

" . . it has always been about the battle for the mind!"

Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus said to him, *"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* This is the first and great commandment."

And the second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* "

What we love, we fix our eyes upon.

We always go towards what we love.

We always become like . . .

our loves!

The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts that are unworthy of Holy God.

Idolatry begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has yet taken place.

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Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever **things** are true, whatever **things** are noble, whatever **things** are just, whatever **things** are pure, whatever **things** are lovely, whatever **things** are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Proverbs 23:7

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The “things” we fix our eyes upon,
. . we go toward and become like!

MarketWatch

Published: Aug 4, 2018 5:09 p.m. ET

By Quentin Fottrell, Personal Finance Editor

Swipe. Click. Binge. Repeat.

Americans spend more time than ever watching videos, browsing social media and swiping their lives away on their tablets and smartphones.

American adults spend more than **11 hours per day** watching, reading, listening to or simply interacting with media, according to a new study by market-research group Nielsen.

That’s up from nine hours, 32 minutes just four years ago.

In the first quarter of the year, U.S. adults spent three hours and 48 minutes a day on computers, tablets and smartphones. This is a 13-minute increase from the previous quarter, and 62% of that time is attributed to app/web browsing on smartphones.

Television still accounts for most media usage, with **four hours and 46 minutes** spent watching TV **every day** in the first quarter of this year.

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" . . it has always been about the battle for the mind!"

Why is it that our culture + churches are overwhelmed by,
Malformed Relationships / Materialism / Debt & Entertainment?

Because the "things" we fix our eyes upon,
. . mold us into the likeness of what we see!

Media and Entertainment - Decadent: Total absorption with unholy media, gaming, and pleasure-seeking. This entertainment contains some [or much] immorality, nudity, profanity, promotion of illicit relationships, violence and constant use of God's name ["OMG"] blasphemously . .

crowding out time to be "alone with God."

These day-by-day, hour-by-hour, choices corrupt the heart and mind,
deadening the person to that which is holy.

This truth is evidenced by the fruit produced by our corrupted loves

Malformed Relationships: Pre-marital sex, fornication, abortion,
adultery, divorce, homosexuality + lesbianism and the break-up of families.

Materialism + Debt: Buying bigger / multiple homes & automobiles, purchasing luxuries [items not paid for by cash] or paying for expensive vacations with money borrowed on credit cards. This allows living beyond the limitations of the husband's income, causing both parents to work. The crushing debt load leads to choosing bankruptcy which defrauds ones neighbor.

Why do people have difficulty getting alone with God daily to read and pray?

It is not because we do not have time, training, teaching, or that we suffer great persecution, etc., it is simply a matter of . . .

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Spiritual Revival requires first,

. . the destruction of

idols in our hearts!

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "*Men and brethren, **what shall we do?***"

Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

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2 Chronicles 15 - The Reforms of Asa

1 Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. 2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

3 For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands.

6 So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. 7 But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!"

8 And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and **removed** the **abominable idols** from all the land of Judah and Benjamin

Then they entered into a covenant
to seek the Lord God,
. . with all their heart and their soul.

10 So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 12 Then they **entered** into a **covenant** to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 and whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 Then they took an oath before the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams' horns. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around.

16 Also he removed Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah; and Asa cut down her obscene image, then crushed and burned it by the Brook Kidron.

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1 Corinthians 10:1-7,14

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, or their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil **things** as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "*The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*"

Therefore, my beloved, **flee** from idolatry.

Then they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God,
. . with all their heart and their soul.

Colossians 3:5,6

Therefore, put to death what belongs to your worldly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient.

[A similar repentance like the Ninevites in Jonah 3:4,7-10]

*Father, I want to know You, but my coward heart fears to give up its toys.
I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and
I do not try to hide from You the terror of the parting.
I come trembling, but I do come.*

*Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and
which have become a very part of my living self, so that You may enter and dwell there
without a rival. Then shalt You make the place of Your feet glorious. Then shall my heart have
no need of the sun to shine in it, for You will be the light of it,
and there shall be no night there.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Name: Sign above / Print below

Date:

Hour:

Please email us a copy when this is completed, and we will regularly pray for you. Tell Somebody!

