



A WAKE-UP CALL TO NETWORK TELEVISION EXECUTIVES

The American Response to the Terrorism has Shown the World that
Religious Faith Changes Lives

Looking back at the 911 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, I think perhaps the most remarkable thing about how the nation responded was the millions of people who sought comfort and inspiration through religious faith. At a time of national crisis, we have seen millions of people in church services, impromptu prayer groups, and family gatherings praying and seeking answers from God. In fact, NBC reports that numerous street corner prayer centers have been set up for people who want prayer for their loved ones, or prayer for others impacted by this terrible tragedy.

We've seen numerous live news broadcasts from The National Cathedral in Washington, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, and numerous houses of worship across the country, indicating that millions of Americans not only respect religious faith, but humbly seek God for answers to the toughest challenges we face.

That's why it's so fascinating that prime time television is virtually devoid of religion. Watch prime time television, and you see a world without any expression of serious religious faith. When it does appear, it's usually in the form of a lunatic, an intolerant jerk, or a child molester.

How is it that network television executives and producers have become so far removed from real America? They wonder why their audience dwindles, and their answer is to fill programs with more sex, profanity, and violence. On September 2nd, The New York Times printed a front page story on television network plans to "spout expletives" this season. Aaron Sorkin, executive producer of "The West Wing" hopes to

be the first to have a character take the Lord's name in vain, and veteran producer Steven Bochco proposed having a character use profanities far greater than those already in use on his series "NYPD Blue."

But serious characters expressing religious faith? No way.

The fact is, in the personal world of many television producers and executives, religious faith plays little or no part. Recently, ABC, the only network with a fulltime religion reporter laid her off, in spite of the many religious leaders frustrated over the ignorance of reporters on issues of faith.

But what can we do? How can Christians across the country make a positive impact with network television executives?

First - we can pray. While many Christians complain about Hollywood, few actually pray for a difference. Miracles still happen, and although this one might seem as tough as parting the Red Sea, that one did happen, and God is still the same.

Second, be cautious about boycotts. During the last boycott of the Walt Disney Studios, their sales actually went up. Plus, boycotts are a negative influence, and I believe it's far more positive to lead by example.

Third, we can let our opinions be known. Television networks actually do listen to viewer feedback, and when you write, it can make a difference. But don't criticize and complain - just let them know that your Christian faith is important to you, and you'd like to see it expressed on prime time television in a more positive light. A gracious letter or e-mail will be far better received than a hostile one.

Finally, we can support Christians in the television and film industry. Everyday, thousands of Christians from coast to coast work in the arena of entertainment, trying to be salt and light in a difficult and challenging place. It's a tough task, and we need your prayers and support. Plus, numerous Christian writers, directors, and producers are developing projects with a Christian focus, designed to make an impact in this culture. We as the Body of Christ need to band together to financially support these innovative efforts.

Christian businessmen and investors? Take note.

Television and movies are the greatest influence on young people today. If we as Christians want to make an impact in this culture, it has to be through the media. So let's

commit to doing everything we can to make a positive difference in the entertainment industry.