

MEDIA ON THE BRAIN

We see it all around us. Hollywood, popular music, TV, video gaming, spectator sports, social media, and pornography are saturating the lives of God's professed people. But what does the latest science say about the mind-altering effects of 21st century media? And what is the spiritual agenda in the entertainment and advertising industries?

The information uncovered in the pages of this book has helped countless individual people escape the pleasure trap of media addiction, restore healthy relationships, and find the joy of life lived God's way.



*By author, speaker, and teacher,
Scott Ritsema*

www.BeltOfTruthMinistries.com

\$5.99

© Scott Ritsema 2018

The Incredible Journey
PO Box 5101
Dora Creek NSW 2264
www.tij.tv or email info@tij.tv
Phone: 0481 315 101

 **BELT of TRUTH**
MINISTRIES



MEDIA ON THE BRAIN

by author, speaker, and teacher
Scott Ritsema

MEDIA

ON THE BRAIN

Copyright © 2018
by Scott Ritsema

All Rights Reserved.

Published
by Scott Ritsema

Scripture quotations are taken from the New King
James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from
the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®
Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Text design by Greg Solie • Altamont Graphics

ISBN: 978-1-5136-2400-6

Contents

Chapter 1	How to Be Human Again	5
Chapter 2	Don't Get Owned	7
Chapter 3	I Admit It: I'm an Addict	9
Chapter 4	A Brain-Damaged Society	11
Chapter 5	From Desensitized to Resensitized	13
Chapter 6	The Counterfeit Reality	15
Chapter 7	An Altered Consciousness	17
Chapter 8	High Priests of a New Religion	18
Chapter 9	Commanded by Another Force	20
Chapter 10	A New Church in the Wild	22
Chapter 11	Musical Manipulation	24
Chapter 12	Distracted	25
Chapter 13	Why the Bible Seems Boring	28
Chapter 14	Escaping the Pleasure Trap	30

Chapter 1. How to Be Human Again

Years ago, just before the highly-anticipated release of the iPad, the late Steve Jobs was asked by a journalist, “So, your kids must love the iPad?” The journalist assumed, of course, that the children of the founder of Apple must enjoy unrivaled screen time with constant access to the latest tech devices.

Well, not exactly. Steve Jobs explained in the interview that his children had never used an iPad! Far from being a house littered with devices where all eyes are continually glued to screens, the home of the CEO of Apple was a place where you would find family members eating meals together and conversing about meaningful things.

For the rest of us, though, it seems that entertainment and social media have almost totally saturated our lives. And that begs the question: Is it possible that modern media, even with all of its benefits and conveniences, has become the greatest distraction from the things most meaningful in life?

The average teen now spends 9 hours per day on entertainment and social media, with the average parent logging nearly 8 hours per day of entertainment. Even the toddlers now use mobile devices; 97% of them are being given regular screen time, most of them with zero interaction with their parents while using the media. The average child will spend more time watching television by the age of 6 than he will spend in conversation with his father in his entire lifetime.

Deuteronomy 6:7 portrays human relationships in a very different way. Rather than merely being a shallow, screen-based social experience of text messages and social media posts, God designed the family to be a place where, as a family, you “talk of [God’s commandments] when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Morning and evening, throughout the day, walking and talking, eating and worshipping *together*.

Fast forward to the 21st century where researchers were astounded at what they found when they examined the brains of enthused

iPhone users. The brain scans showed a brain that was in a literal *love relationship*... with the iPhone—not that they just liked the phone or merely enjoyed the phone, but literally, while interacting with their phones, the same brain circuitry was activated as when you are interacting with and loving a family member or spouse!

When we start having a love relationship with a piece of hardware, while spending less and less time with our loved ones, it becomes apparent that Matthew 24:12 is being fulfilled—in the last days “the love of most will grow cold.”

It is a terrible irony that social media, supposedly having produced the most socially connected generation in history, has only given rise to the highest rates of loneliness ever recorded. It comes as no surprise, then, that heavy social media users are now 2.7 times more likely to be depressed than those who use less social media.

You know the culture is struggling spiritually and socially when you see these odd manifestations cropping up: A South Korean inventor recently revealed a couch with mechanical arms that can “hug” you so that you feel like you are being held warm and close by a loved one. Then there’s the cuddling with strangers craze—a real thing. Lonely? Hire a professional cuddler. They’ve also now invented “social robots” for pre-schoolers and the elderly to have a social experience... with a robot? These strange phenomena didn’t exist just a few years ago. They reveal a deep social/spiritual deficit that is going unfulfilled by the shallow online ‘social’ experience. It’s looking more and more like we desperately need to replace the virtual with the real—by returning to God’s design for human relationships (e.g. the family, the church).

Amazingly, the founding president of Facebook, Sean Parker, regretfully admitted that Facebook was actually designed in a way to deliberately get users hooked by “exploiting a vulnerability in human psychology... We need to sort of give you a little dopamine hit every once in a while.” He concluded, remorsefully, “God only knows what it’s doing to our children’s brains.”

Indeed, God does know how our brains are being affected by modern media. As our loving Creator, God designed our brains to experience abundant joy in Him (John 10:10), and so He is the only one with the antidote to our modern media saturation problem.

The beauty of nature, the joy of family relationships, tasty and nutritious food, serving others, study of His Word, physical labor, gardening, worship, Sabbath rest—every single way that He created for us to live an abundant life has actually been shown in recent research studies to increase happiness levels.

Chapter 2. Don’t Get Owned

Through the channel of ... mesmerism, he [Satan] comes more directly to the people of this generation, and works with that power which is to characterize his efforts near the close of probation. —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 351

When I was in high school, my friends and I were well aware of the herd mentality of most Americans. Why, we wondered, does everybody act and talk and dress to fit into society’s mold? What about individuality and independent thought?