Email to: WasItForMeRom832@gmail.com

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Jonah Preaches at Nineveh

Jonah 3:1-10

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.*" So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk.

Then he cried out and said, "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!*"

God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way;

. . God relented from the disaster . .

. . and He did not do it.

The People of Nineveh Believe

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

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R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR. - The Briefing - April 8, 2020

PART I

"We Turn Our Minds Over to Them" — The Power of the Electronic Screen

As humanity continues to confront the COVID-19 crisis, Christians need to observe some very interesting patterns that are now emerging in human behavior—some old, some new, but all of them now seen in a new light. Now, just consider the fact that many human beings are now spending much more time with electronic devices than they ever might have imagined possible, not to mention acceptable or advisable. If you look at media coverage, even leading right up to the dawn of the COVID-19 crisis, it's interesting how many of those headlines were warning that human beings are spending too much time with their screens. Screen time is a major problem for American children, American adolescents, young adults, not to mention the rest of us.

But now almost every news story seems to accept the inevitability of more screen time. That's an interesting pattern for us to think about. For one thing, there was an article that ran in the New York Times a few days ago by A.O. Scott, and the issue of entertainment itself was raised in such a way that it ought to have our attention because it tells us that even in the midst of a pandemic, what many people want, indeed what they demand, is to be well entertained. Scott wrote this, "What do we do now? It's a big question. As a matter of policy, national purpose and social cohesion, it's the big question," he said, "made up of a knot of local, individual practical decisions. What actions can each of us take to stay healthy, connected, and sane to fight the dangerous secondary infections of boredom, selfishness, and panic?" Notice how that particular lead took a significant U-turn from where you thought it was going. Scott then asked the question, "How are we going to stay busy? How are we going to keep ourselves entertained?"

Now, as much as that might appear to be an irrelevant question, it's not. What it reveals is the fact that there really is a human urge in the midst of this pandemic to be entertained. Even as a significant number of Americans are working harder than they've ever worked before, another significant portion of Americans now has more time than had been previously imagined. Scott refers to the very question he asked, "How are we going to keep ourselves entertained?" Then he writes, "That last one may seem like a trivial problem with an easy solution. Lives and livelihoods are at stake and there's still plenty to watch on television." Well, of course, there is still plenty to watch on television, but one of the interesting things is that as you're talking about television, there has been this massive transformation from what was required in sitting before a big television set just some years ago to what is now almost an anachronism with most people watching whatever they're watching and being entertained however they are being entertained on much smaller screens and furthermore, with entertainment that is more often than not streamed rather than broadcast.

When it comes to movies, there are huge questions about the future survival of cinemas and movie theaters, especially the larger chains, precisely because once human behavior changes in a certain direction, it often does not return to where it was in the beginning. It often does not, as the statisticians would say, revert to the mean. But one of the things we recognize is that there is a distinction between watching something in the fellowship of others and watching something privately. One of the interesting questions is psychological and that is when will human beings feel safe sitting that close to people once again, as was once the norm in a movie theater or you might say on an airplane.

Alyssa Rosenberg, writing in Tuesday's edition of the Washington Post, raise the issue this way: "One question for Hollywood is how soon theaters can reopen. A related issue is whether audiences will have the confidence to sit in close proximity to strangers for an

