

## Mixed messages

**H**AVE YOU NOTICED that TV weather forecasters have a favorite phrase? When they are unsure what to predict, they simply say, "We'll keep an eye on it for you."

Perhaps they are taught this line in meteorology school. Will it snow 12 inches tomorrow afternoon? "Maybe. We'll keep an eye on it for you." Will the hurricane hit land, or stay at sea? "We're not sure, but we'll keep an eye on it." Will a giant meteor strike the earth and destroy all human life? "We'll check the Super-Doppler radar and keep an eye on it for you." Actually, long before we had the benefit of a meteorologist's expert help, there was a simple method for "keeping an eye on" the weather. It was called "looking out the window."

Do you have any pet peeves about the media? Does the advertising industry anger you when it uses sex to sell everything from cars to shampoo? Do TV preachers frustrate you when they devote large portions of their programs to raising money so they can stay on the air? Do you grow weary of radio talk-show hosts who build ratings with outlandish topics?

In today's media marketplace, the bad news of sin tends to overshadow the good news of Christ. Commentator Paul Harvey says, "One gunshot makes more noise than a thousand prayers. That does not mean it is more important—just that it sells more newspapers." By the time most church-goers go to bed on Sunday night, the Word of God they heard preached at church on Sunday morning has been contradicted dozens of times by the TV shows or movies they watched the rest of the day, and it takes a lot of wisdom to sort out the mixed messages. Sitcoms: "Most people sleep around." The Bible: "You shall not commit adultery." Beer commercials: "It's cool to drink." Mothers Against Drunk Driving: "It's dangerous to drink." TV talk-show host: "Don't be so intolerant. All

religious views are equally valid." Jesus: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Instead of simply slamming the media, though, we should take responsibility for what we ourselves choose to view, say, hear, and write. Who does more damage on a typical day—TV news anchors, or ordinary people who backbite and gossip? Who's causing more trouble for our homes—Hollywood movie producers, or men secretly addicted to pornography? Syndicated columnist Cal Thomas has

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said, "The ultimate problem in America is not the media. It's the church. It is the followers of Christ who have been conformed to this world and not transformed by the renewing of their minds."

The Lord wants us to be "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation" (Philippians 2:15), but that doesn't mean we're naive and uninformed. We need to follow the apostle Paul's advice: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22). The Lord calls us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. To mix our faith with discernment, wisdom, and grace. To live holy lives and refuse to mix God's truth with impurity and falsehood, but also to be "salt and light," communicating his unchanging message to an ever-changing world.

God's Word is sure, but media trends are hard to predict. Just about the time you think you have our culture all figured out, another storm appears on the radar screen.

We'll keep an eye on it for you. ■



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