As a high school teacher in my 20s, my passion to see the autonomous human mind thinking freely and pursuing God individually only grew. “Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18). And, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The adversary, however, doesn’t respect the freedom of your mind. While the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, the evil spirit is seeking to *take* control, to take captive our minds (see Col 2:8). And he has had tremendous success, as the population seems to be under a mass delusion, “conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2).

And what better place to take captive the minds of the masses than modern media?

Edward Bernays, the founder of modern advertising, pondered the enormous power possessed by the media masters nearly a hundred years ago when he stated: “If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it?” (*Propaganda*, p. 71). Controlling us without our

knowledge? The first time I read that quotation, my jaw hit the floor. He's admitting it! Something else he said was just as chilling:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government, which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. —*Propaganda*, p. 37

Now if that's the kind of control that government and media possessed at the genesis of the advertising industry nearly a century ago, how much more control over our minds can they exercise using the high-tech, 21st century, multi-billion dollar propaganda tools at their disposal today—tools that Bernays could have only dreamed of using?

Let's take just one example of how the big media of today are programing the masses. Hypnotism, also known as mesmerism, was very popular in the 19th century. Not very many of us know people who go to a hypnotist regularly for therapy sessions, so it doesn't seem very popular today. But the opening quotation in this chapter definitely predicted that near the end of this earth's history (i.e. right now), Satan would use mesmerism as one of his deceptive methods. Not surprisingly, this quotation is being fulfilled today through a mass hypnosis programing medium.

You sit down to enjoy your favorite TV show or movie. Unknown to your conscious mind, within minutes of viewing theatrical style entertainment television, your brain loses high-frequency critical thinking brain waves (called beta waves), and slips down into a slower, more relaxed and receptive pattern of brain waves (called alpha waves). This is the same altered state of consciousness that hypnotists induce when doing suggestion therapy upon their patients. Yes, you read that correctly. Television is literally a hypnotic device.

It may sound crazy, but it has been known for decades that the rapid frame of reference change in the theatrical shows and movies

cause flashes of light that alter your state of consciousness, lulling you into a trance. A normal brain that produces beta waves is able to think critically; a hypnotized brain does not have a moral filter and cannot properly reason through what is being presented.

Professional hypnotist Mark J. Ryan goes even further and explains that "all Hollywood studios" are using sophisticated hypnotic methods of reaching your subconscious mind in order to plant ideas within you. Don't take my word for it. On disc 2 of my *Media on the Brain* DVD set, you can listen to Ryan explain how his craft is used in the movie making of today's most popular films.

The founder of one big entertainment outlet once stated, "At MTV, we don't shoot for the 14-year-olds. We own them." They brag about it. The bottom line is this: the more media we consume, the more manipulated we are. Why would we choose to open our minds to hypnotic trances conducted by complete strangers who want nothing more than our money and our allegiance to their worldview?

It is by beholding their material that we become their slaves. And God warns us to not be conformed by them (see Romans 12:2, Colossians 2:8). He wants to break our conditioning, free our minds, and turn our eyes upon Jesus. For it is by beholding Him that we become changed. "And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Chapter 3. I Admit It: I'm an Addict

For decades, society has issued strong warnings about the dangers of addictions. And rightly so. Millions of lives have been ruined and shortened by smoking, alcohol, and drug addictions. "Say NO to Drugs!" "This is your brain on drugs!" We've heard the warnings. Praise God!

But the latest research is finding that process addictions such as gambling, eating unhealthful food, shopping, pornography, and video gaming can be even more addictive than the traditional chemical addictions.

For example, the fifth edition of the *Diagnostics and Statistics Manual* used by psychiatrists to diagnose addictions has finally

identified video gaming as an addiction. If you or somebody you know can't help but spend hours a day gaming, you know exactly how serious this problem can become. There are 5 million gamers in America who are playing over 40 hours per week. And according to the American Medical Association, there are 19 million gaming addicts. That's far more than the 12 million alcoholics. We don't give alcohol to kids, but we do give a gaming console to 83% of American children. Yet screen-based entertainment is actually more addictive and harmful than cigarettes and alcohol.

Listen to the words of Nicolas Kardaras, author of the book, *Glow Kids*: "I've worked with hundreds of heroin addicts... and what I can say is that it's easier to treat a heroin addict than a true screen addict."

It's no surprise that the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended zero television for toddlers and why the government of France has gone even further and made it illegal to air television aimed at children under three.

We should take these warnings seriously, because anything that is bad for the developing brain is also harmful to the adult brain. The brain is always developing, always changing and adapting. The teenage brain, particularly, is in the most important developmental phase ever, wiring up circuits for self-control that will foreshadow the kind of people they will be for the rest of their lives.

Researcher George Barna conducted surveys to determine whether Americans are actually addicted to media and entertainment. He used the seven-question survey used by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to diagnose an addiction and applied those same questions to peoples' dependence on entertainment media. What he found was absolutely stunning. He found that the *majority* of Americans actually qualify as having an addiction to media, and that media is *the most serious and widespread addiction in America today*.

Pick your favorite media or entertainment device. Wondering if you're addicted? If you're engaged in a compulsive behavior in order to gain short-term pleasure, take this seven-question survey to see if you have an addiction. If you can answer yes to three of these, the APA says you would fit the description of an addict.

1. Do you seek out larger quantities of the media use in question than you used to in order get the same effects of pleasure?
2. Do you ever feel withdrawal symptoms after stopping its use, or do you ever use any other substance or activity to prevent these symptoms?
3. Do you ever use more of it than you intended?
4. Have you ever tried to reduce your usage and found that you cannot, or that soon you are using it at the same level again?
5. Do you spend a great deal of time thinking about and using it?
6. Has it ever caused you to stop participating in worthwhile activities that you used to enjoy?
7. Have you ever continued to use it even in the face of adverse social or health consequences?

