

Comfort. Happiness. The two great lies of American culture woven into the very fabric of society and enshrined by our founding fathers. “They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Preamble to the Declaration of Independence). This idolatrous pursuit of happiness has deluded humanity for the last hundred years.

In the 1930s and 40s, three men envisaged problems with society’s direction and wrote dystopian novels warning of the consequences. *1984* by George Orwell depicts a tyrannical government which terrorizes its citizens into submission. C. S. Lewis foresaw a different danger in *That Hideous Strength*: unquestioned trust in science and media. While each of these prophetic works are applicable today, Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* grasped the greatest threat to our society: the idolatry of ease. His society gave up truth and beauty in exchange for comfort. They consume a drug called *soma*, which strips them of their emotions, leaving neither passion nor pain, just a pleasant high. The similarities to our American culture are dramatic and terrifying. *Brave New World* accurately depicts the most prominent danger in our society as comfort, which destroys our passion and our faith.

Comfort has destroyed the passion of our society. Just as leprosy destroys because of the lack of perception of pain, so too does comfort. Pain is the gift that grabs our attention and forces us to pull our hand off the burning stove. Without it, the hand slowly smolders away. Comfort dulls our senses, lulling us into exchanging what we hold dear for continued ease and safety. While pain stimulates us to reevaluate our lives and act accordingly, comfort allows us to slide toward destruction unaware. Huxley describes a comfortable society this way, “They’re well off, they’re safe, they’re never ill, they’re blissfully ignorant of passion” (220). These descriptions are disturbingly accurate to current America. As the most affluent country in the world (Global

Citizen Solutions), we view pain as the great enemy. Entire fields of medicine are devoted to pain prevention. Doctors are rated based on their ability to eradicate and manage pain. However, the sedation that eliminates pain also eliminates deep emotion. While we are passionate about sports, we have lost emotion in matters of real importance. Our families are falling apart. Over 18 million children live without a father in the home (America First Policy Institute). 42% of marriages end in divorce, an all time high (Terry & Roberts). Our society has become the dystopia that Huxley feared. Without pain as our stimulant, we have sacrificed our ability to care about what matters. Instead of holding fast to what we love and weathering the storm, comfort has lulled us into forfeiting our passion to end the storm.

As great as the danger of comfort is to our passion, it is an even greater peril to our faith as Christians. Suffering is an essential component to faith. In James 1:2-4, James writes, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Trials are a gift and essential to sanctification. Comfort, on the other hand, destroys faith. In Revelation 3:16, Jesus Christ says to the church at Laodicea, “because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.” Cold brings frostbite and heat brings burns, but the middle, the lukewarm, brings death. Our current culture rests in this lukewarm state. In the absence of pain and persecution, there appears to be no need for God. This is exactly what Huxley predicted in *Brave New World*. “Christianity without tears-that’s what soma is” (Huxley 240). When there is no pain to point toward the eternal, the need for God is dulled. Comfort lets us walk distracted. We lose sight of the cruciality of our faith. Facing little to no persecution in America, Christianity is declining. Twenty years ago 42% of U.S. adults attended church regularly, but now that number has

dropped to only 30% (Jones). Conversely, in the presence of pain, man more acutely feels the need for a Saviour. As Huxley puts it, “the tears are necessary” (238). In the presence of pain and persecution, Christians prioritize what truly matters. They must decide between hot and cold. They yearn for true heaven and do not settle for this earth’s poor reflection of it. Persecution sharpens and molds Christians into the sharper, finer image of God. Christians must understand that choosing good means choosing pain as the Savage does at the end of *Brave New World*, saying:

I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin. I’m claiming the right to be unhappy... the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow... I claim them all. (Huxley 240)

The Savage wanted to ride the rollercoaster of blessings and trials because the highs and lows make life beautiful. Living life with *soma* is life in a coma - no highs or lows, just a painless, worthless middle. To choose truth, beauty, and God, we must also choose cancer, starvation, and pain. Because without lows, life is not life. Without sin, God’s mercy and love would not be on display through Jesus Christ. Only through pain and a fallen world can we know the joy and goodness of our Father. Pain is God’s greatest tool for developing the faith of his children.

A world without pain is a world without passion, without faith. In his dystopia, Aldous Huxley correctly identifies comfort as the greatest danger to society. Human nature desires comfort and rails against pain. Yet pain is necessary. Rather than shunning it, we must consciously embrace pain and flee from comfort.

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