

session 12 study guide

discretionary viewing

message

You've probably heard the saying "The eyes are the windows to the soul." If our eyes can reveal our soul, can our souls be impacted by what we see?

Throughout this study, we've talked about honoring God with our bodies—with what goes into our bodies and what kinds of actions come out of them. You may think that the images that you consume are a lot less harmful to you than drugs, alcohol or sex could be—but you're wrong. Images have a powerful ability to drastically impact our self-image, our attitudes and outlooks and our standards of what we view as acceptable.

Some images we view are out of our control—an ad on the side of a bus, flyers that come in the mail, displays in a mall. But others—namely the websites that we visit, the magazines that we read and movies and TV shows we watch—are within our control.

So think about your image diet—those images you consume on a daily and weekly basis. Is your image diet pleasing to God? How can we keep our eyes and minds from impure images?

Read the following passage from Psalm 119:1-16,33-40. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) How can a person keep his or her way pure? (2) Is this writer's voice your voice too? (3) Do you deeply desire to obey God?

*Blessed are they whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who keep his statutes
and seek him with all their heart.
They do nothing wrong;*

*they walk in his ways.
You have laid down precepts
that are to be fully obeyed.
Oh, that my ways were steadfast
in obeying your decrees!
Then I would not be put to shame
when I consider all your commands.
I will praise you with an upright heart
as I learn your righteous laws.
I will obey your decrees;
do not utterly forsake me.*

*How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.
I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.
I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.
Praise be to you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.
With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.
I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word. . . .*

*Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees;
then I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding, and I will keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.
Fulfill your promise to your servant,*

*so that you may be feared.
Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.
How I long for your precepts!
Preserve my life in your righteousness.*

dig

1. How would you describe the psalm writer's attitude about following God's law?

2. Notice that for this psalmist, God's law is not some tedious set of can'ts, don'ts and shouldn'ts designed to limit our freedoms. Instead, obedience to God's law provides the framework for having a joyful, intimate and real relationship with Him. Read through these verses again and write down the specific actions that a person can take to keep himself or herself pure. Then list what you would need to do in order to accomplish each action. (Note that most of these actions will be between you and God.)

Actions to maintain purity	How to accomplish this
walk according to the law of the LORD	

3. The psalmist realizes that he cannot follow God successfully on his own. What are some of the things the writer asks for from God?

4. In verse 37, the writer asks God to keep his “eyes away from worthless things.” How do we determine what is worthwhile and what is worthless?

5. According to verse 40, what is the result when we follow God’s law?

6. In Psalm 101, the writer also focuses on how he can be pure and blameless, looking at “no vile thing” (verse 3). Read the following passages from Psalm 101:1-7 in the left-hand column. Then, in the right-hand column, fill in the paraphrased version with applications that are specific to your life.

Psalm 101	My Psalm 101
I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise.	God, I want to thank You for Your _____ and _____. I will give you praise.
I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart.	I want to lead a blameless life—when will You come to me? Living in _____, I will walk with a blameless heart.
I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.	I won't look at _____. I won't hang out with people who _____.
Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.	I'll stay away from looking at things that _____; I will have nothing to do with evil.
Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.	I'll stand up to people who _____; I won't put up with people who _____.
My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.	Instead, my eyes will look at _____. _____. I'll look to _____ as a role model and mentor to help hold me accountable as I strive to live.
No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.	Nothing that _____ will stay in my house; no images that are _____ will take up my time.

apply

1. In the chart below, fill in the approximate number of hours each week that you do each leisure activity and each spiritual activity.

Leisure activity	Hours per week
Watching TV	
Non-school-related Internet surfing	
Online chatting	
Texting/on the phone	
Reading magazines	
TOTAL	

Spiritual activity	Hours per week
Reading the Bible	
Prayer	
Worship	
Service	
Youth group	
TOTAL	

2. Which table has the greatest number of hours? Based on this, where would you say your priorities lie?

3. Of course, watching TV shows, visiting websites and reading magazines are not necessarily bad in themselves. The question is in how much time you are doing these things versus how much time you are spending with God. Where you spend the most time will likely have the most impact on you, and it is impossible to grow closer to God, to seek His ways and to live according to His guidance if you are not spending time with Him. So, how can you create godly viewing habits? In the space below, develop some guidelines for viewing the Internet, TV, movies, books and magazines based on the Scripture passages you have read.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

reflect

1. What are the characteristics of a good movie or TV show?

2. What's your opinion of the movie rating system (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17)? Is it fair? Is it too strict?

3. What movies or TV programs have you seen recently that would be most Christ honoring? What recent movies or TV programs are the least Christ honoring?

4. Should your parents know about every movie that you see? Is it okay to see an R-rated movie without their knowledge?

5. Does God really care about which movies and TV shows you watch or websites you visit?

6. Is seeing violent, sexual, suggestive or crass images really a problem for people?

7. Is there a difference between small kids, teenagers and adults seeing these kinds of images?

8. Besides the media we've talked about here (magazines, Internet, TV and movies), where else do you need to be on the lookout for unhealthy images?

meditation



How can a young person stay pure?

By obeying your word.

PSALM 119:9, *NLT*