A man lay in his warm, cozy bed on a cold winter night. As it got a little warmer in his bedroom, his sleep deepened. At midnight, his neighbor burst through the door screaming! "Your house is on fire! Get out of here!"

Sometimes it's good to hear bad news. To admit that you're hurting your mind and character, and that you are powerless over an addiction is hard. But this bad news just might save your soul in the end.

Chapter 4. A Brain-Damaged Society

Why does our society seem so out of control? Fear, stress, lust, worry, appetite, anxiety, anger, aggression, irritability, insecurity—these things seem to dominate our lives. And we find ourselves having a difficult time exercising proper reason, sound judgment, and self-control. We find it difficult to put others before ourselves and walk with Christ in maturity of spirituality and morality.

All of this can be explained by looking at two areas of the brain—the frontal lobe and the limbic system. All those good things

(reason, conscience, self-control, empathy, altruism, spirituality, morality) are frontal brain functions. And all of those emotions and impulses that seem to get the best of us take place in the brain's limbic system.

Simply put, the way to gain victory in our spiritual life is to develop a strong frontal lobe that can calm and tame that limbic system.

There are many ways to improve the frontal lobe—sufficient sleep, exercise, a good diet, and choosing healthy thought patterns, to name a few. But the biggest frontal lobe killer is something else altogether. And it just so happens to exercise the limbic system simultaneously. What is it? You guessed it: entertainment media.

Whether it's theatrical style entertainment television, violent video games, or the popular musical styles of today, these media literally shut down frontal lobe function and exercise limbic circuits. And it comes as no surprise that the area of the brain that we exercise will strengthen, and the area of the brain we turn off will become more and more weak.

In fact, recent research conclusively demonstrated that playing violent video games for only ten hours in one week results in weaker prefrontal brain function. If the frontal lobe is weakened after only one week, imagine what playing for hour after hour, month after month, year after year will do to this essential part of the brain! It is not a stretch to say that we are literally a brain-damaged society.

How about some good news? Recent research has found that if you spend just 12 minutes per day thinking about our God of love, you will experience a growth and strengthening in your frontal lobe altruism/empathy circuits.

Salvation, as defined in Romans 12:2, is being transformed, having our minds renewed by God. Sadly, we've been degrading our minds, not renewing them. Simply put, the more entertainment media we consume, the more we're damaging our characters.

If you want victory over fear, stress, lust, worry, anxiety, aggression, irritability, appetite, insecurity, or other emotions and impulses, and if you want more self-control, spirituality, morality, reasoning powers, altruism, and empathy, then science tells us that the first thing to do is to turn off the entertainment media, and instead, to contemplate our God of love each day.

Chapter 5. From Desensitized to Resensitized

They strapped the monkey down, hooked up his brain to the monitor, and began recording his brain activity while he was eating peanuts. With that brain scan recorded the scientists took a break.

During the break while the monkey was still hooked up, one of the scientists began to eat a few peanuts. And the monkey watched the peanuts being eaten. "This brain scan looks familiar," said an observant researcher, as he viewed the monkey's brain activity while the monkey watched the peanuts being eaten. "Bring up the scan of the monkey's brain that we recorded while he was eating peanuts," he said. They compared the two brain scans— monkey brain while *eating* peanuts versus monkey brain while *watching* peanuts being eaten.

All eyes were glued to these two brain scans as the scientists stood shocked and amazed. They had discovered that the two brain scans were identical! The monkey's brain while eating peanuts looked exactly the same as the monkey's brain while watching peanuts being eaten. They had just made one of the most groundbreaking discoveries of modern times. They found that what we see with our eyes is interpreted by the brain as if we are not merely seeing, but actually *doing* the activity being watched.

The typical American child views over 200,000 acts of violence and 79,500 scenes of a sexual nature on television by the age of 18. Think about those 279,500 scenes of immorality and violence that we've seen—no, not just seen, but that we've *experienced* in a real way, neurologically speaking. Is this going to help us in our walk with Christ?

We've all grown up with this stuff, though. People in our religious community whom we respect don't seem to have a problem with a little bit of entertainment. And those who preach against it seem so grumpy and legalistic. It's no big deal, right?

Let's allow God to answer that question. Not me, not you, not your parents or pastors or anybody else.

1 John 2:15 says, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If we are entertained by and attracted to the

worldly entertainment, if we love it, then the straight testimony given is that we actually don't love God.

Those strong words were a wake-up call for me at one point in my life. I was like the typical American in my media choices. But then I came across a thought-provoking question in Isaiah. Isaiah asks, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14). In other words, who will be able to go to heaven and stand in the presence of our God who is a consuming fire? (See Hebrews 12:29.) The answer comes back: "Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil" (Isaiah 33:15). In other words, the evil that comes in through the eyes and ears will put people so out of harmony with God that they will be tormented and consumed, rather than glorified, in His presence.

If we're not repulsed by the immorality displayed in the entertainment media of today, we need to stop and ask how we've become so desensitized.

A young Amish man once left his Amish community and viewed the first movie of his life. It was an old Western, and quite tame by today's standards. After seeing somebody get shot in that movie, his face turned pale, he ran out of the house, and he literally threw up. My response when I heard that story was, "Wow, he is weird." But really, the Amish are living more in harmony with God's pattern; they're not raised with television. So his response is a little window into what is the *normal* human response to seeing worldly violence portrayed.

We, on the other hand, are desensitized by the media and think nothing of violence. We are the weird ones. We are like the proverbial frog in the pot—the water was turned on very low at first, and now we're boiling to death in the water. But the Amish kid who was not slowly desensitized recognized it for what it was. He 'jumped out' of the pot of boiling water.

