

Overexposure to Traumatic Events

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As a result of 911, we have all been exposed to the evil that touched our lives and left us marked with a sense of devastation, and a sense of fragility. The exposure we had to that tragic event was played out over and over on the airwaves. For many, there was a sense of being glued to the television seeing the event replay, and for others, seeing it once or twice was enough.

Why does this occur? And what is its effect? Certainly shock and disbelief rivet through our spirit. The more we are exposed to the event, the number we become to its horrifying details. The images are now imprinted on our minds but the feelings are desensitized. It's as if we are in a hypnotic trance.

Overexposure is defined "to expose too long or too much." Our culture has perfected the art of overexposure. One can no longer turn on the television set without being overexposed. Television ads seduce us with images that play on appetites that many of us would say we don't have. Movies are filled with raw, coarse violence, and vivid bloodshed. What was once left to the imagination is now played out in living color on the ultra screen. Jokes are told that mock and characterize individuals as objects to use - for a good laugh. Gender bending is commonplace in most movies and sitcoms. The term "over the top" has come to denote something good when, in fact, it refers to an extreme. We have extreme sports, extreme antics on shows like "Fear Factor" and extreme words that were once reserved for unique experiences and now substitute for everyday use - "awesome."

Another way to define overexposure is excess. F.E. Marsh in his book Emblems of the Holy Spirit identifies sins of personal excess as "excesses" and "reveling." Excesses are all extremes, especially drunkenness, and the exciting of the passions. Reveling is defined as lascivious songs. Lascivious refers to exciting sexual desire or given to or expressing lust. (Some of the commercials during football games fit in this profile.) Sinful boisterousness is loud and demanding of attention. Ever been out to dinner and had a difficult time engaging your company because of the raucous behavior at the other table?

The result is that our moral sensibilities, our imaginations and inquisitive intuition have been dulled. We have come to be entertained, excited and mesmerized by these excesses and are encouraged by our flesh to give in to this overexposure. If the only way we feel alive is through an adrenaline rush, then we are going to have to increase it as time goes on, to maintain our feeling "alive." This is the stuff addictions are made of! Without knowing it, we cooperate with the enemy, and may actually look at others in disbelief when we are called on the carpet for participating in some manner. What would you say if you found your child participating in excesses? Excesses unleashed lead to addictions.

That is not to say that we cannot have fun, relax, and enjoy ourselves.

God created fellowship, good food, and beauty for all to enjoy. However, this does not give us permission to disregard the impact we have on those around us or even to lead others astray. If you ever travel to a foreign country, you will find out rather quickly that their expectations of Americans is that we are abrasive, brash, rude and arrogant people. I believe that sinful boisterousness mentioned above is equated with Americans.

The solution is to turn. Turn to Jesus. Turn toward Him in your thoughts. Think of what He might say as He stands with you taking in and participating in that which you are participating in. Turn. Listen. Just say YES. Yes to Jesus, to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Do you feel a nudge? Are you wondering if this is a little "too much?" TRUST THAT THOUGHT. Likely, IT IS TOO MUCH. Ask for help. Help to live in the Spirit. Living in the Spirit there is no vain and self-effort to overcome the flesh and to keep from its works. Temperance is a fruit of the spirit. It is a spirit under control, which is sober in all things.

It is a great challenge to parent children in this era of overexposure. It is a great challenge to live honorably in this day and age. May the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all as we resist the overexposure, and cling to what is good and right and pure and holy-our savior Jesus Christ.

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