

How the Church Has Allowed Immorality to Seep In

Why America's current zombie craze goes beyond entertainment for the church

Like frogs in the kettle. I'm certainly not the first to connect America's moral decline to the old analogy of the gradually boiled amphibian. But after sitting through some previews at a movie theater recently, I was struck by just how hot the water is now, as proven by the latest threshold our culture has crossed. Yes, folks, apparently we now consider love—and sex—with the dead as top-notch entertainment.

Technically, it's the *undead* that have captured America's fascination. Though zombies have been a horror-genre staple since the 1960s, today they're a full-blown pop-culture craze. And if you haven't yet encountered some version of a zombie *romance* story, consider this a heads-up. From *The Walking Dead* hit TV series to last month's big-screen teen rom-zom-com, *Warm Bodies*, to the best-selling novel (and upcoming movie starring Brad Pitt) *World War Z*, zombies are everywhere in the entertainment world this year. And it's not by chance.

In Hollywood, the term *ratings creep* describes when movie or TV show ratings degrade over time. What once was deemed shocking and unacceptable—nudity during TV's prime-time hours or dozens of profanities in a PG-13 movie—becomes the norm. In culture, a morality creep is the same: Social values of yesteryear slowly erode to the point where homosexuality is normal, abortion is just a choice and God is outdated. We know that for generations Hollywood has been the main bully pulpit for a loud minority pushing unbiblical values. It's through entertainment that the brilliantly executed gay agenda, for example, softened America's stance on homosexuality with *Will & Grace* (isn't being gay funny!), then sealed the deal with a

gay-cowboy Oscar-winner, *Brokeback Mountain* (isn't true love gender-blind?). The result: In less than a generation, the majority of Americans now favor legalized same-sex marriage, while two-thirds of Millennials—Christians included—adamantly believe there's nothing wrong with being gay.

But the kettle continues to boil over with other moral "creeps." We've quickly moved beyond celebrating same-sex marriage to fantasizing about love affairs with corpses. As ridiculous as that sounds, in this frog-in-the-kettle environment, it only takes a few years for an absurdity to become reality. Consider how much entertainment—from apps to video games to TV shows—centers on the dead today. We communicate with them, laugh at them, sing about them, pose existential questions through them ... and now we're sleeping with them. So it goes when a nation is content to ride a slippery slope.

I'm not writing to debate the chicken-and-egg aspect of whether culture shapes entertainment or entertainment simply reflects culture. For Christians, this dilemma is nothing new. More than 2,700 years ago, Isaiah painted a vivid portrait of today's American society: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (5:20).

You can't get much darker or perverse than romanticizing sex with a rotting corpse. Paul made it clear that in the last days, people would be lovers of evil who cling to their "corrupt minds" (2 Tim. 3:1-8).

But there's a bigger concern here for the church, the "sons of light" through whom God wants to shine His light into the world (1 Thess. 5:5). We can get riled up about Hollywood's extremes and its influence on our culture, but do we realize how far we've succumbed to the same spirits driving this powerful vehicle? Do we understand how much we're helping the kettle boil? Most American Christians are *consumed* with

entertainment. We pray, fast, minister and serve—all with sincere hearts—yet we're so easily distracted with thoughts of what's waiting for us at home on our DVRs, who tweeted what or if our sports team won again.

I'm as guilty of this as the next believer. And I'm realizing that unless I forcefully—*drastically*—change my media diet, I'll be caught in a boiling pot, with my spiritual health so zapped from the heat that I can't escape.

Many in the church are awaking to this same realization. We may not be the walking dead, but our entertainment obsession has caused us to become as numb as zombies to the (eternal) things that really matter in life. Before it's too late, let's deny our constant craving to be entertained and escape today's boiling kettle.

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