Let your prayer be with the psalmist: "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things" (Psalm 119:37). And may we turn our eyes upon Jesus, that the things of this world will lose their attraction.

I want to love the things of heaven and hate the things of this world; because if I love the things of this world, I would hate being in heaven.

Chapter 6. The Counterfeit Reality

If you're like many people, you're puzzled by how 5 million people in America can spend over 40 hours a week playing video games. In order to help free a few of the 19 million gaming addicts in America, a brief education on the addictive nature of gaming is an important first step.

The truth is that games offer the gamer a lot of things that they aren't getting out of the real world—community and belonging; a sense of accomplishment; an escape from real world problems; an opportunity to take on a new persona; a release of aggression; an opportunity to magnify competitive impulses; a world of discovery; a dramatic story to be lived out; and, of course, tremendously pleasurable experiences.

In a way, the video game offers the world. Not the real world, though, but something that seems even better.

But it's a manufactured counterfeit that usurps the reality that God has given us to live. The trade-off is that the gamer must exit the real or "primary" world in order to experience this alternate reality or "secondary" world. Life as God designed it is sacrificed, set aside, and traded in for a cheap, virtual reality.

The game designer is a competitor against the Creator, taking upon himself the usurped role of a creator—literally crafting an existence, creating a world within which many are living hours of their life.

And for the gamer, the lure into this imaginary world is almost irresistible. The gaming world enchants him, because in a game he can be more than human—better than human. Neils Clark, former gaming addict and renowned expert on gaming, explains that the game literally "casts a spell" on the gamer. He continues:

Our minds are set free to explore and exercise heightened abilities and senses in a space that still looks and feels real.... Games take our senses beyond the confines of reality.... At the same time, those sensations also allow the inflation and extension of our consciousness. (*Game Addiction*, p. 69, 71).

Can you hear the whisper of the serpent? “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). And for the gamer, this imaginary world is completely real. The visual system within the brain does not know how to discern between reality and fantasy. To the brain, it’s really not a game at all. It’s a real experience for the eyes, heart, brain, and nervous system.

The strongly addicted player relates to the world inside the game as the more important place to be. And the real world becomes merely a necessary evil. He is robbed of life and sucked into the game.

Even video game ads have betrayed the real aim of the gaming industry. In one Playstation advertisement, gamers say, “I live a double life,” and “I set morality aside.” Another video game ad invites players to “live the life you’ve always dreamed of without any risk or danger to yourself.”

But one doesn’t need to be a heavy game user to be concerned. Recent research has demonstrated several frightening facts. 1) Only ten hours of gaming in one week will weaken pre-frontal brain function. 2) Violent games activate the anger centers and weaken the conscience. 3) Even moderately aggressive games make gamers have more aggressive thoughts.

Gaming is a uniquely dangerous addiction for three reasons. 1) It’s socially acceptable. 83% of kids have a console in their home. 2) There is no satiation mechanism as with food and drugs. You can just keep playing all night. 3) There is endless novelty and exciting new discoveries and accomplishments in the game.

The typical gamer has tremendous talent. And God has an epic mission for today’s gamers—a mission within His reality and within His story. The more we say “No” to the counterfeit realities Satan presents to us, and the more we explore God’s reality, the more interesting and exciting real life becomes.

Dare to begin now, and you’ll find that this great quest goes universal and continues for the ceaseless ages of eternity.

Chapter 7. An Altered Consciousness

In a previous chapter we uncovered the alarming fact that Hollywood and the advertising industry are using literally hypnotic methods to access and influence the subconscious minds of the people.

We also saw that entertainment media has a degrading effect on the frontal lobe (our spiritual organ), while at the same time enhancing the brain’s limbic system, the seat of nearly all of our struggles with sin.

It comes as no surprise that Hollywood and Madison Avenue are up to no good. But what surprises many is that even video game designers are fully aware of what they’re doing.

Remember that statistic that 19 million Americans are addicted to video games? Here’s what one anonymous game designer said: “We make it just like gambling” (*Game Addiction*, p. 84).

Other anonymous game designers have admitted in interviews to using the same nefarious methods as the advertising industry to keep the gamer hooked, and have even admitted that their goal is to manipulate your body chemistry by making you feel like you’re literally going to die while playing the game. (*Times of Asia*, May 10, 1999.)

But the gaming world gets much more serious than game designers knowingly getting players addicted to the game and living an immoral double life. Japanese researchers found that regular gamers, while playing the game, lose high frequency beta brain wave activity. In other words, they slip into an altered state of consciousness upon beginning the game. What’s even scarier is that heavy game users in this study failed to return to normal beta wave activity even after the game was turned off. Dr. Akio Mori observed that the brains of heavy gamers looked more like somebody suffering from dementia than someone with a normal human brain.

Gamers have observed that gaming can be a meditative experience. And top game designers, such as Jane McGonigal, are actual proponents of eastern (new age) meditation as a means for bringing world peace. It comes as no surprise, then, that McGonigal

has advocated for more video game playing to bring about a better world, because the state of consciousness that the gamer slips into is akin to that of a Buddhist meditative trance.

Over a hundred years ago, God warned His people about mesmerism in the last days. Likewise, He has warned us to watch out for games and theatrical performances, which serve to confuse the senses and eclipse the light of God.

Satan's work is to lead men to ignore God, to so engross and absorb the mind that God will not be in their thoughts. The education they have received has been of a character to confuse the mind, and eclipse the true light. Satan does not wish the people to have a knowledge of God; and if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the young that human beings will perish in darkness while light shines all about them, he is well pleased.

—*Review and Herald*, March 13, 1900.

