Protecting Our Children

How Can We Protect Our Children From Worldly Influence?

OUR HOME - OUR CHILDREN

The family is the foundation of our society and satan is out to destroy this foundation. We have often allowed satan to enter our homes like a thief, and have not even noticed his presence. He has not just come once and disappeared, but continues to sneak in undercover daily, using the influence of games, toys, books, TV, videos, movies, music, computer games, the Internet, and above all school friends and teachers. Often parents do not realise how their children are being affected as they busy themselves with all the work they "have" to do.

GOD tells us to guard our gates. No darkness should enter our homes, but the thief keeps trying to creep in. How can you protect your home if you do not know how the thief works? We need to know and understand how satan has used significant events and developments in recent history to underpin his attack on the family and on our children.

The "baby boom", which followed the 2nd World War in the late 1940's, coincided with a massive government-funded rebuilding programme as the nations of the world, and of Europe in particular, cleared away the debris of war to start afresh. New schools and universities were built to educate the growing population. Peace brought in a new prosperity; more attended university and more had money to spend. With newly acquired education and wealth, the young gained influence. The word "teenager" entered the English language: the young were encouraged to freely express themselves with new forms of music, dance and dress.

A youth sub-culture came into being, creating a new market for the growing entertainment business, just as television started to gain popularity. "Educated" youth started expressing their "new" ideas and dissatisfaction with the establishment exploded into anti-government demonstrations and open rebellion on university campuses and city streets. The years of 1967 and 1968 became landmarks in the diary of youth rebellion: post-war baby boomers came of age with anti-war demonstrations across the U.S.A., street riots in Paris, and "happenings" like Woodstock, one of the early rock festivals, with wide-spread fornication and drug abuse.

The post-war decades from the 1960's onwards have seen singularly massive increases in sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, and rock music rooted in the occult. Undisciplined children craving inner peace and satisfaction are naturally rebellious towards God, seeking answers and fulfilment from that which the world has to offer.

This pattern continues today as the latest developments in communications technology are used to promote increasingly violent and pornographic forms of rebellious expression. Now the term "dumbing down" has entered our vocabulary describing the ongoing trend throughout popular culture in favour of decay and decadence.

In this sheet you will find some current examples of the attacks children are subjected to, but be aware that these examples are only temporary. The devil will continually change his garments as he maintains his attacks: he wants to destroy your family and he will come as a friend or as a stranger. Ultimately it is up to YOU to know YOUR GOD, for He will show you how to defend your home.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."  PROV 22:6

The Bible tells you to train your children. Through constant training children will learn to discern between good and evil. Parents cannot be with their children all the time to control what they watch or do. Children, whether alone or with friends, have to learn to stand up and say NO to things they know their parents would not agree with. This attitude can only be developed in children by thoroughly training and disciplining them according to the Bible.

School

The following is an example from one of our families in the Assemblies:

A parent was very upset to see their children bringing home examples of "witchcraft" which was being taught. They burned this material, which had been...
brought home from school, and sent it back in a bucket making the teacher aware that they would not tolerate this rubbish. One of the other parents heard about this. They had noticed their own child was suffering nightmares and removed the school witchcraft material from the child’s bedroom wall. That night their child slept soundly for the first time in a long while.

During the early school years children will mainly be influenced by their teachers and school friends. It is important for parents to get to know the teachers and to ask about the school curriculum to find out what is being taught. If you do have concerns about the content of lessons and the teacher is not co-operating, speak to the principal. Go to parents’ association meetings as often as you can, where you will also get a chance to air your views. As a last resort you may feel it necessary to change the school your child attends.

As the child grows older, school is often the place where problems occur. Many children are teased and tempted by other students. The standard conversation is about “who has seen the latest film” or “who knows about the latest game or craze that is on the scene” (e.g. smoking cigarettes or drinking beer). Naturally, you need to be in regular contact with the teachers who will possibly see your child more often than you do. Teachers should inform you when things seem to be going wrong. Remember many teachers in this generation do not take a stand for morality according to the Word of God, and would not necessarily think to inform you about points which you would know are wrong and need attention.

Games and Toys

"Monopoly", "Snakes and Ladders", "Checkers", ("Draughts" in the UK) and "Chess" are classic examples of games which promote positive interaction.

Other games such as "Dungeons and Dragons" (D&D), and "Magic: The Gathering" are evil and cause harm to the souls of our children. In D&D players build up make-believe characters and become deeply involved in the fantasy world of the game. Some teenagers have identified themselves so strongly with their characters that when their characters died they have then committed suicide.

What D&D was in the 1980’s, Magic: The Gathering was for the 1990’s. It is a role playing game similar to D&D, and has built a cult following among people of all ages across the country. One of the magic cards used in this game is "Soul exchange" and pictures spirits rising from graves. Like all the other cards in this ghastly game, it offers a morbid instruction: "Sacrifice a white creature."

Pokemon, Star Wars, Furby, Teletribbies and Beast Wars are toys which have been developed from children’s programmes and movies. Some of these toys may encourage violent behaviour. Children may become obsessive over them. They may want to spend money on them to collect all the characters, which can lead to greedy and addictive behaviour.

