

Up The Ladder of Holiness/Set-Apartness

Part 1 of 4

Violence in the Cinema

By: Marsha Van

Psalms 101:3 "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." (KJV)

Recently, when I was sick in bed for a time, I found myself spending a lot of time in front of my television. I don't have cable so I played most of the movies I own with brief interjections of local television programming. During one car commercial I heard the words, "Don't miss the greatest event of all time", and I chuckled a little at its unintended humor, what event could man produce that could even begin to compare with the return of our Messiah?

As I continued to meditate on this phrase my humor turned to sadness as I thought about all who would miss that great day and the words of *Matthew 7:23* came to mind, "*Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'.* (NASB) And I remembered *Psalms 101:3 "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."* (KJV) This set me to thinking about all the movies I had watched and what images had passed before my eyes over the preceding days and I began to pray for YHVH's discernment in this matter.

My current movie collection is what is left after years of pruning. Initially I leaned on my understanding but eventually moved into purposeful prayer for discernment. As praying became a continual action, the pruning process did also. Each pruning brings me up one more rung on the spiritual ladder of set apartness. With each pruning my collection becomes more acceptable to YHVH, and so do I.

When I was a small child I didn't understand the concept of set apartness but I did understand that there was a right and a wrong way to act. Good behavior was rewarded while bad behavior resulted in discipline. I didn't like being disciplined but liked the rewards and consequently developed a desire to please my parents. As I grew, I began to

understand there was something outside of my parents that influenced their understanding of right and wrong. That something was YHVH and His book of instructions was the Bible. As my understanding of the Bible grew, I developed a sense of justice and virtue and wanted to please YHVH as well as my parents.

In adolescence, a great deal of my behavior came under the influence of social and peer pressure, but I still held to some of my parent's ideals. However, by the time I reached my teens, I had decided I was smarter than my parents, and God, and was capable of choosing for myself what was right and wrong, and I rebelled.

It wasn't until I started having children of my own that I started back on the journey towards set apartness. As a mother, I was not only responsible for myself, but for my children as well, and not just their physical well being but also their spiritual well being. I did my best to teach them what I understood they should know and I took great care in selecting TV shows and movies they should watch. When I look back now, I am appalled at what I thought was acceptable then as compared to what I call acceptable now. I expect to be just as appalled at some of my current movie choices in the future.

When I first recognized a need to scrutinize my video collection, I had to get to know YHVH all over again. Thankfully, He met me with grace and revealed to me what was detestable to Him.

The first thing to go was violence. In *Genesis 6* YHVH told Noah that He was destroying all people on the earth because it was filled with violence because of them and in *Psalms 11:5* we read that, " *the one who loves violence His soul hates*". Now, the Bible itself contains many violent stories, but *2 Timothy 3:16* states that, "*ALL scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*" (NIV) so clearly, depictions of violence in certain contexts can serve to instruct us in the ways of righteousness. I view the violence depicted in the Bible as a "how not to live" example for us.

Most references to the word "violence" in the Bible are accompanied by another form of sin and associated with spoiling a city, land, person, or people. I think it is safe to conclude that violence is a destructive force; that violence for the sake of violence or graphic violence that is not used to warn or teach Biblical principles is unacceptable to YHVH.

The danger of being continually exposed to the sin of violence is in becoming desensitized to it, or having our hearts hardened, to put it in Biblical terms. We are warned against this in *Psalm 95:8* and *Hebrews 3:8* “*Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness*”. (KJV)

The APA (American Psychological Association) has been studying the subject of violence and its affects on young people for decades. They have released several reports that indicate that the level of violent acts escalate amongst our countries youth as the level of violence increases in the media.¹

The average child watches 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. That number more than doubles by the time he or she reaches age 18.² Since children imitate what they see, is it any wonder they are becoming more violent with each generation?³ And as our youth grow into adulthood, is it any wonder that there is an increase in violent behavior amongst adults too? I hope you will meditate on the words of *1 Thessalonians 3:13* “*so that may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints*”. (NASB) And join me next time for Part 2: Sex in the Cinema. If you want to know more about what in means to be Holy or Set Apart (Qadosh in Hebrew) you can go to <http://www.setapartmingb.org/artidex.html> and browse the index of articles for Kadosh.

¹ <http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/dev392201.pdf>

² <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/violence.html>

³ <http://www.psychologymatters.org/bandura2.html>