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extended period of time." There was another interesting angle in the article by Alyssa Rosenberg. After all, the headline was, "COVID-19 Brings Us a Summer Without a Superhero." Of course, she's writing about the absence of a major release of a superhero movie in theaters, but there is a theological overtone to what she's writing about here. She begins the article this way: "The superhero movie formula is simple. Hero appears to be riding high, hero is temporarily humbled by super villain, hero regains the advantage and saves the day, but now," writes Rosenberg, "the real world has delivered a twist. The coronavirus pandemic makes these costumed heroes seem powerless." Well, indeed, the COVID-19 virus does make those so-called superheroes look powerless. The reason is, of course, they are powerless. All this raises some very interesting background issues also with a lot of worldview significance. If you go back to the period, for example, of World War Two when many of the superhero myths really began to explode in the comic books and eventually on the big screens, it had much to do if not everything to do with the ideological context of the time, the enormous life struggle against Nazi Germany, the fact that Western civilization was in a great battle against fascism and totalitarianism. Those themes continued after the second World War, but they took on different kinds of tones, especially coming from Japan. Understandably, technological issues became a great threat, especially nuclear warfare. Just think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But then, of course, the Cold War was another background and even more recently, the comic books and the superhero movies have taken on a new theme of political correctness.

But one of the things we need to note, and it's in the background of what Alyssa Rosenberg is writing about Tuesday in the Washington Post, is the idea that in the midst of a pandemic, superheroes can't save us and no movie that would portray such would be even credible. The great threat that human beings face right now is not cinemagraphic, it is biological.

But this incessant demand to be entertained, especially in the context of the shelter at home orders and the current context of the COVID-19 crisis revealed something about human beings. We have to fill our intellectual and experiential space with something. If we're not filling it with something other than entertainment, then the desire for entertainment only grows exponentially. But also, what we see is that human beings are giving themselves permission to watch things and to give themselves to entertainment when they would not have given themselves as much permission in the past.

Interesting article that appeared in the Wall Street Journal about many parents bending their own rules with their children and teenagers, at least in the beginning of the shelter at home orders, precisely because entertainment seemed to be something like comfort food. It was something that could be done in order to fill the time. But clearly, the Christian worldview understands there are limitations to entertainment. This reminds us of Neil Postman, we've cited often on The Briefing, whose book a full generation ago entitled *Amusing Ourselves To Death* indicated the fact that Americans in the midst of all kinds of genuine problems were finding escapism in entertainment, which was also basically trivializing the American mind. But Neil Postman was of course writing in the heyday of broadcast television. He could not have imagined the hunger for, the market for, and the availability of entertainment in the year 2020. He also did not see the age in which entertainment devices could be carried in the palm or in the pocket, where the viewing process would become ever more individualistic.

Amanda Hess, writing also at the New York Times, wrote about the fact that we are increasingly surrendering to these devices. As she writes, "In fact, a slavish devotion to our devices has come to feel like a practical necessity." She continues, "Social media platforms have been unexpectedly reliable in spreading information about the pandemic and in a time of social isolation, they have spontaneously delivered on their promise of community connectivity." She then writes this: "But they have also ensnared our attention with an alarming grip. The virus has clarified the dark bargain of these devices. We look to them to protect our bodies and soothe our nerves and in return, we hand over our minds."

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That's one of those statements in the mainstream media that really does deserve repeating. As she writes, there's a bargain that human beings have now arranged with these electronic devices. "We look to them to protect our bodies and soothe our nerves and in return, we hand over our minds." There's a sense in which we recognize that is exactly right. The bargain we make with those devices is that to some degree greater or lesser, greater if we are honest, we are turning over our minds.

PART II

ABC's 'Modern Family' Airs Its Final Episode Tonight: A Media Milestone Deserving of Christian Attention and Analysis

But then next, this takes us to a media milestone that certainly deserves very close Christian attention. I refer to the fact that tonight on ABC will be broadcast the very last episode of the series Modern Family. After 11 years and 250 episodes, the entire series comes tonight to an end. The final program is going to be preceded by a retrospective, but there is no doubt that by now most Americans have at least some knowledge of Modern Family, the television program, and it's important for us to recognize how that program entitled Modern Family has indeed indicated changes and even driven changes in the modern family as we know it in the United States of America.