Chapter 8. High Priests of a New Religion

Over half a century ago, social philosopher Bertrand Russell called the producers of Hollywood "the high priests of a new religion." Have you ever wondered who is producing the entertainment to which we're opening our minds? Who are these high priests of a new religion?

Screenwriter Paul Schraeder put it very bluntly when he said, "We are there to thumb our nose at your values. We don't care if you like us. We don't like you.... People think that Hollywood has principles, morals, and values. It doesn't."

Film maker Kevin Smith also admitted, "I always like to think of it as like, I've got 'em sittin' there— whip a little message at 'em. Whip a little moral at 'em. Whip a little of what my view of the world is. Because that's what every good filmmaker does."

It shouldn't surprise us that all Hollywood filmmakers are whipping their morals at us. After all, if you could present a message to millions of people, wouldn't you include your worldview?

But that raises a question. What is the worldview in Hollywood? Studies have found that 99%+ of sexual messaging in movies is not promoting biblical sexuality. Another study discovered the alarming fact that less than 3% of Hollywood insiders regularly attend religious services of any kind. So it's certain that their worldview is not yours.

But don't be fooled. Hollywood is not atheist. Far from it. Some of the film industry's first actors and actresses were actually receiving the scripts of the movies via spiritual channeling, trances, and séances. The wife of actor, Rudolph Valentino, would hold a séance literally every night. And what come from the spirits they were communicating with? The script for the film they were to record. Similarly, we are told by Mae West's psychic that the actress would literally pace the room asking for the "Forces" to come to her and help her write the script, and then she would dictate the script in a trance while lying in bed.

Even modern actors have admitted their involvement in spiritualism and demonic possession:

Oprah Winfrey: "This is how I see acting.... I use my body to be a carrier for the spirits of those who have come before me.... I tried to empty myself and let the spirit ... inhabit me."

Peter Sellers: "It's rather like being a medium and laying yourself wide open and saying, I want a character to inhabit my body or I want a character to take charge of me so that I can produce what I hope to produce."

Robin Williams: "But there's also that thing—it is possession. In the old days you'd be burned for it..., but there's something empowering about it.... You really can become this other force."

Denzel Washington: "Basically what I did was got on my knees and sort of communicated with the spirits, and when I came out I was in charge... I couldn't have acted that."

After reading these quotes, the Christian will reasonably avoid viewing anything by these actors to make sure to steer clear of dabbling in the occult and being entertained by demons. However, merely avoiding these specific actors isn't sufficient, given the testimony of insider Fairuza Balk, star of a movie on witchcraft, who stated, "A lot of actors ... who don't mention their names, of course, are very much into witchcraft."

If a lot of actors are closet occultists, we can be certain that even apparently morally innocuous Hollywood films are not spiritually safe for Christians.

The Bible teaches that we can claim protection from Satan's demonic intrusion into our lives and our homes. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). But there's a condition attached to that verse. In the preceding sentence we read, "Therefore submit to God." God is longing to protect us from Satan's devices. But only when we confess, repent, and submit to Him can we claim His protection.

Chapter 9. Commanded by Another Force

Is the music industry a safe place for Christians? Is secular music appropriate entertainment for people who want to please God? A brief history of popular music will help us answer that essential question.

The origins of the music industry began at the crossroads of highways 61 and 49 where, to this day, visitors pay homage to Robert Johnson's famous deal to sell his soul to the devil. Johnson, the inventor of the rhythm & blues-turned-rock & roll style guitar, then passed the torch to musicians such as Little Richard, who admitted, "I was directed and commanded by another power. The power of darkness ... that a lot of people don't believe exists. The power of the Devil. Satan."

And the industry has not become any less demonic in the succeeding decades. The following quotations are just a sampling of those musicians who have admitted demonic possession while writing and performing:

The Beatles' John Lennon: "I felt like a hollow temple filled with many spirits, each one passing through me, each inhabiting me for a little time and then leaving to be replaced by another."

The Rolling Stones' Keith Richards: "They think you wrote it.... Really, you are just a medium.... Like being at a séance.... Songs come to me en masse, I didn't do anything except to happen to have been awake when it arrived."

Cream's Ginger Baker: "It happens to us quite often—it feels as though I'm not playing my instrument; something else is playing it and that same thing is playing all three of our instruments. That's what I mean when I say it's frightening sometimes.... We'll all play the same phrase out of nowhere. It happens very often with us."

Michael Jackson: "I have my own secret room, with a moving wall and mirrors. That's where I talk to Lee [Liberaci]. His is the voice I hear in there. I feel his presence so very close to me."

Beyonce: "When I see a video of myself on stage or TV, I'm like, 'Who is that girl? That's not me, I wouldn't dare do that.' 'I have someone else that takes over when ... I'm on stage.' 'When I'm on stage I'm ... not afraid of my sexuality. The tone of my voice gets different, and I'm fearless. I'm just a different person.' 'Things I do when performing I would never do normally.... I have out-of-body experiences. If I cut my leg, if I fall, I don't even feel it...I'm not aware of my face or my body.'"

Have you ever wondered why so many popular 21st century musicians employ eye symbolism in their dances, artwork, and photo ops? Listen to the admissions of guitarist Carlos Santana:

"In my meditations, the entity called Metatron said, 'We want to hook you back to the radio-airwave frequency ... to reach junior high schools, high schools, and universities. Once you reach them ... we want you to present them with a new form of existence.'"

What form of existence are the demons trying to get the youth to accept? In Santana's words: "Remember your divinity." In other words: you can be like God. We've heard that somewhere before (see Genesis 3). And "Metatron" is represented by—you guessed it—the "eye inside the triangle."

