

Praying with Purpose 5:

Media & Communication, Arts, Entertainment & Sport

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I. Media & Communication: Truth, influence, communication, choice.

“The most valuable thing in the world is truth”. Winston Churchill

“In war-time, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies”. Winston Churchill

“The most powerful weapon in the world is the truth”. Andre Sakharov (after giving the Soviets the atomic bomb)

“The greatest and most notable casualty of our times in which we are inundated with spiritual terminology is, unquestionably, truth”. Ravi Zacharias

God desires truth and love together:

Prov. 3:3-4 NKJV

“Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

Prov. 3:3-4 – The Passion Translation

*Hold on to loyal love and don't let go,
and be faithful to all that you've been taught.
Let your life be shaped by integrity,
with truth written upon your heart.
That's how you will find favor and understanding
with both God and men—
you will gain the reputation of living life well.*

Love is an incredible weapon of warfare (e.g. Theologian PhD on spiritual warfare and concluded that love was actually the weapon that won the ultimate victory.)

Deut. 13:12-14

“If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you to dwell in, saying, ‘Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants

of their city, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods”—which you have not known—then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently....

Deut. 11:20

And you shall write them (the Words of the Lord) on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

“The world that has one of the greatest impacts on our decision-making, value formation, relationships and self-perception is the technologically-mediated world”.
Dr. Peter Horsfield (ordained minister currently working on the electronic culture research project which in a simplified nutshell explores the impact of electronic media on global cultures).

“The media in general,..... are incomparably the greatest single influence in our society today, exerted at all social, economic, and cultural levels. The influence, I should add, is, in my opinion, largely exerted irresponsibly, arbitrarily, and without reference to any moral, or intellectual, still less spiritual, guidelines whatsoever.” Malcolm Muggeridge (1903-1990)

One wonders what he would say today,.. with all the advances in technology and social media. How much more is the media the current greatest single influence in our society?

Name, Nature and attributes of God:

The name, nature and attributes of God to be manifested in and through this domain are Living Word and Truth.

Jn. 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jn. 16:13

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Deut. 30:19-20

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His

voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

The Purpose:

One of the primary purposes of this domain is to provide truthful, objective, information of importance to the community so citizens can make informed, responsible decisions. The media also has a powerful role to play in holding to account those in influential positions, for example in government, business and influential spheres.

Important factors to bear in mind:

1. With media it is critical that we bear in mind that whatever we read, see or hear is only a part of the story. It is one side of the story, or some of the story.

Prov. 18:17

The first one to plead his case seems right, until another comes and cross-examines him.

2. There is truth that defiles and negatively impacts one. It is important that we are aware of this and have strong boundaries to protect ourselves.

Phil. 4:8-9

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Some prayer points:

- Thank God for writers, producers, broadcasters and journalists working in the media; for their abilities and skills.
- Pray a blessing on our media, and ask that it would be characterised by wisdom, skill and integrity (*Ex. 31:3*).
- Pray that truth and beauty may be the hallmarks of our media (*Phil. 4:8*).

Pray for:

- a hunger for truth and a desire to seek out truth and expose deceptions (*Ps 51:6*).
- for protection for those involved in the industry (*use scriptures like Zech. 2:5*).
- for divine connections and contacts.

- divine strategies, creativity and wisdom.
- that it would not be manipulated for personal gain or hidden agendas.
- God to raise up godly men and women in this domain who will champion the cause for the powerless, be a voice for the voiceless, seek truth and reveal it
- yourself, your community, and our nation to be wise consumers of information and opinion (*Prov. 15:18*).
- God to bless the relationship between the church and the media.
- those involved in media, that they may have wisdom, integrity, insight and judgement in their work (*Ex. 31:3*).
- truth and morality to be presented (*Prov. 12:9-22; Eph. 4:29; Phil. 4:8; Mt. 12:36-37*).

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II. Arts, Entertainment and Sport: beauty, refreshment, edification, education

"This life's dim windows of the soul, distort the heavens from pole to pole and goad you to believe a lie, when you see with and not through the eye". - William Blake

"We were created to see through the eye with the conscience, modern capacity is inviting us to see with the eye devoid of a conscience..." - Ravi Zacharias.

