

BREAKING FREE FROM OUR CULTURE

book twenty-two in the series:
THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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- Day One: Watch Out for Cultural Contamination
 - Day Two: Enjoy True Freedom
 - Day Three: Evaluate Advertising Carefully
 - Day Four: Choose Wholesome Entertainment
 - Day Five: Review and Test

Breaking Free from Our Culture: Book twenty-two in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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ISBN: 978-1-930153-71-4

Version: TOM2220191106A

Published by LifeTree Books, Sacramento, CA • Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com



The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on "Knowing God"

Twelve books on "Developing a Godly Character"

Twelve books on "Enjoying Healthy Relationships"

Twelve books on "Overcoming Personal Problems"

For

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

Available free for personal use at:
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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

Knowing God

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in “The Owner's Manual to the New You” series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Watch Out for Cultural Contamination

Many people worry about pollution in our environment. Although we should be concerned about this, we should be more alarmed by the pollution in our culture.

Throughout the Bible, we are cautioned about the way ungodly cultures tempt us to sin. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were warned not to adopt the practices of those around them (Leviticus 18:1-5 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

In the New Testament, James wrote that we should avoid "being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). Likewise, Paul warned us about contaminating our body and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1).



Discussion questions

1. Why is it important to be aware of negative ways our culture influences us?
2. What are some ways our culture has negatively affected you?

Our culture often conflicts with the Bible

There are lots of good things in our culture. However, our culture also promotes many values that conflict with the Bible's teachings. For example:

- Popular songs, TV, movies, websites, magazines, and books encourage sexual sin.
- Advertising tempts us to buy things we don't need.
- Sports heroes, movie stars, recording artists, and politicians glorify self-centered lifestyles.
- Teachers, news media, and entertainers openly ridicule God, Christians, and the Bible.

Discussion questions

3. Read the previous list of ways our culture conflicts with the Bible. How have you been influenced by some of them?
4. What are some other ways our culture conflicts with the Bible?

Don't be fooled by the wisdom of this world

It's easy to be influenced by trends and ideas in our culture, even though they change year-by-year and decade-by-decade. If you aren't careful, you may find yourself paying more attention to what teachers, entertainers, media personalities, and movie stars say than what the Bible says.

Many people say the only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth. When you think about that statement, it doesn't make much sense, but many believe it.

The Bible, on the other hand, contains many absolute truths. For example:

- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).
- God hates hands that shed innocent blood and a heart that devises wicked schemes. (Proverbs 6:16-19)
- Jesus died and was resurrected to offer us eternal life (John 3:16).

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32).

We may be more influenced by our culture than we realize

We often go along with our culture's values without thinking about what we are doing. For example, do you sometimes want a new car when your current car works fine? Do you want to have the latest style of tennis shoes? Do you join in when your friends gossip? Do you watch TV shows or movies with sexually immoral themes or scenes? Do you envy people who own expensive houses? Do you always "need" to buy the latest smartphone?

Discussion question

5. What are some subtle ways our culture can affect us—ways that may not look like sin but which can pull us from God or lead us into temptation?

It's easy to rationalize our actions

It's easy to rationalize our actions when we go along with our culture's values. For example, you might say, "It's a PG-rated movie, so it's okay if I watch it." Yet some PG-rated movies aren't okay.

Or you might say a movie or TV show is okay because it doesn't have any nudity or sex scenes, although the dialogue and plot are thick with sexual content.

This is a complex topic. Not everything in our culture is bad. Plus, some things may be sinful to you, but not to someone else. For example, some Christians think eating meat is sinful, while others have no problem with it.

Another complication is that almost anywhere you go in our culture you are exposed to sin. You might feel like hiding under your bed and never coming out, but the Bible shows us a better way. It is to guard your heart (your emotions, thoughts, and motives) as you seek to please God.

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Discussion question

6. Describe one time you rationalized making an unwise choice. Why was it a bad choice?

Prayerfully evaluate how your decisions affect your relationship with Jesus

When you think about doing something, going somewhere, watching something, or listening to something, prayerfully ask yourself:

- How does this activity match up with what the Bible says?
- Would God be pleased by this?
- Would this be good for me spiritually, physically, or emotionally?
- Would I enjoy it if Jesus was beside me as I did this?
- Is it possible this would lead me into sin?
- Does this encourage me to draw closer to God?
- Does this push me further away from God?

