

# Brian Williams and the Great Media Shake-Up

In a three-day period, there was a remarkable shake-up in the world of secular media. What are we to make of it?

First, on Feb. 10, respected anchorman Brian Williams was suspended by NBC after he was caught in several embarrassing lies.

Second, also on Feb. 10, influential Comedy Channel “news” anchor Jon Stewart announced his resignation on his daily TV show, completely unexpectedly.

Third, on Feb. 11, Bob Simon, the patriarchal figure of *60 Minutes*, was killed while riding as a passenger in a Town Car limo.

Fourth, on Feb. 12, David Carr, hailed as a *New York Times* “journalistic celebrity,” succumbed to lung cancer.

Only God knows if these events are in any way connected, but for those of us who are observing them unfold, the connection is striking.

To be perfectly clear, I am not claiming that this is a sign of divine judgment on secular media nor am I implying that the Lord was judging the two men who were sadly taken from this world. And I am not ignorant of the many scandals that have plagued Christian media over the years, in particular, in charismatic Christian TV circles.

What I am saying is that a series of events like this in just three days should get our attention, and at such times, we do well to stop and reflect before the Lord.

What then are some lessons to learn?

## **1. Lies will be exposed.**

Jesus once encouraged His disciples not to fear people, explaining that “nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known” (Matt. 10:26).

We need to speak and act in light of this reality: All secrets are temporary. Everything will one day be revealed (unless it has been dealt with before God through repentance and the blood of Jesus).

As an IT consultant said to me during a recent in-flight conversation, “Don’t write anything that you don’t want published on the front page of the *New York Times*.”

This is also a lesson from the Sony hacking scandal: Don’t send out emails that you would be embarrassed to have your friends or enemies read.

Speak and act as those who live before an all-seeing God and as those who will give account to Him one day.

## **2. Something is wrong with your real-life experience if you need to exaggerate to advance yourself or your cause.**

In recounting a miraculous healing, Smith Wigglesworth once said, “I have asked the Lord to never let me tell this story except as it was, for I realize that God cannot bless exaggerations.”

This is not just a lesson for those in the media. It is a lesson for every pastor and preacher, for every parent and teacher, for every role model and example: Don’t embellish the truth. The moment you do, it’s no longer truth. And the moment you add to it or stretch it, you’re declaring that the truth is not good enough.

## **3. We need a massive overhaul in the reporting of news.**

A headline in the *New York Post*, itself known for somewhat

sensationalistic reporting, declared, "How Jon Stewart turned lies into comedy and brainwashed a generation." Yes, the "news" has come quite a long way since the days of Walter Cronkite and his ilk.

Of course, we understand that Stewart's show was on the comedy channel rather than traditional network or cable news, but Stewart's show was still a major news source for many Americans, while the other alternatives, from MSNBC on the one side to Fox on the other, are hardly unbiased.

Contrast this with America's first newspapers that existed for three main purposes, including: "That Memorable Occurrences of Divine Providence may not be neglected or forgotten, as they too often are," and, "That some thing may be done towards the Curing, or at least the Charming of that Spirit of Lying, which prevails amongst us, wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountains for our Information."

Perhaps as more and more material is instantly available online, it will be harder and harder to skew the news in the direction our personal biases want it to go.

**4. Life is short. Live today in such a way that you will have no regrets tomorrow.**

Every one of us has some kind of influence on others, but those of us who have greater influence need to conduct ourselves all the more carefully.

I know nothing personally about Bob Simon and David Carr, and of course, I make no judgment about them as individuals and only wish their families God's grace in the midst of their loss.

The deaths of these journalists, however, remind us that our words and actions will outlive us, for better or for worse.

And so, those of us who have lived our lives before the world—in print, on TV or radio, from behind the pulpit, on YouTube, or elsewhere—need to ask ourselves how we will feel about others hearing our words and watching our deeds once we have left this world.

How will our message play out before future generations?

Most importantly, what will God's verdict on our lives and messages be?

When such traumatic events take place in the media in just three short days, regardless of why and how, we do well to consider these issues.

May the Spirit of truth prevail in our culture and in our hearts.

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