



## How to Cook a Frog

*Hollywood's Infiltration of the True Purpose of Family*

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**Y**OU MAY HAVE NEVER HAD THE URGE TO EAT A FROG, LET ALONE, LEARN HOW TO COOK ONE. THE TRUTH IS, COOKING A LIVE FROG HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH CULINARY EXPERTISE, AND EVERYTHING TO DO WITH A METICULOUSLY CONSCIOUS PROCESS OVER TIME. COOKING A FROG, THEY SAY, IS ALL ABOUT PATIENCE.

Boiling a live frog must only be done by those crafty enough to manipulate the variables. It is important to start with cold water like that of a frog's natural habitat. Deceive the frog by slowly turning up the heat one notch at a time—let the frog acclimate to this temperature change on its own terms. Continue this process slowly and precisely, until the frog...is a cooked little critter.

Deception is the key to this game. The last 50 years have shown with incredible clarity that the Hollywood culture has been methodically trained in the culinary specialty of frog cooking. From the 1950's *Leave it to Beaver* to the 2000's *Sex in the City*, the temperature gauge has been on a steady and certain rise. On the brink of 2012, a simple flip through the

channels will prove that the present-day media scene can be officially classified as "cooked." It is hard to say when the heat started to slowly rise, or to name a single culprit for placing their hand on the dial. The blame in this game has less to do with the "who," and much more to do with the epic consequences.

### Subtle Invasion

Nearly 25 years ago, a professor by the name of Allan Bloome wrote a seemingly prophetic book entitled, *Closing of the American Mind*. From a professorial viewpoint, Bloome states the many causes that were contributing to the decomposition of American society. Today, his words ring with an even heavier awareness:

Along with the constant newness of everything and the ceaseless moving from place to place, first radio, then television, have assaulted and overturned the privacy of the home, the real American privacy, which permitted the development of a higher and more independent life within democratic society. Parents can no longer control the

atmosphere of the home and have even lost the will to do so. With great subtlety and energy, television enters not only the room, but also the tastes of old and young alike, appealing to the immediately pleasant and subverting whatever does not conform to it.<sup>1</sup>

Even through Bloome's writings in 1987, the drastic impact of radio and television was evident. Now, approaching 2012, further technological advances continue to permeate relationships, families, and homes. The 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey indicates that 68.7 percent of households have Internet access.<sup>2</sup> According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project's research, 35 percent of American adults own a smartphone, and one quarter of all smartphone owners use their smartphone for most of their online browsing.<sup>3</sup> Media is no longer "entering the room" as Allan Bloome once indicated. Now, this agenda-driven media is invading every part of Americans' daily lives.

This subtle, but intentional ploy to redefine the American family may not be immediately apparent while watching the out-of-wedlock pregnancy documented on *The Secret Life of an American Teenager* or following the "normal" homosexual couple depicted on *Modern Family*. Everything is presented with the aura of relativity. As today's children are glued to their televisions, gaming systems, computers, phones, iPods, social media sites, and unfiltered Internet searches, the message that children internalize says that "normal" does not exist.

The deception digs deeper by alluding that everything is equal, there is no ideal family, and regardless of the clear brokenness families are experiencing, the children will be seemingly unaffected. This blatant lie could not be any further from the truth. The perception of the American family has changed; the crux of this change can be found in the American family's relationship with media.

Allan Bloome says:

My grandparents found reasons for the existence of their family and the fulfillment of their duties in serious writings, and they interpreted their special sufferings with respect to a great and ennobling past.<sup>4</sup>

Today, many parents are allowing the culture and world around them to define the reasons for their family's existence. Instead of "serious writings" as their source of information, parents turn to the infiltration of popular blogs, articles on the Internet written by unfounded authors, and reality TV shows about parenting like *Super Nanny*. Instead of interpreting "sufferings" in relation to their accurate context in God's plan, today's youth are prone to ask for a handout, scream "poor me," and even worse, devise every means possible to be "equalized" to their peers. Bloome continues:

The family's moral training now comes down to inculcating the bare minima of social behavior, not lying or stealing, and produces university students who can say nothing more about the ground of their moral action than 'If I did that to him, he could do it to me.'<sup>5</sup>

The average Bible contains 774,746 words of guidance, yet children today can do little more than muster Bloome's above example of a 12-word definition that sums up their worldview.<sup>6</sup> Disturbingly, it seems that the average Christian family has stopped being concerned with how they are engaging the culture around them, and because of this, culture has started engaging and consequentially, altering them.

