

## ELEVATE: Seek What Is Noble!

### Session # 3: Media - *What is In the Message?*

#### Session Objective:

Without creating a knee-jerk “anti-media” hysteria, challenge the students and leaders to seriously consider the impact of various media (music, television, movies, advertising, print) in the area of our thought life, which inevitably spills over into our “real” life (James 1:14-15).

#### Minimum Prep:

- Set up Video Clip from **The Legend of Bagger Vance**
- Get Markers, Pens, Magazines, Glue to create collage
- White or Colour Paper for the collage

#### Extended Prep:

- Set up Video Clip
- Record 10 minutes of commercials and music videos between 5-7pm on either MTV or Much Music.
- Evaluate the way you listen and filter media before challenging the students. Go through your CD's, DVD's, magazines, etc. to see what image you are sending your students. Students are turned off by hypocrites, so make sure you aren't going to say something to them that you, yourself will not take seriously.

### Session Outline

#### Leader Preamble:

*By definition, media is the way a message gets out. Currently our world is bombarded with media (billboards, TV, websites, mail, e-mail, music, movies, newspaper, magazine, dance, art, plays and whatever other means we use to share a message). God has given artists the creative ability to make music, movies, drama, art, and paintings. So let's set the stage to say that there is no need for media bashing, attacking the art forms, or taking issue with any particular genres. This time together is not about a leader telling you what to listen to, what to watch, or what to read – it's about taking ownership of what you take in and how you respond.*

*But you are likely not going to be sitting beside your youth leader or having a Bible in hand every time a media message is coming your way. You are going to have to choose what CD's you buy, what movies you go to, what TV programs you turn on, what magazines you read, what concerts you attend. When it comes down to it, you have a choice what you are going to listen to and consume, and if you are going to focus on a high level and live out the values of Jesus and filter your media intake.*

*I want you to see this clip from the movie, **The Legend of Bagger Vance**, to get an understanding of how you can respond to the media. I want you to look at how Rannulph Junuh (Matt Damon) responded to different messages.*

**Leader Note:** Toward the end of the movie Rannulph Junuh (Matt Damon) is addressing the ball when he decides to move a few pine needles from around the ball. The ball moves and Junuh wants to call a penalty stroke against himself. Nobody thinks he should call the penalty. Even his competitors encourage him to not count the stroke against himself. His caddy, a young boy, says "it's okay, nobody saw it." Others say, "Are you sure it moved – it could have just been the shadows?"

Junuh takes the penalty regardless because he chose not to listen to others messages he was receiving, and simply choose his integrity and focused on what was true.

### **Small Group Questions/Activities:**

#### **1. The Media Challenge**

*Divide your group in two. Each group has to perform a commercial or jingle, a clip from a movie, or section of a song. Start with one group and then go to the next and that will continue back and forth until one group gives up. Have some form of prize (candy is always a winner). It will be a competition to see which team can think the quickest on their feet about the different media messages they have received and still remember.*

*Congratulations to the winning team! In our society it is unbelievable the amount of messages we get sent. Obviously media in different forms works in getting the message out because if it didn't, it would be a waste of billions of dollars and second we wouldn't have been able to remember all we did if it didn't. Based on that last game it is safe to say that we don't just listen to music for the tune, but we know the lyrics, we don't just watching a movie for the plot but we see the action, and we don't aimlessly forget about products we see on TV. We are saturated in media exposure. Now the question is: **Am I engaging in that which supports the messages I value or do I need to filter through it.***

**1. Read Romans 12:1-2.** This passage urges Christians to focus their minds on the person of Christ in order to learn a whole new way of thinking. The underlying assumption is that the messages of the world have corrupted our thinking. Let's watch the following selections of media content and try to determine how they might affect our thought patterns.

**Leader note:** Show up to 10 minutes of media. Inclusions could include movie clips, commercials, MTV videos, sitcoms, and shows like "Cribs" etc.

*Have white papers and markers available for students to write down values, subliminal messages, attitudes, relational cues and values that are present within the media clips that you are watching.*

## **2. What's on the Tube?**

**Read:** Galatians 5:19-21a *"The wrong things the sinful self does are clear: being sexually unfaithful, not being pure, taking part in sexual sins, worshipping gods, doing witchcraft, hating, making trouble, being jealous, being angry, being selfish, making people angry with each other, causing division among people, feeling envy, being drunk, having wild and wasteful parties, and doing other things like these."* (NCV)

**Leader Note [For Extended time]:** Play the record 10 minutes of commercials and music videos between 5-7pm of either MTV or Much Music.

