

What About a Return to Decency and Manners?

May I never fail to commend you on the value of your decision to choose Christian schooling for your children. I recognize that these challenging economic times may cause you to second-guess whether or not you have chosen right. Well, be assured, you have.

Please, however, never think that investing heavily in Christian schooling will lighten your burden as you strive to successfully parent and mentor your children. You have nearly overwhelming competitors for the heart and mind of each of your children: the entertainment media. It is almost as if the media take on the character of some sort of being that is intent on being the very god that occupies every thought of every waking moment. This powerful “being” conveys to our young people things of unbelievable crudeness and vulgarity.

I am amazed at how the media can take those described as the “beautiful people”—glamorous, handsome, exuding great warmth and personality—and present them in situations that probe the depths of crudeness, coarseness, vulgarity, disrespect, and seemingly every other aspect of culture and manners once considered absolutely unacceptable. Somehow, the media have the power to take conduct that is truly unacceptable and make it appear acceptable.

I am afraid that our Christian culture may be similar to the proverbial frog that ends up lifeless—boiled in a pot of water. At first, all is comfortable; but as decadence generates heat, the water warms at such a pace that we never realize we are moving toward an intolerable 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Caught off guard, we are consistently immersed in low-life conduct that eventually becomes common—or, worse yet, the acceptable norm. At that point, we are boiling.

In light of our present culture, it is interesting to consider England in a bygone era. Herbert Schlossberg contributed an essay to a book published to accompany the recent movie *Amazing Grace*. In the book, *The Amazing Grace of Freedom: The Inspiring Faith of William Wilberforce*, Schlossberg points out that before the diligence of Wilberforce and the religious revival that erupted, Great Britain had been “an often brutal society in which a woman walking alone on the street could expect to be at least verbally molested” (2007, 47). In a companion essay in the same book, Ted Baehr says of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Great Britain: “It was the most powerful nation on earth, an empire upon which the sun literally never set” (p. 40).

Sadly, this great nation slid into a horrifically repugnant condition even without the powerful “being” of media to help transport her. But now we as parents daily accept multiple hours of insidious entertainment proliferated through movies, videos, music, and television. And the content of those hours is beating away at our children. Potentially, this influence could reach levels at which the return to decency in our culture is virtually beyond possibility. That is, we could reach those levels unless we assert higher expectations—ones reflecting intolerance of indecency, ones demanding the now-scoffed-at notion of manners and etiquette.

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Christian schools cannot stand alone for a few hours each day in an attempt to counter such a powerful influence. Standing together to counter the media is a most important role for families who recognize the biblical concept of *imago Dei*, that all are created in the image of God. These families understand that therefore all should be treated as such. *Imago Dei* is a crucial concept. It offers a reason to be instrumental in nurturing an environment suitable for God’s creation, humanity. Would not Psalm 19:14 be worth our consideration? “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (NIV). In fact, let’s go beyond considering it—to reflecting it and nurturing it in the lives of our children.

References

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