## Family Redefinition

This troubling problem, affectionately called "frog media stew," is comprised of several ingredients, one of which is the redefinition of the family. What is a "normal" family? In the sitcom, *Leave it to Beaver*, the Cleavers are the classic 1950's "All-American Family."<sup>7</sup> The characters Ward and June play a happily married couple and parents of their two sons Wally and "Beaver." They live under one roof, they solve miscellaneous problems that come their way (most by the mischievous hand of Beaver), and they each serve a vital, well-defined role in their nuclear family unit. While this "ideal" family's tale may not fully account for all the woes life may bring a family, it does start with an important premise that has rippling effects. It starts with a mom and dad who have publically committed to support and remain faithful to one another. It ripples down to their sons, Wally and Beaver, bestowing a confidence in their family commitment by allowing them to witness the example of true loyalty and promise. This starting premise is something that fewer and fewer people have as they embark upon their marital commitments, and as a result, a promise that fewer and fewer children understand.

In 2009, the comedy series *Modern Family* entered the Hollywood "frog swamp" and is the antithesis of the 1957 depiction of the family found

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in *Leave it to Beaver*.<sup>8</sup> The show takes a satirical look at three loosely defined “families.” The advertising tagline states, “One big (straight, gay, multi-cultural, traditional) happy family.”<sup>9</sup> Sadly, there are few things one could define as “traditional” in the *Modern Family* equation. In the three “families” depicted, the treacherous pain of divorce is brought to breaking humor, the replacement younger “trophy wife” finds smooth acceptance, and a male homosexual “couple” adopts a child that ironically utters “mommy” as its first word. Without distinction, a divorced family, a homosexual “family,” and a *truly* normal nuclear family are all viewed as “equal.”

Jesse Tyler Ferguson, an actor on *Modern Family* was quoted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* saying, “Conservatives come up to us saying, ‘You’ve changed my mind about gay marriage.’”<sup>10</sup> And that is, in fact, their goal. The truth is, a homosexual couple raising an adopted child is not commonplace in today’s society. The United States Census Bureau states, that less than one percent of the total households are same-sex couple households. Less than a half of one percent of the total United States households are same-sex households<sup>11</sup> that contain children.<sup>12</sup> “Normal,” in whatever way the definition is manipulated, will never correlate with a lifestyle that fits these imperceptible statistics. As children nationwide suffer whiplash caused by increasing divorce rates, programs like *Modern Family*, instead, paint a smile on everyone’s faces, tack on a younger, more attractive wife, and then top off the convoluted equation with a bonus baby.

The homosexual family is being cast as much more commonplace than it is in American reality. “Normal” may not be what was once depicted with the Cleaver family in 1957, but alternatively, it is still far from this casual, nontraditional, and confusing decomposition that the Hollywood media portrays as the American family. This first ingredient of this “frog media stew” is more simply defined as a problem of content. Music, television, and the Internet, are far more apt to show the extremes of society, because a car crash is innately more captivating than a happy family living an ordinary life around their kitchen table. By watching the extremes like *Modern Family*, or the growing

inappropriateness tale of a high-school glee club, *Glee*, it becomes clear that, the Christian family’s hand is partially to blame for contributing to the nation’s “frog media stew.” After all, if those who confessed their Christian faith also employed it in their discernment of media, the Hollywood culture would no longer have the resources required to continue producing this intellectually numbing material.

## Parental Accountability

This leads to the second ingredient in this “frog media stew.” At the end of the day, this is a personal accountability issue. There is little that can be done to stop the extreme media content altogether. It is not a censorship issue, either. While things should be accurately classified and rated in a way that assists the potential viewer of content expectations, it is ultimately an accountability issue that rests solely on the shoulders of adult individuals in the family unit. An article written in *Relevant Magazine* states:

‘A colonial house was centered around a fireplace to keep warm. The fear was being cold,’ says Derek Melleby, the director for the College Transition Initiative at the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding. ‘Living rooms today are centered around a TV. The fear is being disconnected.’<sup>13</sup>

If connection is the heart of today’s modern fear, then family—not media—can be the anti-venom that pulls the media-infused poison from our minds and subsequent thoughts.

Before children are permitted to watch certain programs, parents can place themselves as the protective barrier by watching the programs first. For example, in the *Twilight* movie series, the leading lady, Bella, finds herself torn between the pursuits of two men; one, a dangerous vampire with whom she feels strong infatuation, and the other, a werewolf that seems safe, vanilla, and loyal. Bella may be forced between these two extremes, but fortunately, God does not offer this dichotomous choice for young adults who are making *real* decisions about their future spouse.<sup>14</sup> A single man after God’s heart can be both thrilling through the risk after marriage, as well as, loyal through the growth and solid foundation of friendship. It is no wonder so many young women are disillusioned in their dating relationships and marriages when they are ingesting the antithesis of reality without so much as a family discussion about the nature and qualifiers of *real* love. Christian society cannot be shocked to watch marriages disintegrate within their first few years after the veil is removed and “prince charming” is revealed to be nothing more than a mere human.

