So that's why we're going to spend a few weeks in this three part back to school series examining media digging into the Bible to find principles to influence our policies based on the person of Jesus. Which is what longtime youth pastor and author Josh McDowell says in his book *Right from Wrong*. So if you want more info about helping youth make right choices, I think his book is still available on Amazon. But let's begin today in 1 Peter 1:13-16.

1 Peter 1:13

13 So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

So the question is: With all this content being created, can Christian watch anything they want on Netflix? Or HBO Go? Or Hulu? Or Disney? The answer from Scripture is no. 1 Peter 1:13 says we should think clearly and exercise self-control. This is a principle that affects are policies about what we watch. And is point number one.

I love the NKJV version of this verse. It says we should "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Men wore long robes and would tuck them into their belt so they could move more freely and quickly. Originally, they did this in the Exodus, you can read about that in Exodus 12:11, where the children of Israel were to

be dressed and ready to flee from Egypt. Here, Peter is saying this generation of believers needs to get ready too. And if necessary, be ready to run too. So God can deliver them and bring them safely into the Promised Land.

But how does that deliverance occur? Only by the grace of God. 1 Peter 1:2 previously said, “2 God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

We don't obey to be saved and delivered. We obey as a result Peter says because we are saved. Then God gives us even more sustaining grace. Verses 2 and 3 adds, “May God give you more and more grace and peace. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation.” The expectation is so great that even the angels, according to 1 Peter 1:12, “Are eagerly watching these things happen.” Did you ever wish you were on a reality TV show? Well, guess what? You are!

1 Corinthians 4:9 says, “We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.” And everybody is wondering when we are confronted with some media: will we see or will we flee? Will we gird up our minds? Will we, in gratitude for God's grace, follow His lead and prepare for the Promised Land He has for us? The word “Therefore”, which begins 1 Peter 1:13 NKJV, reminds the reader that what Peter is saying comes from what he previously said.

All the lifestyle behavioral decisions we make, such as what we will watch on Netflix, are based on principles. That never change. Because rightly understood, those principles are based on the person of Jesus. We are after all, professed followers of Jesus right?

Yes, we're part of the Great Controversy Paul says. We are all on stage. We have been made a spectacle before men and before interested angels. We have been saved by grace. But will live by grace as well? That's the cliffhanger question to be continued.

So in this series, I'm not going to tell you what to watch on Netflix. I'm not going to give you a list of approved shows. What I'm hoping to do instead is give you the 3P's you need to help you decide if what you're watching is worth seeing or fleeing. Why? Because principle number one and point number one, by beholding we become changed.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (KJV)

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT (Scripture Reading)

And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

I'm not here to argue with you about whether exposure to sexuality, violence, or vulgarity affects you. There are so many studies out there pro and con from video games to movies to you name it both pro and con. Some say they have no affect whatsoever. Others say they do.

My job isn't to explain Piaget's cognitive development theory. That says many adolescents 13 years old and younger are unable to think abstract, which means at least part of their brains do not differentiate between what is real and what is on TV. I'm not the one saying the media content kids consume and create has a profound impact on their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Lots of other people more knowledgable about that are saying so. You can read the resources on the handout for more info.

My job is not to curse the darkness. My job, our job, is to light a candle. And that begins by telling you what the Bible says about living the grace of God. And the first thing it says about that is to think clearly and exercise self-control. See and flee.

Yes, there will be some stuff you have to leave behind. You cannot gird up the loins of your mind any other way. But you don't do this by yourself. James 4:8 says draw near to God and God will draw near to you. I've walked out of some movies. I couldn't take the content glorifying the

darkness. I've stopped watching some sitcoms because God's name is constantly used like a punchline or laugh track. Count the number of times God's name is used in 30 minutes and the results may startle you!

I've stopped watching a sitcom because after binging a season or two or five, I've noticed that I'm a lot more sarcastic and short with my kids. And in my quiet time with God, sitting in my fave chair, that's one of the things God revealed to me through the pages of 1 Peter 1 a few months ago in April when as a world church we were studying in our quarterly or Bible study guide the book of 1 Peter. So if you aren't tracking along with us, download the quarterly on your device and spend some time each day reading the those verses and answering the application questions. It works!

But sarcasm is not a fruit of the spirit. And the Holy Spirit will help you think clearly and exercise self-control. Galatians 5 says the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

You don't have any self-control? That's okay. Because the Holy Spirit does. So ask God to come into your life, abide in Christ, remain in Him, begin your day with Him, spend your day with Him, end your day with Him, and the Holy Spirit will start growing those fruits in your life.

You don't live by grace by banning books or cassette tapes. That's what Bible teachers did in my day. And we're going to talk about music next time. But banning specific books or albums or shows will never work because there will always be other media that desensitizes our minds and captures our imaginations. These days, nobody needs to back-mask, because they just say everything vulgar forwards.