Bill Keveney, media reporter for USA Today, noted yesterday the fact that this development, this last episode of modern family, is indeed a milestone. He cited Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd, the co-creators of the series, as saying that they intended the series to reflect "the changing make-up of families and the relationships they enjoyed." The co-creators had worked on other family based programs before, adult siblings in Frazier and Wings and an older father in Frazier and the program Just Shoot Me. Levitan said, "Once we came up with this notion of how families have changed, that brought us right to a gay couple." He said, "I was interested in telling a story that felt like my family, the way lives are changing with technology and social media." He then said, "We got very lucky in casting some excellent actors and we were fortunate to bring on a lot of very senior writers after the 2008 writers' strike." The article also cited Ed O'Neill, the actor who plays the character Jay, who said, "Like every hit show, I always think it has to be the timing, what the country wants to see at a certain time."

Well, here is where we look at the relationship between Hollywood and America and come to understand that it's a two-way relationship, but all the product and messaging is sent by Hollywood, not by the viewership. So let's think about that statement made by the actor Ed O'Neill. He said that the success of Modern Family had a good deal to do with timing, "what the country wants to see at a certain time." But it wasn't clear at all back in 2009 when Modern Family began that it was a storyline that Americans wanted to see. Back in 2009, that was still four years before even the Windsor decision about same sex marriage in 2013 not to mention the Obergefell decision legalizing same sex marriage that came in 2015. So the program emerged six years before the legalization of same sex marriage by action of the Supreme Court nationwide. When Cam and Mitchell, the gay couple featured on Modern Family as a married couple, when they were introduced, the vast majority of Americans said survey after survey poll after poll that they did not believe that same sex relationships were on a moral balance with heterosexual marriage, nor did they believe that same sex marriage should be legalized. But as we've noted within a seven year window, all of that changed and you can look at that seven-year window basically from the turn of the decade to about the end of the decade. Somewhere in there, in a seven-year period, the polling indicates that Americans shifted from a majority believing that same sex marriage should not be legalized to almost the same exact majority saying that same sex marriage should be legalized. All of this requires the huge question. How could that happen? How could such a moral transformation take place in such a short amount of time? Furthermore, you're looking at public opinion of a public that was

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basically the very same public separated only by seven years of experience. Well, you can't turn to the television program, *Modern Family*, and say we're going to credit or blame that program for having such a massive transformative effect on American morality but the fact is it probably did have more effect than we would like to think.

This is where Christians had better think very hard, very carefully. For example, in my book on these issues entitled *We Cannot Be Silent* published in 2017, I cited another USA Today article, this one by Marco de la Cava that was published at the end of June in 2013, just days after the Supreme Court had handed down the Windsor decision which struck down the federal Defense of Marriage act. De la Cava wrote, "Not long after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of gay marriage, Wednesday," so it was Wednesday of that very week, "Ellen DeGeneres," says de la Cava, "tweeted a simple congratulations to everyone and I mean everyone," she said, but de la Cava rightly says she could have added, "in Hollywood." The memorable headline of this article in USA Today was this, "Hollywood: Gay Marriage's Best Man." It was put differently in other versions of the headline, but it all came down to the fact that Hollywood deserved credit as being the best man at the legalization of same sex marriage. De la Cava asked the question, how could this happen? He writes, "The nation's pop culture machine has for decades now chipped away at once taboo topic so as to render it utterly familiar. Whether it's the antics of two gay men in the hit ABC comedy *Modern Family* or the brazen but heartfelt sexuality on display in HBO's *Behind The Candelabra*, same sex unions seem, at least on screen and on stage, to be an entrenched part of our federal union." Dustin Lance Black, identified as a 2009 Oscar winner, said, "Storytelling is the only way to dispel myths. Hollywood has had a rather important role in that. We are the world's storytellers." Well, that's an amazing statement and this milestone with the last episode of *Modern Family* is a good time for Christians to consider just how true these claims actually turn out to be. Here you have a screenwriter who won his Oscar for the film *Milk*, which was about San Francisco gay rights advocate Harvey Milk. He's the one who said that we are the world's storytellers, and to the extent that Hollywood is the world's storytellers, we need to consider the fact that that is a very, very powerful role that we've basically handed to Hollywood and it is a very, very powerful role that Hollywood is using and extending for a particular purpose with a particular agenda.

