



from the desk of

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Us Against them, Part 3

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. (Philippians 4:8 (NIV))

One thing we notice at the church is that when something has been on display for a while, it “disappears.” It just becomes part of the landscape. When we pass something three or four times we just don’t notice it anymore. It just becomes a part of our everyday life.

This week my thoughts go just how much violence we see on TV/movies that just becomes a “so what” in our minds.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry puts things this way:

American children watch an average of four hours of television daily. Television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behavior. Unfortunately, much of today’s television programming is violent. Hundreds of studies of the effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that children may:

- become "immune" or numb to the horror of violence
- begin to accept violence as a way to solve problems
- *imitate the violence they observe on television*; and
- identify with certain characters, victims and/or victimizers

Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. Sometimes, watching a single violent program can increase aggressiveness. Children who view shows in which violence is very realistic, frequently repeated or unpunished, are more likely to imitate what they see. Children with emotional, behavioral, learning or impulse control problems may be more easily influenced by TV violence. The impact of TV violence may show immediately in the child's behavior or may surface years later. Young people can be

affected even when their home life shows no tendency toward violence.
(http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Children_And_TV_Violence_13.aspx)

And if this isn't bad enough, the violence that is depicted is only getting more and more graphic. The envelope has to be pushed or what is shown (even what is currently graphic) gets to be stale. Sadly, we get desensitized to it.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these guidelines for screen time:

Babies and toddlers up to 18 months old: No screen time, with the exception of video-chatting with family and friends.

Toddlers 18 months to 24 months: Some screen time with a parent or caregiver.

Preschoolers: No more than 1 hour a day of educational programming, together with a parent or other caregiver who can help them understand what they're seeing.

Kids and teens 5 to 18 years: Parents should place consistent limits on screen time, which includes TV, social media, and video games. Media should not take the place of getting enough sleep and being physically active.

(<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tv-affects-child.html#>)

These guidelines are certainly challenging. As your children get older you'll have less control over what they see at someone else's home - or when they're old enough on their own.

Further, once they've viewed a certain level of violence, it's hard to go back.

So what's a parent to do?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (same url as before) suggests:

Parents can protect children from excessive TV violence in the following ways:

- pay attention to the programs their children are watching and watch some with them
- set limits on the amount of time they spend with the television; consider removing the TV set from the child's bedroom
- point out that although the actor has not actually been hurt or killed, such violence in real life results in pain or death
- refuse to let the children see shows known to be violent, and change the channel or turn off the TV set when offensive material comes on, with an explanation of what is wrong with the program
- disapprove of the violent episodes in front of the children, stressing the belief that such behavior is not the best way to handle a problem
- help with peer pressure among friends and classmates by contacting other parents and agreeing to enforce similar rules about the length of time and type of program the children may watch

Basically, it's parental involvement. Be aware of what your children are watching. Be "counter cultural" in rejecting the violence. Be aware.

The verse I opened with from Philippians is challenging. There are times when I don't do all that good a job with it in my own life. However, the challenge is there to help channel what affects your child. Be ready to stand against the mainstream of the media and direct your young one to Godly ways.

In the coming weeks I'll talk about the sexualization of the media as well as have some ideas on media filters and other options.

Need further ideas with specific needs? I'm only an email away! (dcerandy@blcbcs.org).

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