**Read** Galatians 5:22-23a: *"But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."*

Asking the students: *From commercials and videos we just watched, what would you say are the values and messages that are being promoted and what is being used to sell the messages?*

**(Compare the values of the commercials to that of the Fruits of the Spirit)**

## **3. So the question now needs to be asked, are media messages: good or bad? Why?**

*Whatever form they take (ads, movies, computer games, music videos); messages can be good or bad for you. Just as you would limit certain foods in your diet that may be unhealthy, you also should limit your media diet of messages.*

*Because media surround us and cannot always be avoided, one way to filter their messages is to develop the skills to question, analyze, and evaluate them.*

## **4. Questions to ask ourselves but respond in groups**

- a. What TV programs don't have sexual acts, jokes, situations, or themes?
- b. What movies promote morality, modesty, and abstinence?

*We are living in an age that is driven by a sexual market where selfish ambition and violence are prevalent from Disney to Fox. This is not to turn on all media, nor is this to say that all people should listen to is "Christian media". What needs to happen is a way that we can be in the world and engaging with worldly media without being so engaged in it that we become it.*

**5. The deeply religious Destiny's Child beauty insists there is no hypocrisy in her body-baring outfits and sexual dancing – she's so secure in her relationship with God, she knows he understands.** *Beyonce explains, "I have standards. There are things I will not do. I always carry myself like a lady. I don't feel like I ever do anything raunchy. I'm not disrespectful or dirty or nasty. It's entertainment and I believe God is okay with that. I honestly believe He wants people to celebrate their bodies, as long as you don't compromise your Christianity in the process."*

*Beyonce on one-hand has a great point – that we need to be in the world where the world can see our witness, our values and our lives. Moreover, we want to be able to celebrate our Christian values and foundation and not compromise them. However, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:3-7 has some challenges to the way that Beyonce actually lives life on stage.*

**When it comes down to it, more than what you say, it will be what you watch, listen to and act on that will lead others to determine what you value. So where do you want your standards to be and what image do you want others to have of you?**

*Why would it be important that we still be aware of the culture of the world?*

*Why is it also important that we do have boundaries in terms of the media that we listen/watch and how we respond?*

## **6. YOU'RE IN THE DRIVER SEAT...whatcha gonna do now?**

*(Have students work with a partner to create a plan which is possible)*

*It has been said before, "garbage in, garbage out". We are also call in the Psalms to guard our hearts and mind and in Romans 12:2 it has been made very clear that we are "not to conform any longer to pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." With this in mind, it is important that we create a manageable game plan that will make it possible to have a healthy filter through which we can live in a media-saturated world, without becoming overcome by negative images, sounds, messages, and actions.*

Creating a Game Plan to effective enjoy positive media without it controlling you.

- How much time will I spend listening to music, watching TV, playing video games, reading magazines?
- What issues/messages will I avoid listening to in my music or watching on TV (I.e. rape, violence against women, violence, swearing, rude jokes etc?)
- How will you evaluate the effect of the media on you (I.e. take breaks from video games or certain music and see the difference, have friends check your attitude, language, and actions to see any positive change etc.)

- Look at ways to become aware of the message and the messengers
  - Content: lyrics [www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com) or Messages [www.screenit.com](http://www.screenit.com)
  - Lifestyles: what life style do the artists have
  - Imagery: what is being left in your mind
  - Goals and Philosophies – your money supports these, so what philosophies do you want to support and what do you want to avoid.
- Write out what you value in life and why you would choose to avoid that which was in conflict to your values (more importantly, God's values)

**7. Prayer:** Use the last five minutes of the gathering time to have students pray for each other in pairs. Then bring everyone together and allow to students to pray aloud for their friends, for themselves and for the media.

### Leadership Appendix:

**Following are basic media education points you may want to take into consideration:**

- **People create media messages.** Any media message, whether it's a magazine article or a TV talk show, is created by a team of people. Those people write it, decide what pictures to use, and what to leave out. All of these things give the message a purpose.
- **Each media form uses its own language.** Newspapers make headlines large to attract readers to certain stories. Media with sound may use music to make people feel a range of emotions. When children learn about these techniques they are able to understand how a message is delivered instead of only being affected by it.
- **No two people experience the same media message in exactly the same way.** How a person interprets a message depends on things unique to that person's life. These can include age, values, memories, and education.
- **Media messages have their own values and points of view.** These are built into the message itself. You should compare the promoted values against you own values. It is important for you to learn that they have a *choice* in whether to accept the values that are being promoted in any media message however, if you constantly take the message in, you have to guard that you do not give up your values for values that are being bombarded your way. And some times the only way, and most effective way is to make a conscious choice to avoid it.

**Leader Note:** Contact Rob McAlpine at [compass@baptist.ca](mailto:compass@baptist.ca) or author Matt Wilkinson – [missionbeyond@yahoo.com](mailto:missionbeyond@yahoo.com) with any thoughts, questions or suggestions.

**Comments and Feedback:**

**Leader Note:** This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

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Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.