The interesting thing about this article published all the way back in 2013, almost seven years ago, is that Hollywood was not only bragging about its power and influence but was seeking to demonstrate it concretely through programs such as *Modern Family*, which at that point had only been around for less than four years. It is worth noting that the *Modern Family* program, by its very title, again, *Modern Family*, was insinuating that the family now is something different than the family had been in the past. And it was not only about normalizing a same sex couple and their adopted child as a family, it was also about looking at three different families all linked together in an extended family and only one of those families was a traditional two parent, husband and wife home, with the children living in the home. Otherwise, it was a post dual divorce blended family, as they are known, or it was the same sex couple and the household that they had established.

But as we're thinking about the same sex couple, Cam and Mitchell, in the program, we need to note not only that they were presented as very much in a same sex relationship, but they were also presented as very winsome people. They were very positive people. They were fun to watch on television. The acting was good, the writing was excellent, the storytelling was compelling. They were very interesting to watch. One of the purposes in that precise kind of portrayal, remember that the program began before the normalization or legalization of same sex marriage nationwide, they were particularly constructed as characters so as to normalize the idea of a same sex couple, two men married to one another, on television first and in real life second.

Steven Levitan, the co-creator of the program, said, "We've heard from many gay people and families of gay people that watching *Modern Family* has opened the door to those conversations and made parents more accepting of their gay children. Making Mitch and

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Cam's trials so normal," said Levitan, "helps change minds and hearts." So again, here you have the co-creator of the program telling us right up front, back in 2013, that the goal of the program was to change minds and hearts. And undoubtedly it did. It certainly had some role in that transformation.

Even two years before that article in which Hollywood was being bragged about as the best man at the same sex wedding, Bruce Feiler wrote an article at the New York Times with the headline, "What Modern Family Says about Modern Families." At that point, by the way, the show had already garnered six Emmys. It would eventually win at least 22 including outstanding comedy series. It won one of those Emmy's five years in a row. Feiler then ask the question, what does modern family say about modern families? He writes then, "From the beginning, the creators, Steve Levitan and Christopher Lloyd, conceived their show around a newfangled family tree. Jay Pritchett, the patriarch, his Colombian trophy wife, Gloria and their son Manny; Jay's grown son Mitchell, his partner Cam and their adopted Vietnamese daughter; Jay's high-strung daughter Claire, her goofball husband Phil and their three suburban children."

But one of the most interesting things to consider as we're understanding the historical role of the program, Modern Family—again, it began in 2009 it ends tonight—one of the things to understand is that at least some of the early controversy about the program had indeed to do with the two men who were in a same sex relationship. But the interesting thing is that many in what would become known as the LGBTQ community accused the program of a certain form of homophobia by making them appear to be so apparently traditionalist and normal. In other words, one of the interesting criticisms came from the gay rights community arguing that Cam and Mitchell were not gay enough. They were not typical or indicative of the LGBTQ experience but of course, even using those letters, let me just remind you that no one would really have known what LGBTQ meant in 2009 and the T was hardly even on the horizon. But before leaving this development, the last episode of Modern Family and its meaning, we need to consider a couple of other dimensions that might have escaped notice. One of them is the fact that the program came just as the ubiquity of these electronic devices and the development of social media began to mushroom in American culture. It was one of the first programs to break one of Hollywood's rules, which was that no one on a television program was supposed to be watching anything. But instead, the characters on Modern Family were often watching something. They were often portrayed with smartphone in hand or Phil's iPad. They were shown being entertained and in a new way, in a solitary way unlike previous generations of the American family that had to gather around that television set communally. As Bruce Feiler wrote all the way back almost a decade ago, "The characters in Modern Family are so immersed in technology that nearly every scene is refracted through a digital funhouse, an iPad screen, a cell phone camera, a baby monitor, a YouTube video. Characters," he wrote, "spend half their time glancing past one another rather than communicating directly." That was intended to be both humorous and ironic in Modern Family in 2009 but given the changes in America, they turned out not to be so ironic after all but rather incredibly predictive, even prophetic.