In closing, take a guess as to who said the following: "We were doing witchcraft, trying to do witchcraft music." "I don't consider Lucifer an evil force—I feel his presence with the music—I feel like he comes and sits on my piano." Open Satanists, such as Ozzy Osbourne and Marilyn Manson? No. These quotes are from Brian Wilson (the Beach Boys) and Tori Amos—musicians whom many thought were spiritually safe!

The modern popular secular music industry is the devil's territory and has been since the very beginning. I beg you to stay

away from this horrifically satanic environment. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

Chapter 10. A New Church in the Wild

Nearly 100 years ago, a man named Aleister Crowley (the top Satanist of the 20th century) anointed himself as “Satan’s chief of staff.” The BBC subsequently called him “The wickedest man in the world.”

I’ll spare you the horrific details, but he proclaimed that an army of youth could be raised up to bring in the new age, and that one could become a genius in music by practicing his satanism. He advocated a “do what thou wilt” philosophy of complete hedonism. And, just like many of the movie scripts and songs of the 20th century, Crowley’s *Book of the Law* was channeled by demonic inspiration. Crowley once wrote, “I want blasphemy, rape, murder, revolution, ANYTHING STRONG.”

It comes as no surprise that the music industry has fulfilled Crowley’s legacy. Indeed, a generation of pleasure-seekers has been raised up—an army of youth who are bringing in an age of spiritualism.

Open Crowley devotees have spanned the spectrum of musical artists from Ozzy Osbourne and Jim Morrison to Sammy Davis, Jr. and Sting. But most importantly, the Hip Hop community is now the most prominent in carrying Crowley’s torch forward.

Jayzee, who refers to himself with a blasphemous name, has produced a clothing line displaying all manner of occult symbolism. Most significantly, though, his sweatshirt displaying Crowley’s credo “Do what thou wilt,” went viral on the internet. To make matters worse, his song, “No Church in the Wild,” states, “We formed a new religion” and goes on to say that *loving desire* is their “scripture,” and that practicing monogamy is a curse to “love”—a twisted, hedonistic version of love, that is.

There’s no doubting Jayzee’s loyalty. But what about the rest of the music industry? If you do a brief review of the lyrics of the top bands and the top songs of the past decades, you’ll find the “do what

thou wilt” philosophy running through it all—from Frank Sinatra’s “I did it my way” (identified as the most satanic song of the century by the founder of the Church of Satan, Anton Lavey) to the “follow your heart” mantra of the 1990s to the blatant hedonism of 21st century pop music. Scores of songs have obvious and open references to the satanic philosophy of Crowley, and hundreds more songs, by the message they present, reflect a blatant Crowleynian influence.

I recently spoke with a pastor who had a revealing conversation with a practicing witch. The witch bragged that he could get women to cheat on their husbands with any man who pays him to cast powerful spells on her. The pastor said to the witch, “You wouldn’t be able to get my wife to cheat on me, because we’re Christians.”

“I get Christians all the time,” the witch replied.

“Not my family,” said the pastor.

“OK,” the witch said, “let me ask you a question.” He then proceeded to ask what kind of media and reading material he and his wife consumed. The pastor explained that they avoid all worldly things. The witch then said, “OK, I concede the point. You are protected. But most Christians don’t answer me that way.”

Can you see that most Christians are giving the devil a key to their homes? By the music we listen to, the games we play, and the videos we watch, we’re not living in submission to God, and we can’t claim His protection. But when we remove these evil things from our lives and our homes—the demonic, mind-altering, and brain-damaging entertainment from Hollywood, the music industry, and the gaming industry—in other words, when we lay it all on the altar, and dispense with anything that is not pure and holy—then, and only then, can we know that we’re living firmly in God’s camp, and that we are in a holy and protected atmosphere where God’s angels delight to dwell.

In sharing the *Media on the Brain* seminar at churches, I’ve spoken with numerous individuals who faced demonic experiences in their homes, only to discover that after purging their lives of worldly things, the oppression ceased, and they had peace in their homes again.

It’s time to ask ourselves a serious question: Is the “fun” of that entertainment really worth risking our souls?

Chapter 11. Musical Manipulation

Music was definitely my idol. When I was in high school, I played bass guitar in a pop punk band in Michigan. My devotion to my favorite bands far exceeded my devotion to Christ, and music consumed more of my thoughts and time than all my spiritual pursuits combined.

I now understand why I was so hooked. Brain scientists and musicologists are now explaining the addictive effects of popular musical styles. Aerosmith's Steven Tyler summed it up well when he said, "Rock music is the strongest drug in the world." That's why the thought of being without your favorite bands and singers is nearly unthinkable. We get addicted!

Billy Joel admitted, after years in Rock n' Roll, "Music ... has the power to arouse, it has the power to frighten [and has] the power to make people profane. You know, all those things they were saying about Rock n' Roll in the early days— 'Oooooohh, it's gonna subvert our youth, it's gonna make 'em all wanna have sex, it's gonna make 'em all go crazy'—they were right!"

To make matters worse, musicians and scholars have pointed out that the kinds and the quantities of rhythms being used in most of today's popular music actually produce a spiritualistic response. In Voodoo, for example, heavily rhythmic music facilitates demonic possession.

And today we're singing Christian words to that very music!

Little Richard, 1950s rock musician, admitted: "My true belief about Rock n' Roll is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic. A lot of the beats in music today are taken from Voodoo, from the Voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you'll see that this is true."

Musician Jimi Hendrix confesses, "We try to make our music so loose and hard-hitting so that it hits your soul hard enough to make it open."

Through this type of music, our souls are opened, our frontal lobes bypassed, and our brains are in an altered state of consciousness. Hendrix explains, "You can hypnotize people with

the music and when you get them at their weakest point, you can preach into the subconscious what you want to say."

