



## Censorship– What we should and should not show!

**Introduction** – Since around the sixties there has been a serious decline in the morality and standards of what is shown on the TV. What was once considered to be 18 certificate films are now considered to be suitable to show to 12 yrs old. Greater violence, more explicit sex scenes, rude and offensive language being common place in many films and tv programs today. Even in Children’s programs there is an increase in violence, witchcraft and negative morality portrayed as modern and trendy. E.g. sex before marriage, homosexual relationships considered perfectly normal. Drug taking and swearing as just part of youth culture. Even in the soaps what was once considered to be “sinful,” behaviour is seen as just the common experiences of life.

**Discuss** – Are you concerned / not concerned about what is now shown as common place within the media?  
What do you think should / should not be shown through the media / television?  
Do you think that there should be greater moral censorship of what is put out through the media. Give for and against arguments for censorship?  
How do we balance the right for freedom of speech / expression, against the possible need for censorship?

### What is Censorship?

Censorship is the procedure whereby publications / programs are examined prior to release to the public, and changed or banned if they contravene certain legally defined criteria. Where used wisely, censorship can establish boundaries of decency and acceptability within a community.

Alongside of censorship – many societies have used a classification system that at the point of distribution tries to limit the age of the person who can access the particular media form. Even on mainstream television there is a 9.00pm watershed.

### Problems facing censorship! (Discuss these issues)

Over many years now there has been immense pressure to push back or abolish the controlling hand that governs what should and should not be shown. :-

- (1) A loss of respect for authority in favour of a real focus on personal freedom has resulted in a permissive society.
- (2) The development of a society that has no standard of set norms of issues of morality and decency and therefore no criteria for decision making on these issues.
- (3) A nation that is losing its Christian heritage and therefore many voices challenging the right of a “minority” to set restrictions on those who do not believe / or believe something different. (**Read Attached Article.**)
- (4) The opening up of the world through the internet, satellite tv, freedom of movement. How do you control and regulate what is accessed by people from any source across the planet into their own homes?

**Some Bible passages to think through** :-Psalm 119 v 33 – 37, Psalm 101 v 2– 3 Proverbs 4 v 14 – 27, Proverbs 22 v 6, Philippians 4 v 8

**Discuss** – Do you think we should expect a society that is losing its Christian roots to live by the standards of Christian morality? (give reasons for your answer)  
How do you think Christians should respond to and deal with the slide of morality in the media,  
At home? In the church? And in our society ?  
Who do you think should be responsible for setting what is decent and moral in our society today; as portrayed in the media and how do you think this could be regulated?

Scripture makes it clear that what we take into ourselves through the senses has an affect on our understanding, morality and behaviour. Many Christians believe that there has been a significant slide in the morality of God’s people as we have been bombarded by images and morality from the world’s point of view. Over time this has caused a erosion of biblical standards and resulted in many Christians seeing the norm for behaviour and relationships being realistically portrayed through the media.

Jesus in the sermon on the mount, talked about gouging your eye out if it caused you to sin. (Matthew 5 v 27 – 30) What he seems to be saying here is that the eye is the gate way to the heart and it’s desires and if what we see feeds sinful lusts, or a weakening in our moral standards then we need to be aggressive in cutting out of our lives that influence.

Even is society accepts certain moral standards in what is portrayed as entertainment, we as God’s people are called to be counter – cultural (without being weird) and are called to have a prophetic voice in our generation.

**Discuss** – How far would you go to cut out external sinful influences in your life? The life of your family?  
Do you think that Christians need to be more proactive (as the Muslims are) in lobbying the government, tv programmers and watchdogs over the issues that concern us as parents, citizens and as the people of God?