Discussion question

7. What is one cultural temptation or situation you face? Which of the previous questions will help you make a wise decision? Explain your answer.

Declare independence from our culture's false values

It's hard to break free from our culture's false values. In fact, it's probably impossible to completely break free. But we can declare independence and embark on a journey to become increasingly free as we grow closer to Jesus.

I'd like to invite you to declare independence from our culture's false values. Ask God to help you grow closer to him and to show you any changes you should make in your attitudes or how you live.

Remember that you have a purpose.

God has a purpose for your life. It is to do "good works"—to make a difference in the world for Christ. God had called you to influence our culture, not be influenced by it.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Limit your use of TV, smartphones, and other gadgets.

When you declare independence from our culture, count the minutes you spend each day on your smartphone, computer, TV, and other gadgets.

It's easy to be polluted by our culture when we immerse ourselves in it. Online games, social networks, video sites, blogs, and other electronics are not bad in themselves. However, when we spend too much time on them we waste our time. Plus, we are likely to absorb our culture's unhealthy values, and we may be tempted to watch things that aren't good for us.

The Bible encourages us to break free from being controlled by "earthly things" and focus on what is truly important.

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:19-20)

Discussion questions

8. Has using a smartphone, computer, TV, or other electronics ever been too important to you? Explain your answer.
9. Are you ready to declare independence from our culture's false values? If so, say a prayer asking God to help you grow closer to him and to show you any changes you should make in your life or your values.

Draw close to God

Many people make the mistake of trying to break free from cultural pollution on their own. We need to live close to God, allowing him to strengthen us through prayer, worship, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers. And we need God's help every time we are faced with a decision.

The Bible says Jesus is the vine, you are a branch, and God is the gardener. Let him prune you of any ways the world has corrupted you so that you will bear fruit.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:1-2)

Discussion question

10. What do you think John 15:1-2 means? How can understanding this change the way you live?

We especially need to be students of the Bible. After all, God gave us the Bible to help us draw close to him and to guide us on our path through life.

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. 'Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests' (Hosea 4:6).

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. (Psalm 119:9)

Discussion question

11. How often do you read the Bible? Do you find it helpful? What can you do to make your Bible study more rewarding?

Memory verse

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Want to learn more?**Bible studies by Doug Britton**

Bible studies on dealing with our culture

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/dealwithculture

Book by Doug Britton

Defeating Temptation

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation

Homework – Day One

1. Why do you think this chapter uses the word “pollution”?
2. Do you agree that “pollution” is a good word to use in this chapter? Explain your answer:
3. What is one way our culture has influenced you in a negative way? Describe how it affected your thoughts, attitudes, or actions:
4. What have you learned from this chapter that will help you change the thoughts, attitudes, or actions you wrote when you answered the previous question?

5. What does it mean to guard your heart?

6. Do you need to break free from anything in our culture? Explain your answer:

7. Why is it important to read the Bible and pray if we want to break free from our culture?

Day Two: Enjoy True Freedom

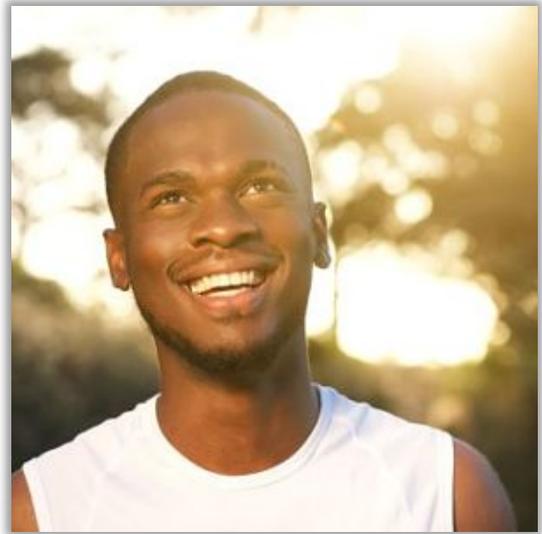
Many people want to be “free”

Multitudes of people say they want to be “free,” to be in control of their own lives. They want to do what they want and make their own decisions, free from God’s laws or society’s rules.

This message is repeated throughout our culture. We are encouraged to break free from anything that would hold us back from doing what we want to do.

Before I became a Christian, I wanted to throw off all boundaries, to be completely free of any rules. I remember someone at work who admiringly told me I was the most free person she had ever known.