Parents, and grandparents, we have to stop this unhelpful listing of thou shalt nots. That's helpful for elementary school but not for teenagers or adults. For the rest of us, we have to start thinking about principles not policies. And giving teens and immature adults the tools they needs to make God honoring decisions. Because every policy must be based on a principle and every principle must be based on the person of Jesus.

And that sounds scary to many of us. Because we're afraid some won't make the same decisions we make. Imagine how God feels though! Granting grace and freedom and free will! It's the foundation of His government Ellen White says. So it must be the foundation of our homes as well.

So ask yourself: Is what I'm watching what I want to become more like? Am I becoming more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled? Are the characters in this show demonstrating those characteristics? If so see. If not flee.

Why? Because grace based Christians are supposed to think clearly and exercise self-control. Why? Because by beholding we become changed. We will make mistakes along the way. And it won't happen overnight. It took years for God to increase my appetite for spiritual things and develop an aversion to violence, sexuality, and vulgarity. But that's why we sing Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus every Sabbath @ 9:45am because the rest of that song says, "And the things of this earth will grow strangely dim..."

It takes time, but by beholding we do become changed! The Holy Spirit will slowly push out and replace the things of this earth until they grow so strangely dim that we don't even realize we miss them. That's the way sanctification really works.

So don't burn your books or albums or movies. Don't create lists of thou shalt nots. Ten commandments is more than enough. Simply spend time with Jesus. And you will become more like Him socially, emotionally, cognitively, and every other way. And when the day comes that those other things don't matter to you anymore, then get rid of them. Philippians 4 says it this way.

Philippians 4:8

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Point number two: Really, principle number two: We are to be In the world not of the world.

1 Peter 1:14

14 So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.

I met some really nice Amish people last week who helped us put a new roof on a widow's house. They worked really hard and were super nice. But they looked like they belonged to a different century. God's not asking us to be Adventist Amish. He's not saying you have to step back in time. I'm not pretending that we don't live in a media saturated world. Jesus didn't ask us to stay out of the world. He asked us to be in the world but not of the world. Listen to his prayer in John 17:15-18.

John 17:15-18

15 I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do. 17 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. 18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

But are Christians modeling point number two by watching porn?

Enough.org

21% of Christian men and 2% of Christian women say they think they might be "addicted" to pornography or aren't sure if they are (compared to 10% of non-Christian men and 4% of non-Christian women) <http://www.provenmen.org/2014pornsurvey/> (accessed Dec. 29, 2015).

So are Christians modeling point number two by watching porn? I don't think so. But it doesn't matter what I think. What does the Bible say? Galatians 5:19 says, "19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality (porneia), impurity, lustful pleasures." This is in the passage that precedes the verses about the fruits of the spirit. In other words, porneia according to the Bible is not a fruit of the spirit. It is not holy. But we live in a sexually saturated world. Where boys especially are being bombarded with images Uncle Arthur never included in his bed time stories.

28% of Christian men and 11% of Christian women say they were first exposed to pornography before the age of 12 (compared to 23% of non-Christian men and 24% of non-Christian women). 2014 Pornography Survey and Statistics. Proven Men Ministries. <http://www.provenmen.org/2014pornsurvey/> (accessed Dec. 29, 2015).

Some people say, well Pastor Mike, have you read Judges 19? Or 2 Samuel 13? Or even Esther in the Bible? The Bible is full of violence and sexuality and vulgarity. And you're right. It is. Because the Bible doesn't sugarcoat evil. But here's the difference: it doesn't glorify it either. Unlike Hollywood. And the porn industry. And even Sports Illustrated.

Instead, Romans 12:1-2 says

Romans 12:1-2

1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

So someone asked Pastor John Piper recently, “Do you believe there is a difference between film nudity versus pornography? I know Christians are against porn, but they have no issue watching movies or TV shows that show graphic nudity.”

And I think that's a great question. I've heard Christians rationalize watching MA content on Netflix saying its simply realistically showing sexuality like the Bible realistically describes the same thing. But again, the Bible is not glorifying that. Instead, it is condemning it. 1 Timothy 2:9 (my paraphrase) says we should “adorn ourselves in respectable apparel with modesty and self-control.” It doesn't say we should run around naked or turn sex into a spectator sport.



