



Assembly



## Privacy and phone-hacking

### Aim:

- To examine the balance between public interest and invasion of privacy

### Introduction

#### What's all the fuss?

- Speaker 1**      **What a lot of fuss.**  
Speaker 2      What is?
- Speaker 1**      **All this stuff about celebs and MPs having their privacy invaded.**
- Speaker 2      Don't you believe that they should have a private life?
- Speaker 1**      **No! They're famous – it goes with the territory doesn't it?**
- Speaker 2.      Why should it? Aren't they entitled to some privacy in their lives?

### Looking Deeper

#### Invasion of privacy

There is widespread media coverage at the moment about allegations of phone-hacking by one particular Sunday newspaper, known for its tendency to publish revelations about celebrities' and MPs' private lives. Perhaps more worryingly, it is also alleged that the newspaper has authorized hacking of the phones of victims of crime.

There is public outrage and disgust at this apparent breach of privacy at a sensitive time for the victims' families, and some prominent people are calling for public and judicial enquiries into both the newspaper's

conduct, and the police handling of the initial complaints.

Quite apart from the fact that it is illegal to gain access to another person's telephone, under two Acts of Law, who decides whether it is in the public interest?

Can it be right that celebs and MPs have their phones hacked into if the media say it is in the public interest?

Can it be right that some of the 7/7 bomb victims' families had their phone hacked into to get some gruesome detail about what happened, in order to sell newspapers and to get us to watch TV?

Can it be right that Milly Dowler's phone was hacked into after she had been abducted and murdered and before her body was found?

What do you think? What would you think if someone invaded your privacy in this way?

Whatever the outcome of the enquiries into these allegations, it would seem that we also need careful scrutiny and robust procedures for determining what is in the public interest. Can we just leave this up to the Press Complaints Authority and a voluntary code which is self-policed, or is there a better way, and if so, what is it? Should we be looking hard at what is called the 'Freedom of the Press' and putting in place legally enforceable frameworks to determine what is in the public interest?

We often call it 'conscience', that small voice inside us that says something is wrong. Christians would say it was God telling them it is wrong and they have guidance about it in the Ten Commandments and a whole book – The Holy Bible – to help them live their lives within God's framework for living.



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## Reflection

"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you; for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."  
Matthew 7:12 (NIV)

## Prayer

Father God, help us to listen to that small voice inside and to act when it tells us something is wrong.  
Amen

## Thought for the day

"We must protect our citizens' **privacy** – the bulwark of personal liberty, the safeguard of individual creativity."

Bill Clinton

## Key words:

Privacy  
Phone-hacking  
Public interest  
Freedom of the Press