

Have You Been Seduced by This Crafty Entertainment?

“The devil pulls the strings which makes us dance; he finds delight in the most loathsome things; some furtherance of Hell each new day brings, and yet we feel no horror in that rank advance.” –Charles Baudelaire, French poet

Growing up, did you enjoy humor and laughter, especially as you watched TV shows with your favorite characters? Andy, Barney and Opie; Wally and the “Beav”; Lucy, Ricky, Fred and Ethel; Rob and Laura Petrie; Jed, Granny and Mr. Drysdale?

God ordained comedy. “Joy is the serious business of heaven,” wrote C.S. Lewis.

Scripture reveals that Jesus was actually the happiest person who ever lived! The Father anointed Him “... with the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Heb. 1:9).

Tragically, Comedy Has Slid Into the Sewer

One of the saddest realities we’re experiencing amidst America’s moral decline is what’s happened to comedy. There are some Christians attempting to redeem this art, and we support them wholeheartedly. May we also pray regularly for lost personalities who contribute to the corruption of this entertainment realm.

Don’t be fooled by the projected images of the “yuck it up,” “c’mon, hoot and holler—I’ve got more zingers to explode your heads!” funny people.

“Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful,” Proverbs 14:13 tells us. Reflect on the tragic stories of Robin Williams, Richard Pryor and John Belushi, to name but a few.

But something is terribly wrong with comedy in our country.

Decadence is rapidly replacing decency. If it's offensive, embarrassing and raunchy, you've hit the mark. The more today's crude comedians push the envelope, the more they're hailed as cool, hilarious and cutting-edge.

Have you noticed, or are you like millions being seduced to accept this as the new norm? Where you formerly blushed, cringed and excused yourself, are you finding yourself accommodating the filthy profanity and perverted themes?

We should all be grateful for ministries like "Plugged In" that provide helpful movie and music reviews from a biblical perspective. They help us avert entertainment grievous to God.

Survey the Scene

Chips just opened in theaters across America, based on what was a wholesome, family-friendly TV show about the California Highway Patrol. Now it's a raunchy, sex-obsessed, profanity-laced comedy.

Larry Wilcox, who played on the original show, said, "Way to go Warner Bros.—just ruined the brand of CHIPS and of the California Highway Patrol."

Eric Estrada, the other actor from the television *Chips*, said, "I saw the trailer the other day ... pure trash ..."

Saturday Night Live is a pop-culture, late-night institution of 42 years.

The variety show started with offbeat, quirky characters and sketches (remember "Church Lady" and the "Coneheads"?); some double-entendres occasionally peppering dialogue; and hip music combined with a guest host's goofy monologues.

Today, it parades almost non-stop, uber-liberal political mockery of anything conservative, along with sketches, impersonations and fake news updates with crude "jokes."

SNL averages almost 10.6 million primarily young viewers, up 22 percent from 2016.

Iconic actor Robert De Niro's last film was *The Comedian*.

He played a foul-mouthed, insulting, vulgar, stand-up comic obsessed with expletives and scatological humor, even ridiculing seniors in their twilight years.

Snoop Dogg's latest comical video is a blockbuster hit with profanities, dope, violence and a depicted assassination of President Donald Trump. All for a good laugh of course!

Stand-up comics with jokes about sexual deviancy and profanity are proliferating in comedy clubs across America while Netflix streams their "no shame" routines.

It's producing a coarsening of our culture as 21st century "comedy" bids adieu to the genius of Bob Hope, Dick Van Dyke, Andy Griffith, Carol Burnett, Lucille Ball and Mary Tyler Moore to embrace the darker, more menacing and "liberated" likes of Sarah Silverman, Samantha Bee, Louis CK, Chelsea Handler and Amy Schumer.

David Letterman said in a rare interview in *The Best of New York* magazine (March 6, 2017), that at the top of his list for a female late-night host, he'd pick the profane Ms. Schumer, showing the seriousness of the situation.

Recently at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, comedian Eddie Griffin told 15,000 people at his stand-up comedy show to assassinate President Trump, just as . was killed in that city. Other performers called First Lady Melania Trump a "prostitute." A Facebook video of the "comedy" had over 100,000 views before it was removed.

Is There Still Hope?

Here's the deal: We've come to the place in comedic realms where nothing is too vile to be off-limits. The more shocking,

hateful, sacrilegious or offensive, the better, especially if spewed from the mouth of brash “cutting-edge” female comics. Therefore, our only hope as standards of decency are decimated is to look to God for spiritual awakening.

On a personal level, it starts with us as we “... do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; instead, expose them” (Eph. 5:11).

“And do not let sexual immorality, or any impurity, or greed be named among you, as these are not proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse joking, which are not fitting ...” (Eph. 5:3-4).

On the national level, we need to reconsecrate ourselves to intercede for courageous Christians and godly leaders to champion morality and truth in this land. Take the Bullseye Challenge to equip yourself, your family and your churches in righteousness and maintain “happy holiness” to be a prophetic oracle and catalytic change agent in our generation.

Reformation of Manners

In 18th century Great Britain, a 5-foot-3-inch young man was grieved at the moral decline in his day and decided to serve politically in dealing with what he called “Two Great Objects.” His name was William Wilberforce.

First, he labored night and day to uphold the sanctity of life by working to see abolition of the slave trade. For us today this translates to addressing abortion and sex trafficking.

Second, he gave his life for the “Reformation of Manners.” This was not referring to etiquette but the restoration of morality. Around him was societal breakdown so he determined to change things for the glory of God!

In his day, the moral ills were child labor, drunkenness, prostitution, animal cruelty and public hangings. Today we

have illegal immigration, marijuana legalization, euthanasia, the LGBTQ agenda and the collapse of comedy. All of these can only be remedied by changing human hearts through the gospel and heaven-sent revival.

Wilberforce engaged in this spiritual battle for over 26 years, finally achieving the abolition of slave trading and slavery. His strategy in fighting many of the social evils was to proclaim the gospel and to “make goodness fashionable” by his words and deeds. Transformation was the result.

What’s happening today with comedy and abuses in freedom of speech is very serious and represents a seismic shift in our culture. Departure from our Judeo-Christian foundations has dismantled the buffer between decency and repulsiveness. But as Wilberforce was faithful with the challenges he faced, so must we be with ours.

Words that motivated William Wilberforce inspire us today. They were written to him by a great revivalist on his deathbed at 87 years old. He too prayed and engaged in Christian activism for an American awakening as we do today.

Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing. Go on, in the Name of God and in the power of His might, 'till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Your affectionate servant,

John Wesley

May we pick up the baton, aligned with God and confident that “He who sits in the heavens laughs” (Ps. 2:4a). {eo}