

CAUGHT BY THE CULTURE

In 1985 a dear preacher friend suggested I read Neil Postman's then new book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. What a deep and important blessing that was. Postman recognized that our culture is racing headlong toward entertainment as a life goal and moving *away* from education, maturity, and success strategies. As such, on average we in the west are becoming less educated and more addicted to entertainment media - music, movies, social media, internet, etc.

Postman compares Orwell's book *1984* to Aldous Huxley's book *Brave New World*. He correctly points out that Orwell predicted a harsh, surveillance, totalitarian government which burns books and controls every facet of the culture. Conversely, Huxley described a culture in which books are abundant and leisurely amusements the goal of life. The books are not burned, they merely languish on the library shelves, ignored, and even scorned. As Postman's book describes, the population was merely *amusing itself to death*. Any intelligent observation clearly shows that Huxley has been far more correct in his predictions than Orwell.

But God, Himself, teaches us there is a third option, and it is obviously neither over-controlling tyranny nor irresponsible, lazy leisure. God's option is following in the footsteps of Jesus. We must remember He said, "I tell you these things that My joy may be in you and your joy may be made full," (John 15:11). God calls us to joyful self-discipline. The fruit of the Spirit begins with love and joy, and ends with self-control, (Galatians 5:22,23).

Peter tells us that the devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, (1 Peter 5:8.) Before a lion can devour, he must *catch*. And the primary way we get caught is by the culture. "Do not be deceived, bad company corrupts good morals," 1 Corinthians 15:33. Those who think they can keep what Paul would call bad company, are, indeed, being deceived. Like a bird comes to the hunter's call, today's culture shrieks the siren song, sin. Make no mistake, sin can be fun. Sin can bring pleasure. But the pleasures of sin kill true success and deliver failure and sorrow.

The culture will call you a dozen different ways, from frat parties to politics; from board rooms to bordellos; from the forced tyrannies of totalitarian governments of communism to the lax applications of capitalism. *Anything* short of scripture will fail to bring the joy of which Jesus speaks in John 15:11, "that My joy may be in you and your joy may be made full."

Ray Wallace

Further study: Rom. 6:13; 8:13; I Cor 6:9-11; 9:26, 27