

The Mass Media; A tool of the devil or a gift of God?

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Jose Antonio wakes up as the clock radio clicks on each morning. Rubbing his eyes, he stumbles to the bathroom while a smooth-voiced singer offers a passionate love song for his girlfriend.

As he sits down to breakfast, his wife turns on the television and the couple watches the latest news. Later, on his way to the bus, he picks up a newspaper and flips through the pages to see how the futbol game ended last night.

On the way, he glances up to see a young girl in a bathing suit selling him cigarettes from a billboard along the road. Later, he notices an announcement pasted to a wall announcing English classes at a local university.

In just 45 minutes, Jose Antonio has begun his daily bombardment by media messages that bounce at him from all directions. Announcements, information, advertisements, entertainment filter through the noise of the street and the activities of the day and assault his ears until he falls asleep again at night.

What do those messages say? Particularly, what do those messages say to Christians about our all powerful, all-loving God? Or, do they say anything at all about the Lord? Or, if they do, what kind of image do they present?

In our media-saturated society, Christians need to be aware of the messages that come from the printed pages and over the airwaves. In addition, they need to learn how to use the mass media in their ministry.

While many messages from the media are contrary to the Bible, others reflect family values and biblical concepts that can be used to teach Christians about the love of God and his perfect will for their lives.

Christians must learn how to separate truth from fantasy and how to help others interpret the images that they receive from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, billboards and other media.

Christian pastors can learn how to help members select carefully the media that they use or to which they expose their children. And, church leaders must be able to offer quality Christian videos, books and magazines to their members so that they will use their time in front of the television or reading for spiritual edification.

The Bible reminds us: “Piensen en todo lo verdadero, todo lo que merece respeto, todo lo justo, todo lo puro, todo lo amable, todo lo que merece admiración, si hay algo excelente o que merece elogio, (Fillipenses 4:8).”

At the same time as we are saturated with secular media, a growing number of Christian radio stations, newspaper and magazines allow Christians to present the Gospel to a

widening audience of people who may never step inside a church, but who may, by the grace of God, tune into a Christian broadcast or pick up a Christian newspaper or magazine. And, an expanding market for Christian books encourages Christians to develop their writing talent and produce books that can be read by Christians throughout the Americas.

Not all Christian leaders will want to work in Christian communications full-time. The Lord has called them to other forms of service. But, often, God presents them with an opportunity to develop a weekly radio program, to write an article for a Christian publication or to develop a sermon series into a book.

For that reason, pastors and lay leadership should take advantage of opportunities to attend workshops and take courses in ministry and communications so that they will be prepared to use the media in a quality way to glorify the Lord and reach others for Jesus Christ.

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