

Are We Entertaining Ourselves to Death?

Whether or not we realize it, we all have been influenced by the entertainment industry more than we might think. When I was a young boy, about the most risqué thing I remember watching on television was Miss Kitty on *Gunsmoke*.

Just a decade later, far more explicit and suggestive scenes were commonplace. Now even watching the advertisements on television or viewing the trailers for movies is enough to make you blush.

Like a frog in boiling water, our culture has been so desensitized to immorality and debauchery that we have lost even the semblance of a moral compass.

The Bible says, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves ... blasphemers ... unholy ... without self-control ... despisers of good ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. ... And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives. ... For their *folly* will be manifest to all” (2 Tim. 3:1-9, emphasis mine).

What a description of our world today and its godless entertainment. Are we turning away or applauding what “Follywood” is pumping out?

Have you ever gone to a movie and felt out of place when a bawdy scene flashed across the big screen and you asked yourself, “What am I doing here?” Or perhaps you’ve been home watching television when all of a sudden lewd language or erotic behavior causes you to raise an eyebrow at these despicable acts that celebrate lifestyles void of morality.

Such scenes should trigger righteous anger, but many parents do not regulate entertainment for their children or themselves. Do we willingly spend our hard-earned money on Hollywood films that instill in us the opposite of what the Bible commands? Do we welcome into our homes the flaunting of sin that glorifies the flesh and curses the name of Jesus while on Sundays we glorify Him at church (Matt. 22:37)? Is it possible to obey God with the whole mind while feeding on godlessness? The answer is no, yet we do let strangers creep into our homes and minds.

The late Michael Landon, often described as the paragon of family entertainment, once said to the Hollywood elite at a Dean Martin roast, "Let's face it, television is an invention where you're entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your house!" The self-inflicted jab stirred a mixture of laughter and chagrin from the biggest stars of the day in 1975 as they all nodded in shameful agreement. Truth yanks out of us what we try to hide—the reality that carnal minds find corruption amusing.

Michael Landon Jr. grew up in the industry. When asked how Hollywood has changed since his father's series *Little House on the Prairie*, he observed that Hollywood no longer abides by any restraint when it comes to infiltrating programs with provocative content. He said, "When you are immersed in this dark, edgy, constant flow of entertainment, there's no way it can't affect you."

Today parents can buy software to filter such programming. My mother was the filter in the Graham home. We were allowed to watch some Disney programs and westerns, including an occasional John Wayne movie where good overcame evil, but after two hours of television a week, at the most, my mother turned the hardware off!

To consider how far we've come in just 60 years is disturbing. Suggestive jokes in the 1970s are today fully demonstrated in

speech and acts, conditioning the carnal mind to openly celebrate shameful behavior. Even Disney World is preparing for Gay Day at the Magic Kingdom in June, exposing thousands of children to a lifestyle that the Bible calls corrupt. In an article on titled "Why the USA Went Gay," John Stonestreet says that "the hearts and minds of Americans—especially our young people—are being changed when it comes to same-sex 'marriage' and homosexual practice because of entertainment."

A Bible verse my mother helped me memorize as a boy is still engraved in my mind—the King James Version, of course: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10). But my mother had her own paraphrase: "If bad boys try to get you to do bad things, say no." Do we let God's Word permeate our thinking, or do we let the follies of Hollywood take up space in the control center—the mind? Christians are told to be guided by God, who will guard our hearts and minds (Phil. 4:7). Also, "the natural man does not receive the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. ... But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:14, 16, NKJV).

Scripture tells us how to be self-controlled—by thinking on whatever is true, noble, just, pure and lovely, and to "meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Even the secular world recognizes the lowering of the bar. Educator Neil Postman wrote a book titled *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He posed the question, "Who is prepared to take arms against a sea of amusements?"

Again the Bible declares, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds ... bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

The Bible has a lot to say about amusing ourselves, and you may be surprised to learn that it isn't good. King Solomon searched out ways to gratify the flesh with wine, folly,

possessions and entertainment, to “see what was good for the sons of men,” and declared, “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure” (Eccl. 2:3, 10). And even in the night he found that his heart took no rest (v. 23).

Sinful entertainment deposits rubbish in the mind, giving Satan a foothold in our lives (Eph. 4:27). Once there, he thrashes around even as we sleep. Whatever has entered the theater of the mind crosses the welcome mat as a thief and begins its lethal work of breaking down defenses. The moral compass that once guided our nation’s people has been ridiculed and rejected, making sin the national sport and pastime.

What happened? Removing God-consciousness from society has given way to self-gratification, chasing after the “sin which so easily ensnares” (Heb. 12:1). The Bible calls it folly. What is the antidote? “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14).

The Federal Communications Commission claims to regulate public airwaves with regard to objectionable language and content, particularly in prime time. Such regulation, however, seems suspect when, at any time of the day, even advertisements contain offensive messaging. The late Sen. Jesse Helms once stated, “This filth ... has no business being broadcast on the public airwaves. ... Garbage is garbage, no matter what the time of day may be.”

So we ask: How has a society that was founded on biblical principles gotten so far away from the command “Set nothing wicked before [your] eyes”? (Ps. 101:3). We’ve gotten here by setting our minds on earthly things instead of on things above (Col. 3:2). The Bible is not a book of suggestions. It clearly states, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ... See then that you walk ... not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:8-11, 15-16).

Almighty God spoke the world into existence, and He will have the last word. The day is coming when the heavens will become His grand theater for the drama of the ages. He will split the canvassed sky wide open, and all who have ever lived will behold when “the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints ... to convict all who are ungodly” (Jude 14-15).

But until that day, let’s not run after ungodly amusement. Let’s be about our Father’s business as genuine believers testifying of the Savior who lives to redeem lost and wandering souls for His kingdom.

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