Listen to what science and scholarly testimony say about music.

A.P. Merriam: "There is probably no other human cultural activity, which is so all-pervasive and which reaches into, shapes, and often controls so much of human behavior."

Dr. Richard Pelligrino: "Take it from a brain guy. In 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

There is nothing like music to move people's emotions and manipulate their thoughts and behavior. Have you ever wondered how Satan will get the entire world (minus a few faithful Christians) to follow the beast? There must be something going on beyond human reason and economic or social pressures.

Ancient Babylon had an image, a false worship system, and a death decree. Last days Babylon also has an image to the beast, a false worship system, and a death decree. What got everybody in ancient Babylon to fall down and worship the image? Music. So it's no surprise that music—the gift that was given to Lucifer in heaven—will be employed as Satan's method of herding the masses into the false worship system of the last days.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not become different from their peers on the day they stood for the Lord while all others worshiped the image. If they'd been talking like the Babylonians talked, eating what Babylonians ate, and listening to what Babylonians listened to, they would have bowed like the Babylonians bowed.

The Bible says, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Chapter 12. Distracted

We live in a media-saturated society. Technological tools can be a great blessing when used to glorify God and win souls. But are social media, smart phones, texting, and spectator sports

drawing us closer to Christ and helping us witness to others? Or are these often a distraction from the voice of God and our mission in life?

I was a huge sports fan. I never missed a Michigan State basketball game. But the conviction came strong: Would Jesus and the apostles, the reformers and the pioneers spend four hours a week watching basketball? Aren't we supposed to be on a mission for God? The Bible says, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).

To be honest, I had to admit that I rarely thought of God or the mission while watching basketball. Rather, I was absorbed in the thrill of the game, the sheer pleasure of watching.

Then I found some interesting research that showed a 25% increase in heart attacks on a big game day. With the excitement of action, the body enters fight or flight mode, releasing a cascade of stress hormones (similar to gaming or watching an exciting movie), preparing the body to exert tremendous energy, for example, in fighting off a lion. Sitting on the couch is the last thing we should do under such circumstances.

Looking back, I realize that the sports world was not exerting a holy influence on me. It was a competitive, "I'm-better-than-you" world. The advertising and cheerleading promoted anything but holy thoughts, and the attitudes modeled by coaches, fans, and players were anything but Christ-like. When I found myself hoping for somebody else to perform poorly, I knew I was firmly in the camp of the enemy.

For others, it's not sports, but social media that consumes them. Rather than using social media in balance and for the purpose of blessing and encouraging others and witnessing, do you have a spirit of gossip, lust, or covetousness when on Facebook? Are you on there all the time or compulsively responding to notifications?

Studies have demonstrated a number of negative social and psychological consequences of social media use such as increases in relational jealousy, narcissism, and other destructive emotional dynamics. For most people, far from being something that draws people closer to Christ, social media is another distraction, another counterfeit reality.

Why is it that the most connected generation in history has become the loneliest generation in history? Maybe it's a counterfeit 'social' experience.

Or maybe it's your iPhone. Brain studies have shown that people are literally in love with their iPhones. The area of the brain associated with relational attachment is activated when thinking about the phone! That's just not ok.

The average teen sends 3,000–4,000 texts per month. Could this useful device also be a distraction from developing skills in real human communication, and bonding in personal relationships? But even more seriously, does texting interrupt your personal devotional time with the Lord? Let the phone serve you, rather than you serving the phone.

We have a tough time enforcing boundaries. One study found that answering emails and phones compulsively mirrors the behavior of an addict. They had office employees take an IQ test, and they were told not to answer their cell phone or open the emails that were coming in during the test. The test-takers couldn't help but respond, even to their own detriment on the test. Being distracted reduced their score by 10 IQ points—the same amount of reduction from being high on marijuana or losing an entire night's sleep!

The research shows that those who think they can multi-task with electronic devices are actually worse at 1) switching from one job to another, 2) retaining memory, and 3) paying attention. Of course, we can walk and chew gum at the same time since these tasks don't require focus, but the brain cannot be 100% focused on more than one activity that requires thought.

The majority of Gideon's soldiers were rejected because they knelt down to drink the water. They were consumed with their own satisfaction to the point that they took their eyes off the bigger mission and battle. If we're doing anything that causes us to neglect God, we need to re-think that activity. And if we're consuming hours of time on things unrelated to the work of God, it is time to heed the counsel of the apostle Paul: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15, 16, NIV).

Chapter 13. Why the Bible Seems Boring

In my studies, I've found that Christian youth in the schools I've taught at spend an average of 25 times more hours per month on TV and video gaming than on their personal devotions and Bible study. In other words, 25 hours of the world for every one hour of the Word. The numbers would be even bleaker if we counted other media distractions. How did we get to this point?

Many people find the Bible to be uninteresting. While that is their true subjective experience, objectively speaking, the Bible is the most interesting pursuit imaginable. It reveals the Creator and explains the cosmic drama that is unfolding all around us. It not only defines reality, but defines us and gives us hope for our fallen condition. How can we find the most-read book in history boring? Why don't we voraciously study the very book that millions throughout history have spent years exploring and examining?

The simple answer is found in a Kaiser Family Foundation study, conducted in 2010. They found that the more media you consume, the more bored and the less happy you are.

I was once a Mountain Dew addict. I literally had Mountain Dew for breakfast. But 45 minutes after flooding my system with a rush of sugar and caffeine, I was left with less energy than I would have had if I had never taken the drug. That's exactly what the media stimulation is—a rush of excitement that leaves you empty, unfulfilled, and unhappy.

But the really sad thing is that actual food became distasteful to me. The thought of having an apple after drinking a Mountain Dew, or worse yet, a bowl of steamed broccoli, was completely unappetizing. Remember, more media, more boredom.