She thought I must have great peace inside, but she was wrong. I knew that I was dying inside, spiritually and emotionally.



Discussion questions

1. Have you ever believed in the world’s idea of freedom? If so, how did that work out for you? (There’s no need to share all the details.)
2. Why do you think our culture’s idea of freedom can be so appealing?

“Freedom” from God is counterfeit freedom

If you look at counterfeit money, it looks real, something you would like to have. Likewise, if you look at someone living a “free” lifestyle, it might look attractive from the outside, but the reality is something very different.

“Freedom” from God is the freedom to be miserable.

An infant may be tempted to enjoy the “freedom” of running into a crowded street, but this freedom would bring serious injury or death. Likewise, “freedom” from God may look attractive, but the end result is misery and, for many, an eternity separated from God.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23)

Discussion question

3. When you read about entertainers and other popular people in our culture who seem to live “free” lifestyles, it’s hard not to notice how many of them fail in relationships, become addicts, or commit suicide. What can we learn from their unfortunate examples?

“Freedom” from God means being in bondage to sin.

Freedom from God's rules is counterfeit freedom. It is an illusion. If you proclaim yourself “free” from God's restraints, you become a slave to sin and the devil.

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. (2 Peter 2:19)

The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires. (Proverbs 11:6)

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

Discussion questions

4. What does it mean to be a slave to depravity or sin (2 Peter 2:19 and Romans 6:16)?
5. What do you think it means to be a slave to obedience (Romans 6:16)?

True freedom is not freedom to sin. It is freedom from the power of sin.

God's life within us transforms us. As we walk in the Spirit, we begin to see sin for what it really is, something vile and leading to death, and it becomes easier to do the things that please God.

Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. (Romans 6:19-20)

Discussion questions

6. What does it mean to say that true freedom is freedom from the power of sin?
7. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

True freedom is freedom to celebrate God's love and live a full, joyful life

As we grow in the Lord, we experience the joy of becoming who we are meant to be, of realizing our best possibilities. True freedom is abandoning your life to God.

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)

I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

Discussion questions

8. What does it mean to say that true freedom is abandoning your life to God?
9. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

True freedom is freedom to love

When we walk in the freedom that God offers, we are better able to truly love and serve others.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)

God's rules are for our good

Although the heart of Christianity is understanding and responding to God's love for us, that doesn't mean the Bible doesn't have instructions for living. In fact, because God loves us, he has given us many commands and instructions in the Bible. They are for our good.

Discussion question

10. When do you find it hardest to obey God's commands and rules? Is there anything you can do to make it easier to follow his commands and rules at these times?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

The following suggestions will help you get started in your Christian walk:

- Read the Bible daily, starting in the New Testament with the Gospel of John.
- Join a Bible-believing church.
- Pray regularly.

Resist temptation

Even when you understand true freedom, you almost certainly will find yourself tempted by the world's false ideas of freedom from time to time. That's part of life. Here are some ways you can resist temptation:

- Stay close to God.
- Study the Bible every day.
- Pray to see sin through God's eyes.

- Make a concrete plan to deal with temptation.
- Find a friend who will pray with you.
- Declare war on sin daily.
- Establish personal boundaries (places where you will—and will not—go).
- Choose not to be controlled by peer pressure.
- Replace bad habits with good ones.
- When tempted—stop, think, and pray.

Discussion question

11. Which of these ways to resist temptation do you need to put into practice? Take a few minutes to pray as a group for God's help in these areas.

Shake the dust off your feet

Jesus told his disciples to shake the dust off their feet when leaving a home or town that did not receive them (Matthew 10:14). Since you are probably exposed to unholy attitudes and actions as you go through life, “shake the dust off your feet” at the end of the day. Ask God to cleanse you from your exposure to these things.

- Take a “prayer bath.” Pray for cleansing from all the sinful attitudes.
- Praise God. Enter into his presence.
- Read the Bible. Replace the unholy with the holy.

