

Non-Fiction or Fiction:

“Appetites motivate us. Feed the good appetites but starve the bad ones.” Anon. (See Proverbs 16:26)

Some Biblical guidelines for what NOT to feed our minds with:

1. No hint of sexual immorality, impurity or greed (it is improper for God’s holy people). Eph. 5:3, 1 Thes. 4:3-8
2. No obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking (it is out of place for the believer). Eph 5:4
3. Nothing to do with fruitless and secret deeds of darkness (it is shameful to mention it). Eph. 5: 11-12
4. Do not “lose all sensitivity and be given over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more”. Eph. 4:17-24, Jer.2:5
5. Set nothing wicked, vile, evil before our eyes and not let it cling to us. Psalm 101:3
6. Deception: “He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence. “ Ps. 101:7 (*Think: Would you allow a real person in your house to tell your children the same things they are watching or reading? What/whom have you invited in?*)
7. Beware of movies and books that claim to tell a Bible story or Christian message but do not teach the truth. Guard from stories that distort (“torture”) the truth of God’s Word. (2 Peter 3:16-17, 2 Cor. 4:2-5). Interestingly, the Greek word for “beware” or “guard” in 2 Peter 3:16 has the idea of isolation, preserving, avoiding, watching out for. It doesn’t say “keep the good, ignore the bad parts”. (Note that first, some “Christian” companies do not understand these principles as being applicable to their ideas. (You also should watch out for false teaching/heresies and flee from/avoid these if a movie or book is promoting such. 1 Corinthians 10:12) Second, there is no good reason why the anti-Christian entertainment companies would *want* to tell the real truth. In general, they only wish to tell what itching ears would like to hear in order to make a profit and draw the religious crowd into buying their products. “A bad tree doesn’t produce good fruit” (Matthew 7:17-18) so be on extreme high alert when the unsaved world promotes a “spiritual” product. It may be wise not to see it but rather to stay away from it (1 Cor.10:12)).
8. No details about pagan religious practices. Although a very basic understanding of other philosophies can be of benefit to know how to respectfully share with others the good news of Jesus Christ, care needs to be taken as to what/how much information is given. (Deuteronomy 12:30, 7:26, Jeremiah 10:2, Matthew 6:13, Romans 16:17, 19b, Psalm 101:3, 6-7, John 14:23, 1 Corinthians 1:20, 2:4-6, 13-14, 3:19, 2 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Timothy 6:20)
9. Guard against “sensational” propaganda. Be careful on the amount of gory details of “suffering” you watch or read about since it does cater to fleshly/sinful thoughts (1 Peter 2:11). Even though Paul went through a lot, it wasn’t considered important to be talked of in immense descriptive detail (2 Cor. 12:11). Keep in mind that Jesus was marred more than any man (Isaiah 52:13-53:3) so anyone claiming to suffer more than Christ is not someone to promote.
10. Nothing that feeds sinful thoughts (i.e. lustful desires), nothing that conforms us to the world’s mould. (Romans 12:1-2, James 1:12-16...-24, 1 John 2:15-17, Col. 3:5-10, Eph.6:11)
11. Do not waste your time. Even if it is a “good” program to watch, be careful not to use your time foolishly. Turn away watching from worthless things. (Psalm 39:4-8, 90:12, 119:37, Eph.5:15-16)

The prudent (wise) see danger and take refuge, but the simple (foolish) keep going and suffer for it. Proverbs 27:12 NIV (1984)

Some Biblical guidelines for what to NOT to starve our minds from:

1. Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Rom. 14:19) Finally, brethren, 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, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—think on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil. 4:8-9
2. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:17
3. My eyes *shall be* on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me. Psalm 101:6 (in contrast to verse 3)
4. *It is vain* for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; *For* so He gives His beloved sleep. Psalms 127:2

Tips for Watching Media With Children:

Explain as simply as possible when a program is unsuitable for seeing. Children may understand a lot more than you think.

Don't allow profanity, evolution, or pride to go unchecked in the presence of children. Mute commercials that are offensive or change the channel or turn off the program even if it is not finished if it has too much offensive content.

