

THE MEDIA: GARBAGE IN-GARBAGE OUT

We are immersed in the “media” these days. With all our technology, social platforms, and availability of information we are literally swimming in information. With the seemingly instant availability of information and connection to others one might think that we would be a more enlightened society, fully informed and able to share information with others, enhancing our group understanding. But...is that where we are?

I am reminded of my computer genius friend from college. I took a computer class and found it to be very frustrating. I just could not get the computer to do what I wanted it to do. My friend told me something that stuck with me. He said “You have to remember that computers can’t think on their own. They just act on whatever you tell them to do. So, if you put garbage in, you’ll get garbage out.” We are not computers, and we **can** think for ourselves. But our thought life is in large part determined by what we choose to put in to the “system” that is our own computer. Whatever we fill the computer of our minds with will influence the actions, thoughts, and beliefs consistent with that input. Today we will discuss what the input is, how it affects our thoughts, actions, and beliefs, and how we can be sure to guard against “garbage” we might encounter.

INPUT: THE “MEDIA”

“When television is good, nothing -- not the theater, not the magazines or newspapers -- nothing is better. But when television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite each of you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there, for a day, without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper, without a profit and loss sheet or a rating book to distract you. Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that what you will observe is a vast wasteland.”

-Newton N. Minow, Chairman of the FCC, *Television and the Public Interest*, delivered May 9, 1961, National Association of Broadcasters, Washington, DC

What does the Bible say?

Psalms 101:3-4: ³ I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.⁴ A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

Philippians 4:8: ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Dictionary definition- media: the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the Internet) regarded collectively. So, considering the definition, let's discuss the following questions:

What does the Bible say about our “input?”

What forms of media do you see as beneficial and why?

What forms of media do you see as harmful and why?

ACTIONS

Jean Twenge, a social psychologist at San Diego State, calls the post-millennial generation (born between 1995 and 2012) “iGen” (like the iPhone). They were the first to grow up with internet access in their pockets. In 2006 Facebook opened to everyone, not just college students. One year later the iPhone was introduced. Social media platforms proliferated (Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Facebook developers spent

considerable time and resources developing techniques to get young people to spend as much time as possible on their site. In a 2017 interview, one of the developers of Facebook said “God only knows what it’s doing to our children’s brains.” -Paraphrased from Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 2018.

James 3:5-11: ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,^[a] and set on fire by hell.^[b] ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹

1 John 2:15-17: ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life^[a]—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

How are these verses tied to the proliferation of media, not just social media?

How is the tongue even more able to “set things ablaze” in the current environment?

How does love for the world tie in with our need to tame the tongue?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

“...Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” Franklin Roosevelt Inauguration 1933

Isaiah 41:10: ¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

Matthew 14:29-31: So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind,^[a] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Ephesians 6:10-13: ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

What do these passages say about our responsibility as Christians?

Why do we fall into fear? How can we guard against fear and lack of faith?