

Seeing the Good

Gordon saw Phil one day, and suggested that they have a movie night. Phil liked the idea, and they got into a lively discussion about what they should watch. Gordon made several suggestions, but Phil shot each one down.

He explained, "My basic philosophy is that only Veggie Tales and old Disney movies are worthy of being watched. Everything else has violence, terrible language, or inappropriate behavior such as nudity or sexual situations. I have to keep myself pure from such things. Our society is degrading because of such filth! To watch is to support this evil industry."

Gordon, however, had the view that in almost any good (well received) movie there is a "Good" theme, and challenged Phil to look for it whenever he could. Looking for the Good was sort of like a treasure hunt. It should be thought of more as an opportunity.

Gordon tried to approach this from a Biblical perspective, and mentioned two passages. In the first, he showed that we are encouraged to look at the best in every situation – look at the Good in the midst of the Bad¹. The other passage describes the impracticality of totally isolating ourselves from the world and its evils². We must avoid the appearance of evil³, and be very careful not to accept hypocrisy. But we cannot live our life on a pole as the monks attempted in the Dark Ages. We cannot isolate ourselves and be an influence for Good.

Even in the face of this authority, Phil did not change his mind. He still thought of himself as somehow above those who participated in or, in his view, contributed to the spread of sin.

Gordon tried to argue that it is a part of looking for the Good out of the mix that can help us grow. He said, "We may have to be cautious in how we separate these things⁴."

Gordon continued, "The Bible itself shows us warts and all; and it leaves us with questions. If you strip the "bad" out of the Bible: what is left? What if we censored all of the "sin" episodes in the Bible? If God did not report instances of adultery, murder, and lying, even among the "faithful", what value or meaning would His word have? Most importantly, what if the "fall" was not reported, nor the cross (or the power of Grace)?"

Phil still resisted, and felt that we must cover our eyes to all evil. He repeatedly referred to those who did not do such as "sinners"⁵. But there were times when he ran into problems because his eyes were so tightly shut.⁶

Gordon then took it to a higher level when he pointed out to Phil that God has a similar problem when He looks down on the earth. He also sees sin in so many forms, but He pulls out the Good (i.e., the people that are following Him).

He then said, "What if he just turned the universe off and went on to another of His projects? He did something like that once before (the flood), but He promised not to do it again until the universe as a whole is renewed.

We might be motivated to quit reading a book or stop watching a television show when it is has bad scenes in it, but with this attitude we can watch the show and look for those who are doing the heroic things.

When we see bad things happening in any situation, we can use these as a backdrop to re-live Christ's story or God's will in a different way. Unfortunately, we become somewhat immune to the gospel story because we have heard it so many times, and though it affects us we do not typically cry because of it. Then when we watch a video with a story where someone sacrifices themselves for others we get all choked up (in spite of vulgarity, nudity, or other bad influences).

This may be because we attach such a supernatural power to the actions of God, but in a way feel moved by the act of man in his weakness when he steps up to save someone. These are remapped stories of God and Christ, and are similar in the sense that Christ showed power in His weakness, too⁷.

Gordon then said, "Think about it from God's point of view, how much He loves to see us respond. Perhaps He gets choked up (in some spiritual or godly sense) when He sees man do Good. We know that Jesus rejoiced when He saw the good in sinners (the widow who gave her only two mites⁸, for instance). I can only hope that I can please Him in this way. Jesus and only rejected hypocrites."

Nothing Gordon said had any influence on Phil, even with the little jab about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They dropped the idea of movie night, and Phil went on his way. Later Gordon

learned that Phil had condemned him from his congregation, where in his “conservatism” he promoted isolation from sinners. It was no wonder to Gordon that Phil’s group didn’t grow!

1. Philippians 4:8
2. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:22
4. Matthew 13:24ff (parable of the tares)
5. see Matthew 9:11, John 9:31
6. think of the “bleeding Pharisees”
7. Philippians 2:5-8
8. Luke 21:2

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