Discussion question

12. How will you “shake the dust off your feet” at the end of the day?

Memory verse

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)

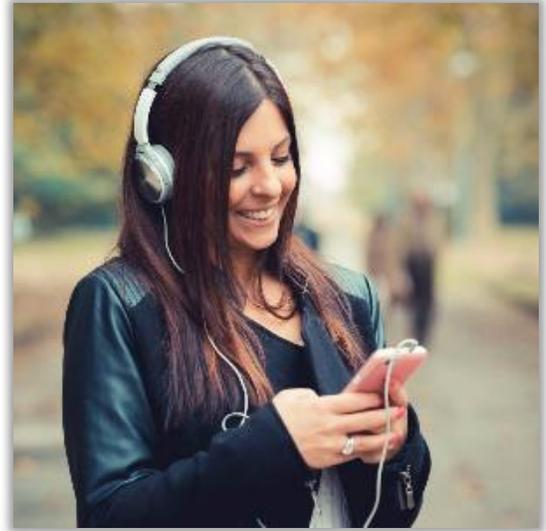
Day Three: Evaluate Advertising Carefully

We are bombarded by advertising

The advertising in TV, radio, the Internet, social media, newspapers, magazines, and billboards bombard us with messages intended to stir up our desire to spend. We are told we need a new car, this year's fashions, expensive perfume, a certain mouthwash, new furniture, the latest smartphone, and the fastest computer.

Advertisers tell us we need what they are selling, we deserve it, and life is not worthwhile without it.

Once we make the purchase, the excitement and satisfaction often wear off quickly, and we realize we have been deceived by advertising lies.



Realize that advertising affects you

You may think ads don't affect you, but you probably are wrong. The reason companies pay massive amounts for advertising is that it works. Well-written ads appeal to envy, pride, and greed — emotions that affect us all.

Discussion question

1. Describe one advertisement that tempted you to buy something you didn't need. What lessons can you learn from this experience?

Realize that advertising tempts you to misuse God's resources

According to the Bible, God owns everything. You and I are simply stewards of what he has entrusted to us. Pray about how you will use your money, asking God to help you be a wise steward.

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:11-12)

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

Discussion questions

2. What did Jesus mean when he said to be "trustworthy in handling worldly wealth" (Luke 6:11-12)?
3. How can Luke 16:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 4:2 help you evaluate advertising carefully?

Realize that advertising tempts you to spend money you don't have

The Bible encourages us to stay out of debt (Deuteronomy 15:6 and 28:12), but many people take out loans or build up credit card debt to buy things they don't need. Instead of enjoying the freedom that can come from being debt-free, they often find themselves overwhelmed, anxious, and depressed over their financial situation.

Discussion question

4. What's wrong with going into debt if you really want something? Explain your answer.

Reject the world's false values and materialism

When you are constantly exposed to advertising, it's hard not to think it's really important to spend money on more possessions, vacations, and more expensive houses. Ask God to help you reject our culture's values.

Remembering what God says about envy and greed can help us resist advertising.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17)

Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. (Luke 12:15)

If you have trouble with envy or greed, study Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21, Proverbs 14:30-31, Ecclesiastes 4:4, Matthew 23:25, Luke 12:15, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, and James 3:14.

Be like Paul, who wrote:

I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. (Acts 20:33)

Discussion questions

5. What's the danger in greed or coveting what someone else has?
6. How can the Bible's warnings about greed help you resist advertising?

Adopt God's values

If you aren't careful, advertising can blind you to what's really important. Let's look at some things God values:

Loving God and loving others

Jesus was asked what is the most important commandment. Remembering his answer can help you find freedom from what our culture says is important.

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

The fruit of the Spirit

God wants to transform us by changing us on the inside. As we grow in him, we will develop “the fruit of the Spirit.”

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Contentment regardless of your situation

When we are walking with God, we can be content in “any and every situation.”

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:12-13)

Discussion question

7. Do you think it's possible for you to be content in “any and every situation”? Explain your answer.

Generosity

Remember that you are a steward. Whatever your financial situation, God calls you to be generous.

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:25)

It's not necessarily wrong to try to improve your situation. It may be okay to purchase new possessions, pay for plane tickets to go on vacation, or purchase a new house. However, don't make these things too important. Keep your priorities straight.

This is especially true if you are wealthy since the Bible warns in many places about the dangers of wealth (Psalm 49:12, Mark 10:25, and James 5:1-3). It's not a sin to be wealthy if you remember you are a steward, use your finances wisely, and give generously.

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. (2 Corinthians 9:11)

Discussion question

8. How important is it to God for us to be generous? How do you think knowing this will affect how you respond to advertising and our culture's values?

