

Is Someone Watching You? (Abridged)

By Kyle Pope

In George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he painted a frightening picture of a totalitarian government in which every activity of Oceania's citizens was under constant surveillance. The oppressive state was personified by "Big Brother," and its ominous warning was simple: "Big Brother is watching you."

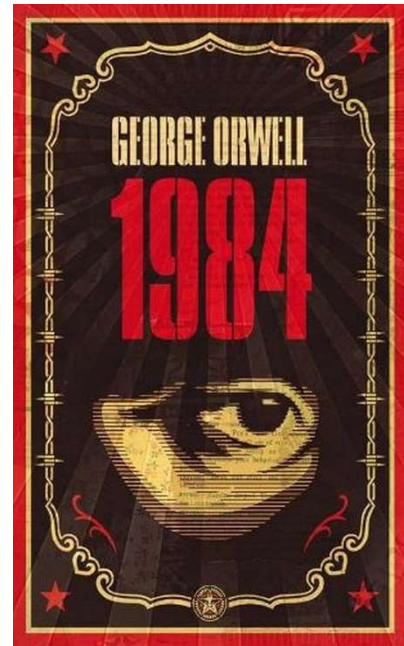
Orwell's vision was never fully realized. The year 1984 came and went, Western nations retained their liberties, and the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Yet Orwell's warning entered our vocabulary. Whenever government seems to intrude too deeply into private life, people invoke "Big Brother." We value privacy and resist the thought of someone watching us.

Christians understand this concern, because history records governments persecuting those who sought to follow Christ. Yet there is another kind of surveillance we should consider. It involves no cameras, microphones, or computers. It can happen anywhere, at any time, often without our knowledge. Simply because we profess to be Christians, someone may be watching us and forming an impression of Christianity from what they see.

It may be a child sitting near us at church. Children notice whether we worship attentively or become distracted. They notice when we miss services, but they notice when devotion to God is important to us. Our priorities teach them what their priorities should become. Paul urged Timothy, "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

It may be someone we have never met. They see us at a restaurant, grocery store, workplace, or on the highway. They may sit across the auditorium at worship or observe us in Bible class. We may not realize they know us at all, yet our attitude, temperament, honesty, and kindness shape their view of what serving Christ means. Paul wrote, "let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). Peter urged Christians to maintain honorable conduct so others might "see your good deeds and glorify God" (1 Pet. 2:12).

Someone struggling with faith may be watching. Perhaps an older Christian, discouraged by a wicked world, looks toward us wondering whether faith can still be found on earth (Luke 18:8). Perhaps a younger person is asking whether Christianity is real—whether faith survives disappointment, temptation, suffering, and loss. Do they see in us the house built upon rock, or one resting upon shifting sand (Matt. 7:24-27)?



Those who exercise authority may be watching too. Employers see whether we work diligently. Teachers see whether we listen respectfully. Parents see whether we obey. Church elders see whether we receive guidance humbly. Our profession of faith means little if our conduct contradicts it. Paul taught Christians to serve “as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph. 6:7), not with “eyeservice,” but “doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6).



Someone near the breaking point may be watching. Their hope is fading, their faith is weak, and the world seems overwhelming. They look around one last time to see “if there are any who understand, if there are any who seek God” (Psa. 14:2). What will they see in us? Bitterness, selfishness, quarrels, and worldliness—or a faithful soul

who loves the Lord? Could our perseverance give them courage to fight another day and escape “the snare of the devil” (2 Tim. 2:26)?

Someone is watching you. The question is not whether we will be observed, but what our lives will communicate. Is our light shining? Will others see our good works and “glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16), or will “the name of God” be blasphemed because of us (Rom. 2:24)? May we live each day remembering that our example may influence a soul more than we will know.