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it. Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam and looking at the beam are very different experiences.

"Young people, please hear me; this, to me, is the problem of 20th century man: he no longer knows what to laugh at and no longer knows what to weep at. So, you turn on your television screen and before you know it, you're looking at a seduction yourself. And instead of weeping at it, you're watching in intrigue as the story unfolds. You watch illegitimacies transpire before your eyes and mine, and because Hollywood has convinced us that it is entertainment, we become entertained, rather than sitting there with a crushed and a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And I often wonder, if my Lord Jesus were able to stalk some of the seats of Broadway, or sit in some of the theatres where things are perpetrated and shown to you and me, where jokes are made of His virgin birth, where Christianity is demeaned and mocked, where illegitimacies are glorified and exalted; that which is vulgar is intended to make us laugh, that which is sacred is intended to make us weep, rather than sit there in awe and gratitude for the sacred, what has really happened between the educational system and whatever else is happening, we've lost the differentiation between laughter and tears. It is vitally important what you laugh at. It is vitally important what you weep at. What breaks your heart tells God who you are. What makes you laugh tells God who you are." Ravi Zacharias

"Let me write the songs of a nation - I don't care who writes its laws." Andrew Fletcher, Scottish political activist (1655-1716).

In a speech at the USC Entertainment Law Symposium in 1988, British film producer Baron Puttnam (*Chariots of Fire*, *The Killing Fields*, *The Mission*), reminisced about his own childhood, growing up in the United Kingdom but watching American movies: “Movies are powerful. Good or bad, they tinker around inside your brain. They steal up on you in the darkness of the cinema to form or confirm social attitudes To an almost alarming degree, our political and emotional responses rest for their health in the quality and integrity of the present and future generation of film and television creators I remain entirely convinced of the law of cause and effect. I also firmly suggest that the images of the filmmaker are responsible, frighteningly responsible, for the attitudes and behaviour of the young and overly impressionable.” Whether Christian viewers realize it or not, Hollywood will always influence and shape the values and culture of a generation that is impressionable.

Sir David Frost, OBE (1939-2013), an English journalist and media personality, once humorously but perceptively remarked that “Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn’t have in your house.”

You can see a play in a theatre, on Broadway, turn on the TV to watch a movie or cartoon, or listen to music and “you will find a certain philosophy of life is being endorsed, espoused or questioned”. The arts is the context within which many, and many of the next generation are grappling with philosophy, worldviews and understanding life.

Deut. 31:19-22

“Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behaviour today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.” Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

Name, nature and attributes of God:

God is beautiful. God is Holy. Holiness is beautiful. Therefore art, music and entertainment should be beautiful. Vulgarity, death, destruction, defilement and immorality are not part of God's person and as such are not part of Godly art and entertainment.

1 Chron 16:29

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Ps. 27:4

One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

God is Creator and ultimate Artist.

Gen. 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

He is Potter and Poet (as seen in many of the Psalms).

Isa. 64:8

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we are the work of Your hand.

Jesus was a carpenter.

God perseveres. God is longsuffering. God is purposeful. God is victorious in battle (competition), whilst remaining patient and kind.

Jesus competed against Satan in the wilderness and defeated Satan with the Word of the Lord (Mt. 4:1-11). Jesus went to the cross to do battle against the effects of sin and death:

1 Cor. 15:25-26

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

As believers, we are told that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus ([Rom. 8:37](#)); we are to tear down strongholds ([2 Cor. 10:4](#)); we are to fight the good fight ([1 Tim 6:12](#) [2 Tim. 4:7](#)); and we are to put on the armour of God ([Eph. 6](#)). These are

just a few verses that show us that we are in competition with “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

Some of the attributes to be manifested through this domain include beauty, uniqueness, restoration, joy, edification, comfort and education.

The Purpose:

Some of its purposes include to provide rest, relaxation, restoration (of health) to our body, mind and soul. To provide for beauty, recreation, music and enjoyment. To encourage, edify and exhort. And also, to educate and teach.