Say “no” to advertising's lies

It isn't easy to say “no” to advertising and our culture's false values. Ask God to help you develop sales resistance. Remember that people have been paid a lot of money to tempt you to make impulsive purchases. Recognize most ads for what they are—appeals to covetousness and greed.

If ads stir up your desire for possessions, don't read ads. If magazines or catalogs affect you the same way, throw them out unread. If ads on your smartphone or computer tempt you, install an ad blocker.

Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Most importantly, spend time with God in Bible study and prayer.

I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

Discussion question

9. How will this study help you resist advertising and our culture's false values?

Memory verse

I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Defeating Temptation

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation

Homework – Day Three

1. Today's lesson spent a lot of time discussing advertising. Why do you think the author gave this topic so much attention?
2. What types of ads (such as for cars, computers, or clothes) attract you the most? Why do you think they appeal to you?
3. This study points out that you are a steward. How can remembering this help you resist advertising?
4. What is materialism, and why is it dangerous?

Day Four: Choose Wholesome Entertainment

Entertainment and recreation play an important role in most of our lives. If we don't overdo it, that's a good thing. Recreation can relax us, and it can help us connect with others.

However, entertainment and recreation can also cause problems in our lives.

One problem is that in our culture there is a tremendous emphasis on entertainment and recreation, and many people make having fun their main goal in life.

Another problem is that in our search for enjoyment and relaxation, we often accept our culture's ideas of fun and do things that harm our relationship with God.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

In today's lesson you will read about dangers in secular entertainment. However, let me add that not all secular entertainment is bad. Some of it can be fun, educational, entertaining, or uplifting.



Discussion question

1. How important is recreation and entertainment in your life? Explain your answer.

Stay balanced. Don't spend too much time on entertainment.

Recreation is fine if it is part of a balanced life, but if you live mainly to have fun, you are missing out on God's purpose for your life—and the joy that comes from serving God and helping others. Set your mind on things above.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Discussion questions

2. What are the three forms of entertainment that take up most of your time? What is the average number of hours per day (or week) you devote to them?
3. Do you spend too much time on entertainment? If so, what changes should you make?

Be aware of potential dangers in entertainment

Much of the entertainment and literature in our society is ungodly and harmful. This doesn't apply only to obvious material such as pornography. It also applies to many regular TV shows and movies, books, smartphone apps, magazines, video games, and music.

Let's look at some of the potential dangers of secular entertainment:

- **We can accept a secular picture of the world.**
 - Much entertainment presents a false or incomplete picture of reality by leaving Christ out. Even if there are no negative references to Christianity, the picture of the world we expose ourselves to may ignore the most important element of truth—God. If the main things we fill our minds with are these versions of reality, we can come to see Christianity as irrelevant in our daily lives and “religion” as only belonging in church.
- **We learn lessons that rarely work out in real life.**
 - If you watch TV sitcoms, movies, or pornography, you may believe a false picture of human relationships. For example, you may become upset because your spouse does not seem as sexy as the actors and actresses. Or you may think sexual affairs bring happiness.
- **We are not truly refreshed.**
 - I used to spend a couple hours every night watching TV, thinking I needed to relax and unwind. But I discovered that when I was done watching TV, I wasn't truly relaxed, closer to my wife and children, or nearer to God. Instead, I felt like I was mildly drugged.
- **We can become cynical.**
 - We can develop disrespect for pastors or Christianity since few movies or TV shows portray Christians or pastors in a positive light.
- **We can develop impure sexual thoughts or lust.**
 - The sexuality in most secular entertainment—and I'm writing about most everyday entertainment, not just pornography—portrays sex simply as an instinctive drive, or it makes adultery and other sexual sins appear romantic and wonderful.
 - When you expose yourself to these messages, your thoughts about sex are likely to become more like the world's and less like God's. You may fantasize about sexual sins.
- **We can learn to accept ungodly violence as okay.**
 - In some instances, violence has an appropriate role in movies and TV shows. For example, scenes from World War II reveal an important part of history.
 - But the violent scenes we usually see are brutal, sadistic, and ungodly. If we aren't careful, we can find ourselves accepting this onscreen violence, or even laughing at it.
 - Some of us may actually find ourselves imitating the violent behavior we see in TV or the movies. I have counseled with many delinquent teenage boys who imitated the violence they saw on TV or in movies.
- **We can become materialistic.**
 - Most advertising has one purpose: to make you think you must buy something to be happy. Movies and TV shows often feature luxurious living and give the message that happiness comes from spending lots of money.

