

GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

A very long time ago, there once lived a master programmer who designed an organic hard drive and operating system that has never been duplicated to this day. All of the inhabitants of the world were issued one at birth. All operating instructions were built into the core programming. There was sufficient storage capacity that no one, even in a lifetime of use, would use up the system capability. Technical support was free and always available online and externally. It was the best of all worlds and seemed somewhat foolproof. But the end user had not been reckoned with. Nor had a rival programmer.

The rival's plan was somewhat ingenious. Knowing that the master programmer would never permit him to directly damage the product, he devised a more subtle approach. He encouraged and taught the users how to rewrite their programming themselves. He gave them the basic training. He built up their confidence. Then he stood by and laughed while the virus they introduced into the programming at his suggestion perpetuated itself throughout history. All that was necessary was to allow the users to destroy themselves and their systems through their own choice of input data. It seems he had neglected to mention a few safeguards and truisms known to programmers everywhere. The most elementary programming principle goes by the initials, G.I.G.O.. This stands for, garbage in, garbage out.

This programming concept is simply that what you put into any system determines what comes out. Imagine throwing all of our garbage into a pot and pulling out of it, a meal fit for a king. Ridiculous? Yet, that is sometimes how we prepare the feast that we intend to serve our Lord. Jesus told us in Matt 12:34, that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. From within us, we bring forth the words and the ideas that will form the worship we give to our God. This is the incense we will use to entice Him into spending time with us. It is made up from all of the things that we have placed within our hearts and that have become a part of us. Things we have allowed in through any or all of our senses. Those images, sounds, and ideas we have digested as a part of our souls. It is our hope that when we come into the presence of absolute purity and holiness, God will overlook the fact that we are what we eat.

It might be wiser to simply guard the windows to our souls. The input devices of our eyes and our ears. Simply shutting our eyes would often accomplish so much toward improving our relationship with God. If King David had even an inkling of the sorrow ahead, he would have turned away from the first glimpse of Bathsheba. God phrased it best when He said that if the eyes caused us problems, it would be better to enter heaven blind than to miss it whole. There are things we hear, but especially things we see, that once they are in our minds will always be available for review and replay. There are temptations we will forever struggle with that are possible only because we saw things and partook of things that we wish desperately we had never been involved in. While they have been forgiven, they remain a part of our memories, our wills, and our souls.

It is bad enough that we live in a world ruled by Satan and must be bombarded by images and experiences that are contrary to God. To seek them out is worse. Sometimes, in a quest for entertainment, we are prone to excuse the profane and immoral content of what we view or read with the idea that if the basic plot is interesting, the details can be overlooked. There is a story in the Old Testament about an Israelite searching through the rubble of a destroyed enemy, looking for valuables. It occurs to us that we are supposed to be children of the King, yet, in search of precious little value in what passes now for entertainment, we stoop to digging through garbage, looking for gold. Forgetting that the God who made and then remade us in His image, in an effort to keep us looking like Him, has given us a commandment in Phil 4:8. Whatsoever things are good, and pure, and holy, we are to think on these things.

He especially does not want us to eat our own vomit. That is His words, not ours. It is how God perceives our returning back to those things from which we were delivered. If we prayed and were delivered from a problem with lust, why on earth would we seek out erotic entertainment to rekindle that spirit within us. If violence obsesses us, why would we want to feed our minds with images of violence, boxing, the martial arts, war, and so forth. The examples are countless. The point is, we desire the Spirit within us to rule our souls. We fast to weaken our carnal nature and better allow the Spirit to dominate. Then we feed, nourish, and strengthen the carnal nature we have asked the Spirit to diminish. We will become that which we partake of. What is programmed into our minds will determine how we function.

We must determine which part of ourselves we will feed and which we will starve. Will the images, sounds, ideas, and experiences that make up our souls, strengthen or weaken the Spirit of God within us? The decision on what pleases God is easily and often made. It can be phrased as a simple question. If God is in us, is He going to enjoy this as much as we are? Or will He simply leave?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever worked with a computer program in which you had to input the data the program would use? Did you ever get a correct answer back using incorrect data?
2. Do you think the things that we see, watch, and listen to, affect the quality of our worship to God?
3. It is a given that our environment determines who and what we will become. How much control over our visual and auditory environment do we wield? In other words, how much of the junk that we listen to and watch, that we know could not please God, do we consciously choose to partake of?
4. If you were promised by God Himself that the only way you would make it to heaven would be to never listen to another secular song or watch another show of any kind, could you and would you abstain?
5. Can you recall the first show you ever saw that was erotic or frightening? Can you still recall images from it? Have you ever dreamed or fantasized about something you heard or saw?
6. Have you ever seen or heard anything that created spiritual problems for you and you wished now you had not watched or listened to it?
7. How much garbage are you willing to overlook in a song or movie in order to enjoy an otherwise delightful plot or music composition? One word? Ten words? One nude scene? One exploding head? At what point is it too bad to partake of?
8. More importantly, has your tolerance level increased the more you are exposed to? Are things not so hard to tolerate that once shocked you? Is it because you have matured or because of what you are becoming as a result of your diet? What makes something "adult?"
9. Has the Creator, the Lord of glory, not prepared food for your consumption that is appealing to you? Is the Bread of Life not sufficient? The Water of Life not enough? Which part of you finds no satisfaction in these?
10. Do you think it is possible to create the very temptations we struggle with by our choice of entertainment? Do romantic movies make you feel romantic? Violent movies, violent?
11. When we turn back to what we have been delivered from and reinforce our carnal nature, is that what is meant by, "treading the blood of Jesus underfoot?"
12. Have you ever made a decision about an activity based on the question of its enjoyment by God's Spirit within you? If not, would the answer matter to you?

13. Have you ever made the decision to do something you know will not please God and during the activity, suddenly felt hauntingly alone? Did it frighten you? Was the enjoyment worth it?