

How to Become Radio-Active

A newlywed friend of mine confessed surprise concerning her new husband. She had known from the beginning that he supported a particular Christian radio station, but what she *hadn't* realized was that he listened to it constantly. The station woke them up in the morning on the clock radio and played in the background as they ate breakfast. The car radio was tuned to that same station for the trip to and from work, and the minute they entered their apartment at night, he flicked the stereo on so they wouldn't miss his favorite evening programs.

Granted, this was an extreme case, but according to a recent poll by George Barna, nine of the ten people sharing your pew last Sunday listen to Christian radio. Instead of passively listening to whatever comes on next (like my friends), I'd like to suggest a radio-*active* approach to help you choose the *best* programs. Here are a few questions to use as guidelines:



Pure gospel or another gospel?

Does the teacher add anything to the gospel? The apostle Paul applies some of the strongest language in Scripture against those who would add any work to the message of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone (Galatians 5:12). Anyone who teaches that baptism or *anything* we do contributes to justification or adds to Jesus' finished work on the cross should be avoided. Conversely, anyone who teaches that good works do not necessarily follow salvation is in error.

Scriptural or psychological?

Does the teacher generally find the answers for life's difficulties in the Scriptures or in psychology? This error is especially noticeable on some radio call-in shows devoted to counseling, where biblical terms are redefined into psychological ones. Someone caught up in sin is called an addict. Depression and anxiety are treated not primarily as spiritual issues but as physical ones. Much emphasis is placed, not on dying to self, but on self-esteem. Such teaching can be a serious stumbling block to Christian maturity, converting believers from servants to "takers" and from sinners in need of grace to blame-shifters.

Doctrinal or sensational?

Does the teacher expound the Scriptures or does he rely most heavily on private revelation from God or signs-and-wonders? Does he or she promise things the Bible doesn't, like wealth, healing from every disease or a pain-free life? The New Testament writers take it for granted that there will be difficulty and suffering in this life (1 Peter 4:19). To promise anything else sets listeners up for disappointment with God. Likewise, to teach that an individual should normally receive special revelation from God or experiences like uncontrollable language or laughter is unbiblical and can only lead to discouragement or dangerous flights of imagination.

A few questions to help you evaluate a teacher:

- Is he or she faithfully interacting with Scripture, or have you noticed verses taken out of context or twisted to promote a certain point of view? Does he teach *all* of Scripture?
- Is the teacher moved by his own teaching? Does he admit to being awed by God's majesty, convicted of personal sin and challenged to greater service, or does he give the impression of having attained perfection?
- Does this teacher exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in his life, or is he mean-spirited, belittling those who disagree with him? Is he usually angry or unnecessarily divisive over non-essential matters?
- Does this teacher consider biblical doctrine to be paramount, or are feelings and personal experience elevated to primary importance? Does the teacher have a high view of God and of Scripture? Does his teaching challenge you to follow God more closely, or does it simply make you feel better about who you are now?

How to actively pursue the best in Christian audio:

1. Ask your pastor for input.

Ask your pastor if he has a radio program he recommends. You may also want to ask for his opinion about some of the programs you listen to regularly so that you can benefit from his insight.

2. Use technology to make the most of the good programs.

Are the best programs broadcast at a time you can't listen? Use a timer on your stereo to tape programs and listen at a more convenient time. Another way to make the most of a good program might be to listen via their website, where you can usually find archives of past broadcasts. Your church may offer online sermons you can listen to over the Internet, or to download to an MP3 player. Check the websites of seminaries and ministries associated with your church for more online audio options.

3. Invest in an audio Bible.

Instead of always listening to others talking *about* the Bible, consider investing in a good quality set of CDs or tapes *of* the Bible. One friend who listens to her audio Bible regularly says that she can listen to the same tape several times and hear something new nearly every time.

Finally, as you listen to Christian radio, be sure to keep it in its proper place as a supplement to your church experience and never as a substitute for it. No radio program can replace fellowship, corporate worship, or accountability to each other and to local church leadership in the body of Christ. As the Bible says, "*Let us not give up meeting together*" (Heb. 10:25a, NIV).

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