

Minister's Message – October 2011

TV Triviality

The child was just over one year old when she took the remote, pressed the red button and on came the TV. She was gripped by the bright, moving pictures and the sounds. But is it good for a one year old to be watching TV – physically, emotionally or spiritually, or any way at all?

I saw a cartoon in the newspaper in which a person was looking at a beautiful landscape on the TV. The view out the window of the room was exactly the same as on the TV. The point was obvious. For some reason we prefer the TV to the real thing.

TV is an acronym for the word TeleVision. It might also be an acronym for TriViality. Much of what is seen and heard on the TV is completely trivial. It is time wasting, mind shrinking triviality. John Piper writes 'a steady diet of triviality shrinks the soul. You get used to it. It starts to seem normal. Silly becomes funny. And funny becomes pleasing. And pleasing becomes satisfaction. And in the end the soul that is made for God has shrunk to fit snugly around triteness'. How true!

Some people, even some Christians, watch anything and everything that comes on the TV. But there is rarely anything on TV that is glorifying to God. You are more likely to see mocking of matters of life and death, or hear the Lord's name being taken in vain. Yet still the TV may be on all day and all night with little children freely watching whatever comes on.

You can identify those from homes where the TV is on 24/7. All the children can talk about is what they have seen on the TV. They cannot sit and listen to a story being read for more than five minutes. They cannot concentrate on reading more than half a page of the Bible even when they become teenagers.

Piper says that he has never owned a TV. The only time he had one was 'for three years in Germany when he used it for language learning'. In India we rarely watched TV because it was in a foreign language – and it did not help us learn the language. I am glad for our children's sake because they are all avid readers.

Children in fact do not learn language from the TV – apart from bad words. TV is one-way communication and language is learnt in two-way communication. TV detracts from two-way communication in the home to the obvious detriment of relationships.

In the Bible we read '*whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report ... think on these things*' (Philippians 4:8). Is there anything on TV that meets these standards? Think about the shows that you watch. Open the Bible and you will read lovely things to think on. Turn off the TV and start reading the Bible to your children if you want them to think about reality rather than triviality.

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