

# CHANNEL SURFIN'

1. List three **positive** and three **negative** things about television.

2. Circle an answer for each of the following.

**Why do you watch TV?**

Because there's nothing better to do.

Because it's entertaining and fun.

Because it's educational.

Other—

**What would you do if a friend called during your favorite show?**

Return the call later, after the program.

Talk on the telephone while watching the program.

Turn the set off and talk to my friend.

Other—

**What would you do if your TV broke?**

Try to talk my parents into buying another one immediately.

Find something else to do, to occupy my time.

Have a huge withdrawal.

Other—

3. Are the following statements true for you **all of the time (A)**, **some of the time (S)**, or **never (N)**?

\_\_\_ I watch over 20 hours of TV per week.

\_\_\_ I watch TV even though I should be doing something else, like homework.

\_\_\_ I'm influenced by commercials.

\_\_\_ I'm conscious of my TV watching time.

\_\_\_ I watch shows that contain a lot of sex and violence.

\_\_\_ I watch music videos.

\_\_\_ I turn on the TV as soon as I walk in the door.

\_\_\_ I study with the TV on.

4. Decide which of the following Bible verses apply to TV and how?

Exodus 20:3-61

Corinthians 10:31

Joshua 14:1-2

Galatians 2:1



# CHANNEL SURFIN' [ t e l e v i s i o n ]

## THIS WEEK

Television, the tube, the telly (to use British slang), the TV. Call it what you will, but the TV rules the American household. The average person watches hours of television every week. There is a TV station for nearly everyone with any interest—from sports lovers to rap music fans. Most homes have more than one television and most young children can name cartoon characters. The TV is the life of U.S. culture—telling people what they need or don't need, what they should eat, drink, or where, and how they should look, act, and behave.

This TalkSheet raises important questions for Christians. You can't tell your kids to turn the TV off all together, but you can teach them good viewing skills. The purpose of this session is to talk about TV and teach them how to evaluate what they watch.

## OPEN

On a large piece of newsprint or whiteboard, draw a blank television schedule for the week, writing only the days, certain channels, and certain evening times (such as Fox Network, Monday, 7:00 p.m. or NBC, Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.). Then ask the kids to guess or tell you what shows air at those specific times. You'll be surprised how much they know! Have the correct answers available in order to check their responses. For information on show times in your area check out Gist TV ([www.gist.com/tv/](http://www.gist.com/tv/)) or [www.askjeves.com](http://www.askjeves.com) then type in the keywords "television shows."

Want to take it further? Ask your group to rank the shows as good, bad, or questionable on a scale of 1-10, with stars, or however you want to. Talk about the different kinds of shows and what age group(s) they think each show is meant for. Then, discuss how each show portrays people of different ages—especially teenagers, parents, and religion.

## THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Discuss the positives and negatives that your group wrote down and make a master list of them on a poster board or whiteboard. Does everyone agree with these points? Why or why not? Why do some people think the TV has different positives and negatives?
2. How did your kids respond to these questions? What other answers did they give? Point out that their answers may show them just how much TV rules their lives! How can they begin to make changes in their viewing habits?
3. This activity will help the kids evaluate their viewing habits. Don't force them to reveal their answers, but talk about each of the statements in

general terms. Did they have trouble being honest with themselves while answering the questions? Discuss your group's responses and followup with a few questions—

- If you think you watch too much television, why?
  - How could your life be different if television didn't exist?
  - How can a young person develop good viewing habits?
4. When the Bible was written there was no such thing as television, so many people think the Bible has nothing to say on the subject. Read each passage and vote as a group about whether or not the verse could be applicable to television.

## THE CLOSE

TV is entertainment. Billions of dollars are spent on programming every week. But most of what's on TV isn't real—it's shows offer an escape for those who can't cope with reality. Some youth don't understand that they're watching fiction—shows with beautiful (sometimes perfect) people, numerous special effects, and unrealistic plots.

Brainstorm and make a list of the values that Christians should look for in TV shows. What should Christians keep in mind when watching TV? How do they think saturating their minds with TV shows affects the way they act, talk, and live? How do they think advertisements affect them and what can they do about that as Christians? Challenge them to limit their TV watching and brainstorm other activities they can do to fill the time.

## MORE

- What and when are they watching? Ask your kids to keep journals of their weekly TV watching and then bring it in for discussion. Discuss the shows they watched and the amount of time spent watching it compared to the other stuff they did, such as homework, playing sports, eating, talking on the phone, sleeping, and so on.
- And while they're watching the shows, have them pay close attention to the advertisements. What was the ad telling them? Make a list of all their favorite ads and why the ad appealed to them. Explain that the average 1/2 hour TV show has over 10 minutes of advertisements—how does that affect the way people think about and spend money?