Discussion question

4. Which of the potential dangers about secular entertainment speak to you? Why?

Avoid harmful entertainment

Ask God to help you evaluate your recreation and entertainment. Keep your spiritual eyes open.

I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. (Psalm 101:3)

Do not violate the Bible or your conscience.

Paul gave us timeless guidelines when he wrote:

Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (1 Timothy 1:18-19)

Do not blindly follow our culture's standards.

We sometimes think that since “everybody” else is watching or listening, it must be okay. Or we think something is acceptable simply because it is not as bad as something else.

Do not blindly follow Christian friends' standards.

Some say since we are under grace, we are “free” to watch movies with questionable content, talk about how sexy some movie stars are, flirt, or even get drunk. Follow God's standards, not theirs.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (Romans 6:15)

Watch rationalizations. (Would you feel comfortable if Jesus were sitting beside you?)

You may say, “I filter out the bad parts.” That may be true. However, be honest with yourself. How do the bad parts affect you? And how do they affect people with you? Would you feel comfortable if Jesus were sitting beside you?

Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Discussion questions

5. Do you make any of the mistakes listed under “Avoid harmful entertainment”? If so, explain your answer.
6. What will you do differently?

Enjoy healthy activities and entertainment

Choose activities and entertainment that are fun and wholesome. A good guideline is to only engage in activities Jesus would approve of. As John wrote:

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:6)

Check activities you would enjoy doing.

- Make a great meal and share it with friends.

- Watch a good video or movie.
- Play games on your smartphone or computer (but don't get addicted).
- Read Christian biographies or other good books.
- Listen to podcasts or radio programs.
- Visit with friends.
- Tell wholesome jokes.
- Go to a good musical or play.
- Listen to uplifting music.
- Go backpacking or climb a mountain.
- Play tennis, golf, or another sport.
- Join a choir.
- Study the Bible.
- Go for a walk in the park.
- Go to the beach.
- Play games with friends.
- Learn to play a musical instrument.
- Read Christian magazines.
- Listen to an orchestra.
- Grow a garden.
- Write letters or send emails and text messages to friends.
- Join a small group in your church or community.
- Start a hobby.

Discussion question

7. Describe some healthy activities you would enjoy.

Memory verse

*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!
(Romans 6:15)*

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible studies

Bible studies on self-image and self-worth

Homework – Day Four

1. What are your favorite types of entertainment or ways to enjoy recreation?
2. After reading this lesson, do you think you need to stop any activities you listed in the previous question? Explain your answer:
3. After reading this lesson, do you think you need to spend less time on any of the activities you listed in the first question? Explain your answer:
4. Review the potential dangers in secular entertainment. Which danger is something you need to think about? Explain your answer:

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- T 1. Our culture often conflicts with the Bible.
- F 2. If a movie is rated PG, you can be sure it would be okay for an adult to watch it.
- F 3. Spending a lot of time on a smartphone, computer, or TV is harmless fun.
- T 4. Freedom from God is counterfeit freedom.
- T 5. Freedom from God means being in bondage to sin.
- T 6. True freedom is freedom from the power of sin.
- F 7. Advertising doesn't really work.
- F 8. Every secular movie tends to push people away from God.
- F 9. We live under grace, so we don't need to put limits on what media we watch.
- F 10. Christians can't have fun.

Memory verses

- 1. Romans 6:15
What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

- 2. 2 Corinthians 7:1
Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

Free online Bible studies for daily living

Read and download Doug's free online studies on marriage, parenting, anger, self-concept, anxiety, depression, temptation, fear of death, biblical counseling, mentoring, small group leadership, and other topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources.

Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

We would love to hear from you

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More Books by Doug Britton

In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

Growing in Christ

Getting Started, Getting Connected
First Things First
Living by Grace

Living Free

Breaking Free (from Drugs and Alcohol)
Conquering Depression
Defeating Temptation
Healing Life’s Hurts
Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
Six Keys to Personal Growth
Six Keys to Successful Relationships
Strengthening Your Marriage
Victory over Grumpiness, Irritation, & Anger
Who Do You Think You Are?

Marriage by the Book

Laying a Solid Foundation
Making Christ the Cornerstone
Encouraging Your Spouse
Extending Grace to Your Mate
Talking with Respect and Love
Improving Your Teamwork
Putting Money in its Place
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Successful Christian Parenting

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