PART III

Say Goodbye to Television as You Knew It: The Transformation of America's Media Ecology

But there's still two other dimensions that are of interest here. One of them has to do with the fact that Modern Family ending tonight almost assuredly brings an end to an entire industry. That was the broadcast sitcom, because so much of the audience is no longer watching broadcast television. When Modern Family emerged so popularly, it in many ways rescued the channel ABC from its doldrums. It then led to spinoffs and further energy for ABC and it became a massive moneymaker for ABC. And as the program ends tonight, it brings to an end the idea of the big budget ensemble sitcom as a broadcast entity.

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One of the things to recognize is that *Modern Family* was fabulously expensive. Networks could do that when they could be guaranteed a sizable audience and the advertising revenue that would come. But in the day of all these technological devices, streaming entertainment, and individual choice, it's not going to be a winning economic proposition to try to spend that much money on any one program. The world has changed so much that no program like that, especially on broadcast television, is going to attract that much advertising revenue. That age is over. In one sense, it ends tonight.

A couple of other issues. One of them has to do with breaking the fourth wall. *Modern Family* was one of the first programs in which the actors would routinely at some point turn to the audience and refer to the audience, specifically address the audience, not just each other. Now, there's some very interesting worldview analysis just about this point. Why would it be called breaking the fourth wall? Well, it has to do with even ancient drama and the scenery for that drama. On a stage, you could have three walls but not four. You could look into a house, but that required one wall to be missing. You could have a back wall and two side walls looking into a house, but you couldn't have the front wall, otherwise the audience wouldn't be able to see the drama. Breaking the fourth wall, or as the actors would say, breaking the proscenium, meant speaking to the audience directly.

Why would that be important from worldview analysis? It is because once the actors address the audience, the audience becomes a part of the story. Early in the 20th century, this became an innovation on the stage where, for example, in the dramatic presentation of *Peter Pan*, Peter Pan turned at one point to the audience and asked them to applaud if they wanted to save Tinkerbell. Once the audience is a part of the story, there's a certain kind of wink and nod and that's exactly what was going on in *Modern Family*. Breaking that fourth wall in which the actors would address the audience was a way of saying, "This is about our families, but let's be real. It's about your family as well."

The most famous French playwright of all times, Molière, he also thought about this convention of breaking the fourth wall, but the classic dramatist understood that it would have to be done extremely sparingly. That's not the case with *Modern Family*, in which every episode had at least one major scene in which the actors broke that fourth wall. Molière understood that that would imply a certain form of intimacy, which when you think about it is exactly what the producers of *Modern Family* intended to imply.

PART IV

Every Television Family Runs Out of Story: Not So in a Real Family Marked by Real Faithfulness
But as we bring *The Briefing* to a close today, one final issue, it's important to recognize that one of the reasons that *Modern Family* comes to an end tonight is that they ran out of storyline. What does that tell us? It tells us that no family, real or invented, no three families put together in an extended family, no family is this interesting to watch all the time from the outside. From the outside, we tire of watching almost everyone who becomes extremely predictable. The parents' irritations aren't that funny anymore, the kids aren't that cute anymore, and the storylines aren't that revolutionary or interesting anymore. That's one of the reasons that every major dramatic program, whether it's a sitcom or otherwise, has to come to an end, especially when it has to do with the family—ancient, medieval, or modern.

What does this tell us for Christians? It tells us that God intended family life not to be lived from the outside, but from the inside, and that the strength of family life doesn't depend upon moments of absolute exhilarating drama, nothing even that might be interesting to outsiders. The reality of God's gift of the family, the family based in the covenant marriage of a mother and father and their children, extended family, yes—he awesome power of that family is understood from the inside out, not from the outside in. And it's based upon absolute unconditional commitment when the storyline is interesting and perhaps even more importantly, when it's not.

What we Love!