“The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” - Johan Sebastian Bach

“The church has shrunk God from the God over every area of life to the God of personal salvation. With this shrinking of God has come our diminished creativity, limited imagination and a superficial understanding of the role of arts in our world”.
Tendai Chitsike

Church leader Chris Wienand wrote: “The demise of the arts in the hearts, minds and lives of the church is surely an indicator that revival has been reduced to a charismatic experience and not the full embodiment of the faith as portrayed by the reformation and its artistic voices”.

Isn't it fascinating that the first mention of someone being “Spirit-filled” was a craftsman by the name of Bezalel, not a prophet or preacher?

Ex. 31:1-5

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary challenges us concerning this passage:

“The Lord announces that He has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, and has filled him with the Spirit of God. To what sacred office, then, is he called? Simply to be a supreme craftsman, the rarest of artisans. This also is a divine gift...So then it appears that the Holy Spirit of God is to be recognized in the work of the carpenter and the jeweler, the apothecary and the tailor. Probably we object to such a statement, so baldly put. But inspiration does not object...It is quite clear that we

must cease to think of the Divine Spirit as inspiring only prayers and hymns and sermons. All that is good and beautiful and wise in human art is the gift of God. We feel that the supreme Artist is audible in the wind among the pines; but is man left to himself when he marshals into more sublime significance the voices of the wind among the organ tubes? At sunrise and sunset, we feel that “On the beautiful mountains the pictures of God are hung”; but is there no revelation of glory and of freshness in other pictures? Once the assertion that a great masterpiece was “inspired” was a clear recognition of the central fire at which all genius lights its lamp: now, alas! It has become little more than a skeptical assumption that Isaiah and Milton are much upon a level.”

D James Kennedy notes: “Living in a post-Christian culture, we see the effects of man’s rejection of God even in art... Art reflects life, and if life to the artist is meaningless, so will art be meaningless.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky took this idea a step further and prophetically proclaimed: “First art will imitate life, then life will imitate art, then life will find its very meaning from the arts...”

2 Samuel 12 records an account of a King, King David committing terrible acts. He had taken another man’s wife, slept with her, impregnated her, and to cover for this had sent her husband Uriah to a sure death on the battlefield. This was a turning point in David’s life, a shocking fall from grace. Now, it is one thing to confront a man who is hardened and unrepentant after adultery and murder. It is quite another together when the man in question is the king who could order another execution. And a king whom up to this moment had led extremely well.

God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, so as to bring about repentance. Even for a prophet of Nathan’s stature, this was no small endeavor.

Tendai Chitsike brings to our attention the unusual and creative way the prophet in accomplishes this challenging task. Nathan chooses to do it with a story.

Nathan’s story was well told and relevant, and it aroused within David powerful emotions. It was so provocative that David, upon hearing of the rich man’s greed declared: ‘That man deserves to die’. The king’s emotions were caught up in the story-line. Nathan then reveals to David that the villain in the story is in fact David himself. This provides a mirror for David and he sees things as they really are. This, then begins the process of David’s repentance, a repentance that arrested a situation that would have only gotten more destructive.

What does the account in 2 Samuel have to do with the arts? Everything. We live in a world hardened by sin's deceitfulness, and often centred on doing "whatever is right in my own eyes" and whatever feels good.

In the same way that God used a prophet to engage with David at multiple levels, we need a prophetic generation of competent artists in all manner of arts to arrest our attention, touch us deeply and bring us back to our senses for good.

The sad reality is that in the last century, the arts have often been a forerunner to changing the culture for the worse in the Western world.

Movies, music and other media are powerfully influencing the generations, transforming cultural norms and worldviews. There are many examples of this, but one obvious one would be sexual ethics.

Apologist Ravi Zacharias comments on the current state of the arts and the current reality we face in our media-saturated culture: "Truth has been relegated to subjectivity; beauty has been subjugated to the beholder; and as millions are idiotized night after night, a global commune has been constructed with the arts enjoying a totalitarian rule."

The problem of course is not with the medium of the arts, but rather with the predominant worldview that shapes much of modern art, and with it the hearts and minds of billions.