Now I understand why I read my Bible so little when I was immersed in media and entertainment. The Bible is, objectively speaking, "sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psalm 119:103). However, the Bible also points out that "one who is full loathes honey" (Proverbs 27:7, NIV). As a society, we've filled up on the junk food of entertaining reading, movies, games, music, sports, and constant electronic communication. Consequently, the bread of

life, now uninteresting, goes uneaten because, full of entertainment, we loathe the honey.

I can testify that the life that God designed is extraordinarily pleasurable. Having given up worldly entertainment and devoted my life to God's service, I find far more joy, meaning, peace, happiness, and fulfilling pleasure than I ever found in the world.

Understanding a little bit about the brain has helped me understand why.

The pleasure centers of the brain are called the nucleus accumbens. They're central to the brain's reward circuitry that God gave us to help motivate us to do good things. When the frontal lobe floods with activity—for example, by practicing altruism, exercising self-control, solving a problem, or connecting with God through prayer—it triggers the nucleus accumbens, the reward circuit fires off, and we feel pleasure.

Various chemicals and behaviors (drugs, alcohol, nicotine, pornography, shopping, gaming, eating unhealthful food, gambling) produce an artificial dopamine rush, triggering the pleasure circuit and tricking the brain into thinking we've accomplished something great. Sadly, the normal activities that once brought pleasure no longer satisfy, and addiction takes hold as the brain becomes dependent upon ever-increasing levels of artificially-induced dopamine.

In one study, rats were given the ability to tap a lever, which sent an electrical signal directly to their nucleus accumbens, resulting in a feeling of pleasure. What researchers observed was tragic. The rats stopped eating their food, and just kept tapping the lever. After some time, the rats were on the brink of death. They had come to the point where they loathed real food.

That's exactly what we've done in our spiritual lives. We've found various ways to get a quick fix of pleasure. Facebook, emails, and texting, even while they can be morally innocuous, deliver that pleasure and distract us from our spiritual duties. The music and the movies deliver even more, and consume our attention. And the gaming and pornography have enslaved millions.

We've left our food, and we're on the brink of death. Scientists call it "the pleasure trap." How do we escape the pleasure trap? Read the next chapter to find out.

Chapter 14. Escaping the Pleasure Trap

In this book you have probably learned some things about media and entertainment that have challenged some of your previous notions. Have you been surprised by some of what you've learned?

We've seen the demonic nature of the entertainment industry. We've looked at how Hollywood, the music industry, and the game designers are master manipulators, altering our body chemistry and our state of consciousness, even employing hypnotic methods to program us into their mold. We've seen the latest science demonstrating the destructive effects of entertainment media. And we've even seen that electronic communication tools can crowd out the voice of God.

Indeed, media is the most serious and widespread addiction in America today. But this begs the question: What steps can we take to become free?

Let's go back to square one: "Do you trust God?" Remember when you were a kid, and you couldn't swim, but your mom or dad stood in the pool and let you jump into their arms? If they fail you, you will drown and die. But you jump anyway. Why? Because you trust them with the faith of a child.

Do you trust God enough to move forward with radical changes? Jesus promised, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice...." Following Me will be hard, He says. You'll be different. People will exclude you and make fun of you and say you're extreme, judgmental, and weird. Your friends will be rejoicing in the "fun" of their worldly lifestyle, and you will weep and mourn for a time. Now the end of the verse: "but your sorrow will be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

A student once told me that he really wasn't following Christ. I asked him, "What's stopping you?"

He replied, "What would I do for fun?"

Entertainment was this young man's idol. He couldn't believe that God's reality would truly bring more joy. But Jesus promised it! "Your sorrow will be turned into joy," He said.

So if you're ready, if you're willing to jump into His arms, here are some practical steps to take:

1. Lay it all on the altar. Take a total media fast for 30 days. Drop everything that even might be slightly distracting you from Christ. You can't think objectively about it and evaluate it fairly when you're consuming it.
2. Throw away anything worldly permanently.
3. Do something better. Get involved in positive spiritual pursuits and other edifying activities.
4. Be accountable. Do this with somebody else or ask a mentor to walk with you on it.
5. Plan your time. Schedule how you'll spend every spare minute. If you're not intentional, you'll revert to habits or worldliness.
6. Pray. Ask God to help you. Tell people about your decision, and ask them to pray for you, too.
7. Claim God's promises: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

If you talk to anyone who has done a 30-day media fast, it goes something like this: "When I started my 30 days of abstaining from media, it was really hard and even painful at first, but after a few days I realized how much time I had for better things, and I started to *enjoy* reading my Bible, enjoy more time with loved ones, and enjoy nature and other simple pleasures."

The Bible promises us that God withholds no good thing from us, and that He satisfies the desire of every living thing (Psalm 84:11, 145:16).

God invites us to try it out: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). If we exchange some of our media time for time in the Word of God we will find new meaning and purpose in a life lived in relationship with Jesus. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Let's close with my favorite quotation, written before the advent of modern media, but which is more presently relevant to our media-saturated lives now than ever before:

If we do not receive the religion of Christ by feeding upon the Word of God, we shall not be entitled to an entrance into the city of God. Having lived on earthly food, having educated our tastes to love worldly things, we would not be fitted for the heavenly courts; we could not appreciate the pure, heavenly current that circulates in heaven. The voices of the angels and the music of their harps would not satisfy us. The science of heaven would be as an enigma to our minds. We need to hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ; we need to be molded and fashioned by the transforming influence of his grace, that we may be fitted for the society of heavenly angels.
—*Review and Herald*, May 4, 1897

We can never go wrong fasting from potential distractions so that we can again hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2).