

Staff Work

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We Don't Have a TV

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We Don't Have a TV

Abstract

"The manner in which we choose to communicate shapes us more than the content found within the medium."

Posting about developing healthy intimate relationships from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/we-dont-have-a-tv/>

Keywords

In All Things, television, mass media influence, intimacy, interpersonal communication

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

We Don't Have a TV

▫ inallthings.org/we-dont-have-a-tv/

Jonathan De Groot

We don't have a TV and we've never had cable. A lot of people ask me why, but I honestly don't have a substantive answer. Our TV broke a couple of years ago and we found that a week without it was actually kind of refreshing. A week turned into a month and a month turned into more than two years. We are not fundamentally *against* TV. (In the future, we might buy a new one.) But for now, we are enjoying life without it. In our television's absence, what I have noticed the most is a renewed sensitivity to what I see.

One can hardly watch a half-hour of television or YouTube without seeing a woman in her underwear or bra. And I notice this now more than I used to. Perhaps it is because I have boys of my own, but likely it is because I am not as numb as I was with regular viewing. Television keeps normalizing yesterday's "taboo."

Recently, I brought home a Justice League (Batman and Superman) cartoon for my boys and the opening scene hosted scantily clad women (mostly silhouettes) dancing in cages behind Lex Luthor. Sadly, my sons will grow up viewing hundreds of thousands of concrete images of women portrayed sexually, and they will be devoid of real intimacy with any of them. Sex in the media ultimately is an enemy of true intimacy.

The big problems with sex and the media are: 1. Our medium is inherently communicating instant, convenient, and customizable sex (an impossibility). 2. Something designed to be known through intimate, trusting relationships is treated like a commodity and put on public display. 3. Sex is portrayed and associated with concrete images (in film and photos) that naturally necessitate comparison and contrast but are kept separate from true relationship.

The philosopher Marshall McLuhan coined the well-known phrase: "The medium is the message." In other words, the manner in which we choose to communicate shapes us more than the content found within the medium. Today, our communication mediums are instant, convenient, and customized. If we want food, sex, money, or popularity, we have immediate pacifiers in fast food chains, convenience stores, Viagra, pornography, credit cards, instant loan centers, Facebook likes, and Twitter feeds. People used to journal; now they blog. People used to write letters or call someone to share their latest news; now they post it.

Consider intimacy. When I am intimate with someone, we look for privacy; we close the door or we whisper. There is a secret "knowing" shared in an understood relationship (thus Victoria's irony). Even inside jokes are a form of intimacy, separating those who are "in" from those who are "out" of the shared experience or piece of humor. Intimacy requires relationship, and relationships are not instant. They require the investments of time, energy, and mutual familiarity. The very definition of intimacy purports that one cannot know or be known by everyone. In fact, true relational intimacy is reserved for a select few.

And everyone longs for intimacy.

We like to whip the church for "not talking about sex." Frankly, we've done a poor job of having the conversation. But maybe the problem isn't sex. Maybe the problem is that the church needs to get better at intimacy. It breaks my heart when I see dads who are emotionally distant from their kids or who withhold physical affection or affirmation because they are uncomfortable with intimacy. I get angry when God is portrayed as one-sided: an authoritarian Father who is rationally cold and uninvolved and who treats His

covenantal “love” as a legal transaction. I hear pastors complain about emotionalism, and I get the fear, but I honestly get more nervous about *not* inviting emotions into our Christian worship. I personally find it helpful to sing about how “heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss”,¹ and I find value and encouragement when a whole bunch of us sing with passion to Jesus... even when using first person pronouns.

I believe in a God who desires pleasure and provides abundant life for his children. I believe in a God who gives us power and grace through our relationship with Him to face every situation. And who promises to satisfy our longings and provide for us, giving us hope in this life and the life to come. It is a miraculous mystery that God knows each of us intimately and invites us to know him in return. Our transcendent, sovereign, need-of-nothing God calls me and you (individually) to *know* the Creator. Perhaps the Christian answer to a sexually saturated media is a church that lives in deep intimacy with God and one another, where secrets can be shared, inside jokes are told, and it feels really good to be known.

Footnotes

1. [How He Loves](#) by John Mark McMillian © 2005 Integrity’s Hosanna! Music. Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing IMI. [↩](#)