John Piper

Sexual relations is a beautiful thing. God created it and pronounced it good (1 Timothy 4:3). But it is not a spectator sport. There is no great film or television series that needs nudity to add to its greatness. No. There isn't. The closer I get to death and meeting Jesus personally face-to-face and giving an account for my life and for the careless words that I have spoken (Matthew 12:36), the more sure I am of my resolve never intentionally to look at a television show or a movie or a website or a magazine where I know I will see photos or films of nudity. Never. That is my resolve. And the closer I get to death, the better I feel about that, and the more committed I become. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/12-questions-to-ask-before-you-watch-game-of-thrones#9-am-i-compromising-the-beauty-of-sex>

To put it another way borrowed from my friends fighting human trafficking: Real men don't buy sex. Whether you're buying sex from a brothel or truck stop or HBO Go subscription, you're still buying it. "13 So think clearly and exercise self-control." Sex with someone else or sex with pixels on a screen is still porneia. That's what the Bible means in Galatians 5:19.

And by beholding you become changed. If you don't believe that buying sex or watching porn affects your ability to interact with the opposite sex, please try stopping. And you'll see how challenging that addiction can be. Fortunately, God's grace is more cleansing and more powerful than any addiction including sexual addiction. And there are resources on the second page of the handout we're giving you after church for help with that. I know two pastor friends who struggled with porneia that but are doing better now. And the good news is we can live as obedient children. By God's grace, 1 Peter 1:14 also says we need not slip...

14 Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.

But rampant porneia isn't the only problem plaguing Christians today. Violence is rampant as well. Not just in the church as the End It Now campaign will reveal when we explain that in October, but also on Netflix and TV. And for a few years now, I've wondered if its was only me that noticed. But ever since the respected journal *Pediatrics* came out with their

startling study in 2013, I now know this is true. Results from their study found...

### Pediatrics 2013

Results found that violence in films has more than doubled since 1950, and gun violence in PG-13-rated films has more than tripled since 1985. When the PG-13 rating was introduced, these films contained about as much gun violence as G (general audiences) and PG (parental guidance suggested for young children) films. Since 2009, PG-13-rated films have contained as much or more violence as R-rated films (age 17+) films. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2013/11/06/peds.2013-1600>

So I'm not making that up. It's not my imagination. My threshold and capacity to watch violence has over the years strangely dimmed, but simultaneously, the appetite for it in media has increased! Tripled in fact since 1985. In the good old days, we could really say there used to be less violence in Hollywood movies but not so today. It has and continues to increase. Will Christians admit that? Will we factor that into our by beholding we become changed? And think clearly and exercise self-control about being in the world but not of the world? Will we live as God's obedient children or will we satisfy our own desires and pretend we didn't know?

And you know what else is on the rise? Cursing. And vulgarity. And blasphemy. Which we'll talk about in part three so stay tuned. But for now let's conclude with one more principle. Every policy must be based on a principle and every principle must be based on the person of Jesus.

### 1 Peter 1:15

15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

We flee from porneia because Jesus is pure. We flee from violence because Jesus didn't embrace violence. And because Jesus is holy, we can be holy. But please listen very carefully to how that holiness happens from Jesus own words.

John 17:19

19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

We don't become holy by obeying better. We become holy because Jesus gives us His 33 years of perfect obedience. As a result of Jesus' perfect holiness, he looks at us as "made holy." Hebrews 10:14 NIV says the same thing. "14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." Our perfection in God's eyes doesn't depend on our thinking clearly and self-control. Our perfection comes from Jesus who alone is perfect (Revelation 15:4). The best we can do is imitate Christ's holiness.

Ephesians 5:1 says, "1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ."

Ellen White says it this way. "Christ is our pattern, the perfect and holy example that has been given us to follow. We can never equal the pattern; but we may imitate and resemble it according to our ability." - Ellen White Review and Herald, Feb. 5, 1895.

So let's live as holy examples worth following point number three. Paul was following Jesus. So he told the people to follow his example.

Philippians 3:17-20

17 Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. 18 For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. 20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

Can you feel the love in in his appeal? With tears in my eyes? Yes, there's a Father up above but get this, He is looking down in LOVE!!

So ask yourself: Would you watch what you're watching with your daughter? Would you want her to follow your example? Or would you want her to follow the example being set by the characters on the screen? If so, see. If not flee!

Because by beholding we become changed. So let's be in the world. But not of the world. Let's live our lives as examples to follow Jesus. Longing for the day He returns. Even if we're young.

1 Timothy 4:8,12

8 Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come. 12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

If that your desire? If so, will you help us sing one little song to help us remember to watch what we watch on Netflix?

O be careful little eyes what you see  
O be careful little eyes what you see  
There's a Father up above  
And He's looking down in love  
So, be careful little eyes what you see

O be careful little ears what you hear  
O be careful little ears what you hear  
There's a Father up above  
And He's looking down in love  
So, be careful little ears what you hear

O be careful little mouth what you say  
O be careful little mouth what you say  
There's a Father up above  
And He's looking down in love  
So, be careful little mouth what you say