

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: What about the Harry Potter movie???

ANSWER: I don't see many movies (frankly, I don't want to), but I did join the ministry staff of SOTH to see this one. This is a combination of MANY questions I have received regarding *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

It is the spiritually immature Christian who asks: "What is wrong with it?" The mature Christian always asks: "What is right about it?"

The Corinthian congregation had a problem...they used their freedom in Christ as a license for immorality. St. Paul exposed their sophistry in 1 Corinthians 6:12 (You Corinthians say) "Everything is permissible." (I, Paul, say) But not everything is beneficial....not everything builds up."

I have a number of concerns, which directly and indirectly have to do with this movie (sorry for the length):

1. The people of God are called to be "salt and light". By who we are, by how we live, by what we do, and by what we don't do, we proclaim to the world the kind of God we serve. In order to be salt and light, we must neither be afraid of the world, nor must we take part in any of its evil. **As parents, we must walk the narrow line of raising children who are not naïve about evil nor participants of evil.** We are also called to be "IN the world, but not OF the world".
2. The church does not win many people to Christ by vehemently presenting itself as people who are AGAINST certain activities and philosophies. We must also equally and passionately present ourselves as people who are FOR certain activities and philosophies...like grace, reconciliation, loving our enemies, helping the oppressed, truth, mercy, and justice. It is sad that the very groups of people who were so attracted to Jesus are often so repulsed by his church.
3. Statistically, which evil draws more young believers away from God: witchcraft and sorcery, or the constant barrage of sex, drugs, homosexuality, violence, filth and moral relativism that comes into many Christian homes every night via the TV, Internet, and music videos? **We must be careful not to focus**

on just one snake while we are in fact standing in a nest of them. Satan is far more effective with Christians in his subtleties than in his direct attacks. (Frankly, I can think of a number of prime time TV shows that are spiritually more dangerous than *Harry Potter*...because they present evil as attractive, humorous, and fulfilling real-life.)

4. The church must have a strategy beyond **defensive** avoidance. We must **offensively** march against evil. We must have a solid understanding of what we believe. **We must know how to disarm evil by dismantling its arguments and attractions.** We must be able to verbalize coherently and articulately. Jesus said the Gates of Hell would not withstand his church (see MT 16:18). Certainly, because of a believer's age, moral development and spiritual maturity, **avoidance might be the best choice at that moment, but in the stratagem of the war, the believer must develop the faith-skills needed to defeat evil.** These skills come through: (1) The careful, supervised, gradual exposure to the tactics of evil complemented by (2) prayer, knowledge of Scripture, and the Armor of God (see EP 6). We have the words of life and truth. This truth will stand up to any philosophy of evil. This truth will unmask and expose evil. **Avoidance alone will give the world the impression that our faith is weak and vulnerable without much to offer.**
5. Parents must be VERY careful about how they expose their children to the philosophy, tactics and strategy of evil. A child's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development must be carefully evaluated and considered. The goal of exposure to evil is to make Christian soldiers ("wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove" MT 10:16). The way children avoid the enticements of evil is with a solid anchor of faith AND an ability to recognize evil (critical thinking skills).
6. Beware of the entertainment myth. The values, morals, social commentaries, and theology of movies do affect children (and adults) deeply. There is no such thing as neutrality when it comes to Hollywood. Evil is seductively attractive; children need to understand it and have the faith-skills to survive and conquer it.

Should your child see this movie? It depends on how you answer the following questions:

1. Will it draw your child into a deeper relationship with Christ?
2. Will it confuse your child about truth? Will it suck your child even just a little bit away from God? Will it plant the idea of compromise in their hearts?
3. Is your child spiritually anchored in his faith? Will this movie help him solidify his faith convictions or question them?
4. Will this movie help your child delineate the difference between good and evil? Or, will it blur the line?
5. Are the movie characters worthy of admiration (for godly reasons)? Or, do they promote choices and lifestyles that are contrary to God's law?
6. Will you be willing and able to discuss this movie with your child in a way that he can gain valuable offensive knowledge in his future battles with evil?
7. Will it further desensitize your child to evil in any form? Is evil presented as exciting, desirable and fulfilling? (see GE 3:6)
8. Are you modeling the idea that there is an "age" that makes watching any kind of garbage OK?

The only valid reason to expose oneself or one's child to evil is to overcome it with good (see RM 12:21) and/or disarm it. If you are uninterested or unable to do this, evil should be avoided. Sadly, many children see every movie that comes along...sadly, many adults do too. Harry isn't the only snake to be wary of. The next time you turn on your TV don't get bitten!

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