

## Little Brother is Watching You Too

George Orwell's book "1984" painted a grim picture of society. One aspect of that Orwellian society was a pervasive surveillance that existed everywhere. "Big brother is watching you," was a theme of that society and book. Orwell told his story as a warning against totalitarianism and the total dominance of the police state. In 1949, when it was published, no one had envisioned the internet, Wi-Fi, Facebook, or Google. In fact, to many people computers were still a thing of science fiction.

It is now nearly 60 years later. Today we live in a society where there is a tremendous amount of interconnectivity. We can phone, text, or Skype, etc., with almost anyone anywhere in the world. One of our pastors recently did a short-term mission trip to Nepal and was a bit embarrassed to find that most of the kids on the streets in the cities he visited had better smartphones than he had. Both as individuals and as society, we have incredible technical tools at our disposal.

But this brings with it the loss of privacy and the pressure to conform. In the book 1984, the central character, Winston Smith, was considered to be a criminal because he expressed his individuality. Big brother was always watching, and anyone who did not conform was dealt with. In our society today, there are many voices who are concerned about the government surveillance systems that are in place. There is the NSA monitoring phone calls. They recently admitted to destroying over 600 million calls that they have captured. Then in almost every city in America there are surveillance cameras focused on public spaces and public buildings. These cameras are recording 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Added to that, government regulators can track large financial transactions and trace those back to an individual's bank account. And this doesn't even include the corporate tracking.

Google and Facebook keep track of the sites you click and use that to filter the information you see on your screen. Numerous websites track who has visited the site and if you purchased something, what was purchased. In fact, you can join a site or become a member and then provide even more personal information in order to get faster service from that site. Your smartphone knows where you are and will make recommendations about local points of interest, based upon your expressed interests and habits. There are applications that will connect you with others who are using the same application and in close proximity to you. Airlines and hotel chains know what city you are in and where you are going next. And this is only scratching the surface. You are leaving digital footprints everywhere you go.

Now let's take a homeschooling turn with this discussion. Many government education officials are of the opinion that children belong to the state and not the parents. The state should be in control of the education and indoctrination of children. Earlier this month, New Mexico sent a letter to all homeschooling parents insisting they ascribe to a set of rules dictated by the New Mexico Department of Education concerning curriculum. In their letter they told parents they must comply, or the family would not be permitted to homeschool. That is just the most recent example I have seen. In the homeschooling association I work with, we have trouble with Lexington County school officials every year as they try to intimidate and make demands on South Carolina homeschoolers in their county. No matter where you go, there will be government officials ready to deny or restrict

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As homeschool parents, we need to guard the sanctity of our home as both the school and refuge for our children. We should not allow Big Brother to gain any more access to our lives than they already have. It is our responsibility to raise our children. We want to teach them morals and character. We want to be sure they learn true history, geography and science. In Orwell's book, he introduced the concept of "Newspeak" which essentially rewrote the history and redefined the key concepts in society in a way that ensured the government could fully control what people thought. We can see these same trends occurring in our society today as history is ignored or distorted and through political correctness, terms are redefined in a way that totally changes their meaning.

Which finally brings me to my point. Big Brother is watching. And Big Brother wants to control the upbringing of your children. However, we are often our own worst enemies because we are sharing to the world a lot of personal and private information with our Facebook updates, our Instagram posts, endless texting with people we don't even know. Add to that, in many homes there is a new persona present named Alexa or Siri that is able to record everything that is going on in the house and share it over the internet. We are Little Brother, surveilling our lives and distributing our surveillance footage everywhere around the world.

So, mom and dad, it is time to step back and think about what information you want the world to know about you and your children. Do they need to know that 4-year-old Tim is still not potty trained? Or that 6-year-old Sarah gets her letters confused? Or that 10-year-old Mark doesn't like math? Does the world need to know that you and your family will be at the zoo all day today? Some homeschool families are almost perfect in every way, and some families have numerous struggles with each child. Those families often benefit the most from homeschooling. So, don't be a Little Brother and surveil then inform on your family and friends who homeschool. I am not saying become Luddites and abandon technology, but be careful what you post, both the pictures and the text. Because it is quite likely that Big Brother is out there, and he is watching you, or at least he is watching your social media sites.