Also in *Relevant Magazine*, Reid Daitzman says, “A real relationship is one where you take out the garbage, pay the bills, and talk about your kids.”<sup>15</sup> It should not be assumed that children understand this when they are being flooded with covert messages

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signaling that a real relationship involves vampires, speeding cars, and scandalous heart-sweeping romance.

## New Societal Mores

The last ingredient to this “frog media stew” is the most difficult to conceptualize. The impacts of these inferences made by the Hollywood media culture have far heavier consequences on children than any scientist could empirically measure. The synapses that click in the minds of youth as they hear “bleeps” from the television screen, lyrics from Ke\$ha (who prefers to use a “\$” in lieu of an “s” to spell her name,) whining things like “boys trying to touch my junk, junk,”<sup>16</sup> and the anti-reality of two homosexual men parenting their adopted child, are scarily rampant. These ingestions can lead to peer discussion and potential experimentation, motivated by a desire to feel “cool” and “accepted” by peers and society at-large. These actions will turn into generations that accept these inaccurate cultural mores; starting small, these seemingly meaningless inferences will one-day morph into a treacherous reality.

## The Redeeming Antidote

Once a frog has been fully cooked and becomes “frog media stew,” it cannot go back. Even with this understanding, a redeeming hope can be realized. The starting point for this hope is not the government, nor Hollywood culture, for these entities have proven time and again to be far out of line with the realities of Scripture. The hope is found in the safety of strong families and church communities. Elders and other leaders of local churches would be wise to start a conversation around this subject matter amongst the parents in their congregation. In a daily dose of interactions, what proportion of learning is about God’s plan, compared to evidence testifying to the world’s rebellion? How is the truth being communicated to children in measures that parallel their stage of emotional and mental development? How are they being equipped to contend for their important moral convictions?

Redeeming media does exist. *Reach Records* is a production company that has found a beautiful “in” with America’s youth, and is holding firm to the truths of Scripture to accomplish their mission. Artists who have signed with the *Reach Records* label like Lacrae, Trip Lee, and Tedashii, offer theologically sound lyrics that encourage boys to become men of God. Lacrae’s song “I Love You,” speaks about his faithfulness to his wife, saying:

No divorce ‘cause what God brought together, we will never tear apart, gonna fight and never let up. And when I get up I’m back down on my knees, thank God my rib’s the best part of me.<sup>17</sup>

Young boys and girls that are being raised in broken homes may have the opportunity to listen to



these lyrics, learn the importance of loyalty to marriage and family, and be the generation that alters the alarming pattern of familial brokenness.

Music is not the only form of redeeming media. Movies like *Courageous* are showing the importance of fatherhood. Focus on the Family’s media-discernment site, *PluggedIn*, gives an excellent review of this movie that has the opportunity to change the course of American families.<sup>18</sup> The main character, Adam Mitchell, in his plight to be the provider, sees the void he is creating in time away from his wife and children. After seeking his pastor’s counsel, he joins a Bible study of godly men, and eventually vows alongside them:

I do solemnly resolve before God that I will take full responsibility for myself, my wife and my children. I will love them, protect them and serve them, and teach them the statutes of God as the spiritual leader of my home.<sup>19</sup>

This vow, publically proclaimed in theatres nationwide, Lord-willing, will have a rippling effect. All media has the power to infiltrate the cultural mindset of the “ideal,” and with movies like *Courageous*, and music from the artists from *Reach Records*, this infiltration can be one that honors God.

Finally, the best example of reality can be seen through the actions and visual communication of a low-conflict, God-centered marriage between one man and one woman. Only through the structure of marriage and the faithful efforts to build a home that protects the children, will the impressionable subjects of this media generation have hope to feel the sacred connection around the dinner table. The alternative, or this viral “frog media stew,” is but a *false* connection to a world that distorts the reality of all that is good, beautiful, and important in life. The truth is, it is not *just* TV. Now is the time to make the choice as a family, as North Carolinians, and as a nation, to make this media infiltration one

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that advances the Gospel and portrays the important sacredness of the family. After all, who wants to eat a frog, anyway? ❖

#### ENDNOTES:

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