We need the Nathans to rise up and influence in this domain. We need the sportsmen and women who will be shining lights and examples in spotlights across the world. We need art and entertainment to reflect the beauty and creativity of our God, to bring refreshment and restoration on multiple levels, rather than defilement and wrong ideology.

Sport

Some purposes of sport –

Competition

Competition teaches valuable lessons and is good. It is common in today's society in some communities to try to eliminate competition. Some children's sporting organizations play games in which no score is kept. Such policies ignore the benefits of direct competition for children such as teaching them to work hard to achieve a goal—and keeping score is one measurement of success. Of course, children must also be taught to be gracious when they are victorious and to give God the glory, but that is also part of healthy competition.

Even some Christians claim that competition is bad because winning makes the loser feel bad. They often refer to what Paul said, “Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:3–5, HCSB). However, we must also consider that Paul used competitive sporting events as illustrations for spiritual truths. In 1 Cor. 9:24–27 he uses competitions among runners and boxers to illustrate the importance of spiritual discipline in one's life. It seems unlikely that the Holy Spirit would inspire the apostle Paul to use something sinful to illustrate how we should have discipline in our lives.

The most extreme form of competition is war. In a battle people are competing for domination, and the consequences are the most severe because people die. Jesus went to the cross to do battle against the effects of sin and death. In the end we are told that Jesus, at His second coming, will defeat all His enemies: “The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ . . . The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh” (Rev. 19:14–15, 21).

As believers, we are told that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:37); we are to tear down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4); we are to fight the good fight (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7); and we are to put on the armour of God (Eph. 6). These are just a few verses that show us that we are in competition with “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

While the Bible does not forbid competition, it does forbid the heart attitudes that so many have when they do compete. The Scripture is clear that we are to do all things for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). "All things" must include competitions and winning as well as losing.

Entertainment by sport (like ballet, movies, shows, etc.).

- What are the types of sports we can watch, what types does glorify God?
Which types definitely do not glorify God (cage fighting, dog fighting, wrestling with the trash talking and arrogance, etc.)
- Some are beautiful to watch, like gymnastics.

Participation – form of recreational companionship

- God has given us all things for our enjoyment (verse)
- Physical exercise – is good for us.

Children involved –

- Opportunities for learning and discipleship:
 - teamwork
 - fruit of the spirit
 - submission to authority
 - obedience to rules
 - attitudes, - like learning how to win and how to lose
 - competition
 - working towards a goal
 - resilience

Lessons –

- God can use it teach us many life lessons:
 - perseverance
 - patience
 - commitment
 - running your own race
 - training
 - help us with competitiveness
 - how to behave (e.g. ref has blown incorrectly against you)
- Even spectators, need to learn how to behave (e.g. Pirates vs Chiefs, Premier League Soccer).

Professional Sportsmanship –

- Excelling and being a role model
- Using influence for the Gospel
NB: to distinguish between talent and calling. Often the talent opens a door for the calling.
- Be a light for Christ. People unfortunately become obsessed with sport. Steroids, cheating, doping, etc.
e.g.s. Barcelona vs Sevilla and Messi last night, Federer.

Eric Liddel before serving as a missionary in China, ran in the 1924 summer Olympics. Liddel demonstrated the kind of attitude one should have when competing. He said, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast! And when I run, I feel His pleasure”.

Competition is good, for many reasons. Healthy competition is good. Unhealthy competition and attitudes are what is not good.

Some prayer points:

- for Christ’s influence in these areas.
- for God to honour and raise up influential actors, singers, sportsmen, artists who stand for Christ (*Col. 2:8*).
- for producers who recognize the need for the family-friendly entertainment
- for the success of godly entertainment and art, that which esteems Godly values and principles (*Zech. 8:16-17*).
- for God to draw influential people to Himself and that they will become ambassadors for Christ.
- for creativity, diligence and excellence that reflects God’s character (*Ex. 36:1*).
- for a spirit of integrity, humility and excellence on Christian sportsmen and entertainers.
- for open doors, larger platforms and greater influence for those involved in these arenas.
- For their character to contain the spotlight and attention
- for labourers to speak to those in media, arts and sporting circles about the love of God.
- for believers in these industries will take every opportunity to use their talents to share Christian values and principles with their fans and audience.