

### 334 “Think on these things”

“Whatsoever things are true ... honest ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report ... think on these things” (from Philippians 4.8, KJV).

The “Jeremy Kyle Show”, ITV’s most popular daytime programme which attracted around one million viewers a day and which thrived on airing family quarrels on national TV in the guise of providing “excellent entertainment” and “reality TV”, is no more. A week after failing a lie-detector test on the programme, one male contestant was found dead from an apparent overdose. Suddenly the hurrahs stopped and real “reality” kicked in: the “JKS” has been axed.

This sad case of someone’s suicide arising from a TV programme prompts us in this Reflection to consider afresh the sheer power of the media within our society: it remains as important as ever that Bible-believing Christians realise that we are all recipients of a ceaseless barrage of “stuff”, pumped out from the media into millions of lives and homes all the time, a pumping process which of course is massively influential.

No matter what actual form a media outlet may involve, (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet, social media), the underlying principles are much the same. First, a comparatively very few people decide what to cover and how to cover it, and then proclaim this content to perhaps millions of people, as frequently as their funds permit. This reach-of-the-few-to-the-many is neither right nor wrong in itself, but clearly carries great potential for good or ill.

Second, every media outlet cannot help being biassed, (along with all the rest of us on the planet), in the choices it makes. We waste our time therefore in looking for a media outlet that is not biassed! Rather we should seek somewhere that has the right bias as we understand that to be from our biblical point of view, (and, thanks be to God, there are indeed wholesome Christian outlets hard at work).

A third media principle is simple but immensely powerful: “The more often we proclaim a message, the sooner will that message become widely accepted”. Current examples abound of this principle in action, such as the promotion of homosexuality and its various offshoots as being normal and acceptable; ditto with women’s issues, notably over abortion, euphemistically termed “pro-choice”; ditto with the supposed acceptability of Islam spreading within western societies; ditto with “save

the planet” concerns. In some of these matters some genuine (Bible-based) debate is required as complexities are thought through - and we can all contribute to such debate - but the point stands that the secular media outlets clearly play a massive part in shaping such debate, (not least in ensuring there is never a mention of Almighty God and His Word), and hence in shaping society at large.

We see this “self-fulfilling” process in the Jeremy Kyle Show just mentioned, and in TV “soaps” and in TV adverts (a fascinating study in themselves of what is currently deemed to be “cool”). In each case “the media few” promote whatever suits them, which then becomes widely accepted as the norm.

A further principle underlying the media, related to what has just been said, is the tendency of television first to publicise, and then slowly to transform, whatever its cameras look at. We see this in professional sport for example: Premier League football in Britain is now awash with TV money, but every game is now timed to suit TV schedules, so the interests of the travelling fans at Away games for instance are now of little concern. “TV rules, OK!”

The aim of this Reflection has been to draw fresh attention to the enormous power of the media in its various forms, and the recognition that most of that power is used for purposes far removed from those of the Lord and His Word. Hopefully there is little new in this recognition for folk like us, but how we need to keep it in mind, for ourselves and for all those in whose lives we may have some influence, such as our children and grandchildren.

Some obvious Scriptures come to mind as we close: Exodus 20.1-17 / Deuteronomy 6.4-5 / Many verses in Proverbs as to purity of speech and behaviour / Matthew 5.1-12; 6.33; 7.24-29 / Romans 12.1-3, 9-21 / II Corinthians 5.17-21 / Ephesians 6.10-18 / Philippians 4.8-9 / Colossians 3.1-17 / ...).

If the people responsible for programmes such as the Jeremy Kyle Show had taken such guidance to heart from God’s Word, there would have been no such programmes in the first place; much strife and misery, justified under the specious title of “entertainment”, would have been avoided; and the overall state of our society would be much healthier than it is now.

Truly, Jesus Christ is Lord, and it would be well for us all if His Lordship was recognised throughout the media.

Praise God, that day is surely coming! (egs., Philippians 2.9-11 / Revelation 11.15).

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