When "Christians" distort Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (or similar), tell your children what it really means. Paul stating this verse had nothing to do with pride in personal will-power or pride in ("superhuman" or not) abilities or false humility. To interpret the verse for superhuman strength is a distortion of the verse's meaning but is sometimes seen in popular sport competitions or diet plans. Paul simply recognized that his day to day testimony/witness and life in the prison cell was evident due to God's strength and not his own to carry on. (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3). Paul had no confidence in his flesh! (Phil. 3:3).

Keep in mind that unlike what vaccinations might do, feeding your children a little "evil" does not inoculate them from acting out sin. A little "evil" rather, feeds the sinful nature. Read Romans 15:19b for what God's Word says about this.

Should we be concerned if a leader of a philosophy has a questionable spiritual testimony or source of thoughts and then seeks to give out spiritual knowledge to train others? Yes. One reason is for my own sake (I don't want to start accepting something that might lead me away from truth) and the other reason is that if I'm promoting it to someone, I want to make sure that if my trusting audience (e.g. children) goes to find more of what I just promoted, that they won't be led astray by the same author. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, Galatians 1:6-8, 1 Timothy 6:20-21, 2 Corinthians 7:1. We can apply these thoughts to choosing Sunday School/children's ministry or home Bible study resources.

Nothing produced by humans is perfect of course, but checking the below three questions helps me a lot. Here are the questions I try to find the answers for when choosing Bible-related curriculum:

- a) What does this producer/author believe about Who Jesus Is? (What is his/her understanding of God and is it correct according to the Bible)
- b) What do they think about "What the Gospel Is/How to Be Saved"? and
- c) What Do They Believe About God's Word? (Is it truth or just contains some truth and some error?)

If you home school your children be aware that "extra" time during school hours can be wasted in allowing the temptations in the media (books, T.V., etc.). Choose wise activities and feed good appetites.

Fiction:

There are good adventure tales, role playing stories, clean humorous funny stories, and stories that teach and uphold good morals/message.

The purpose of reading fiction is either to learn a message or idea from the author or for enjoyable recreation/relaxation (a.k.a. “fun”).

Imagination can be good but we need to recognize that it has been marred by sin (Gen. 6:5, Jer. 17, Romans 1) and every thought of a Christian is to be under the obedience of Christ who is our Lord. (Imagination can lead us away from godly thoughts, especially when reading books or watching movies whose themes are focused on depraved lifestyles. “Just let your imagination run” in creative writing assignments? Hold it in check according to Biblical standards. Remember, you are responsible for what you say and what you write – be sure God would be pleased with your work.)

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways, My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9

God warns us that the heart is very deceptive (Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 12:20). Jesus warns that the heart is an untrustworthy guide for truth, especially the "uncircumcised" (unholy) heart (Matthew 12:33-35, 15:18,19).

Humour

Types of Humour to Avoid:

1. Sarcastic Claims: Proverbs 26:18-19, Galatians 5:13-15
2. Derogatory/Belittling Stories: James 3:9-12, Romans 12: 9,10
3. Insensitive Insults: making light of sickness, disabilities, or painful trials as an insult – Eph. 4:31-32, 5:1-4 (coarse jesting)
4. Remarks that make light of sin, its punishment, or portrays incorrect doctrine without clarifying what the truth is: 2 Tim. 2:16-17, 2 Cor. 10:3-5, Eph. 5:6-12, 1 Tim. 1:5-6
5. “Unclean” humour: Eph. 4:29, 5:4
6. Jokes that are disrespectful to authority (especially when we are trying to be a witness to those in government; jokes that make police, parents, pastors, politicians unnecessarily look like fools are poor taste). 1 Peter 2:12-18 (16)

Types of Humour to Enjoy:

1. Cheerful: Proverbs 15:13, 15
2. Healing: Proverbs 16:24, 17:22
3. Honestly funny things that fit under the Biblical principle of uplifting one another. (Eph. 4:29, 1 Thes. 5:11)