Pokemon is a cartoon and game that has become very popular among children and is sold by Wizards of the Coast, the same company which sells D&D. Similar to D&D, Pokemon is a role playing game, but designed for younger children. The object of the game is for the child to become a master by gaining power through confrontations between the various monsters. The players must catch as many Pokemons as possible if they want to be Pokemon masters. The more they catch and train, the more power they will have for future battles. Since the Pokemons are spirits, they have abilities to do such things as induce headaches, read minds, and suck out souls. Energy cards are used to strengthen one's own monster or weaken the opponent. Psychic energy, for example, enables the player to evict sickness, pain or confusion induced by a Pokemon.

Some of the commands used are: "Select your desired attack. Hold down the button until your opponent's life stops draining." "Once you have captured Zapados, you can use it to quickly lower the health level of Articuno."

Shops which sell D&D often sell other occult material such as tarot cards, ouija boards, and games involving the same. All occult practices are evil, opening spiritual doors to demonic influence, and should be strictly forbidden and avoided. This includes "harmless" fortune telling such as reading tea leaves, palmistry, astrology and horoscopes, and magic of any kind. Children often become innocently involved in these things, experimenting and playing games with friends.

The ouija board, in particular, is a powerfully dangerous satanic weapon which tends to fascinate older children and teenagers. Children have to be taught and assured that standing up against occult practices is not weak, fearful, or "chicken", but is strong, wise, and obedient to God who forbids witchcraft in any form (see 1. Samuel 15:22-23; Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

Children should also be taught that if they are ever afraid they should simply call to Jesus in prayer, asking Him to shield and protect them. Teach them also to bind and rebuke whatever frightens them, commanding it to go away in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Be aware of what your child is playing with. Gain advice and do not hesitate to throw away games or toys you do not agree with. Use these opportunities to teach children God’s ways.

Books

If possible, read books yourself before giving them to your children, or at least make sure your children tell you what the books are about. Check the books they take home from school. Do the books teach about strange religions, corrupt morals or show immoral pictures?

Parents should talk with other parents and consult with the Sunday School to find out about good books for children to read. Here are a few books for children: "Pilgrim’s Progress", "Treasure Island", "Oliver Twist", "Little Women", and "Huckleberry Finn". Books by Enid Blyton, as well as "The Little House on the Prairie" series, are also recommended.


TV and Cinema

"The eyes are the windows to the soul." (See Luke 11:34; Matthew 6:22,23).

According to A. C. Nielson Co. (1998) the average American watches 3 hrs. 46 min. of TV every day. By the age of 65 the average American has spent nearly 9 years in front of the TV.

In his book "Family Issues", Christian author Bob Larson reveals an alarming finding that should make even the most carefree father sit up and think. He states that "...a Michigan State University study revealed that when four- and five-year-olds were offered the choice between giving up television or their fathers, a third opted to give up daddy." According to another study, "the average five-year-old spends 25 minutes a week in close interaction with his father, but 25 hours in close interaction with the TV set."

Children should ask for your permission before watching television. Naturally, if they do not ask they will need to be rebuked. Go through the TV programmes with the children and choose what they are allowed to watch. Inform yourself about these programmes. Watch them once or twice with the children to check the content. Discuss any negative points that are seen and help the child to understand the difference between good and bad.

One bad example for many children is the popular comic series: "The Simpsons", where much hatred, sarcasm and disrespect is shown between the characters, especially within the family scenario.

Another relevant example of a bad programme is "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch". This programme endorses white magic, which is totally forbidden in the Bible.

"Teletubbies", aimed at younger children, and "Pokemons" look like images of demonic figures (Pokemon is short for Pocket Monster). In Japan, where Pokemon originates, there was a report about 160 children being rushed to hospital after having watched one episode of Pokemon. They all suffered forms of epileptic fits due to the strong colour shown on the TV screen. Make sure you teach your children that, although some of these characters and pictures seem nice, there can be an evil spirit behind them.

Many children's programmes on satellite channels are spiked with TV advertisements which are more pornographic or rebellious than the actual scheduled programme. It is estimated that the average child in North America sees 20,000 commercials per year.

With regards to movies or the cinema, be sure you know the contents of the film before you allow your children to watch it. The age rating does not give any guarantee that the film is clean. Maybe others in the church can help you decide if a film is suitable to watch. Various publications and on-line web sites can help you to be informed about movies or television series. For example, The Dove Foundation is a non-profit organisation which identifies movies safe for family viewing (Internet site www.dove.org). Another very good Internet site is www.christiananswers.org where TV films, movies, and computer games are rated for content.

There are many older TV series and videos which are very good for the education and training of our children, e.g. "The Nelsons", "My Three Sons", "Anne of Green Gables", "Pollyanna" and "Little House on the Prairie". These shows are acceptable and present a good moral standard.

Dr. Paul Fink of Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia has studied childhood viewing habits and concludes that "those obsessed by TV are less creative and more passive." Evidence also indicates that television interferes with the capacity to entertain oneself and stifles the ability to express ideas logically and sensitively.

The best way to keep our children away from evil games or shows is to give them other interesting things to do in their leisure time (e.g. sports, learning to play musical instruments, joining the Scouts or Girl Guides or other youth groups). Children have to be able to play and use their time without TV, gameboys, or computers. It is the "norm" for many modern families to get peace by placing their kids in front of the TV - unsupervised.

Music

What kind of music is your child listening to? There are many musical groups around today which are very popular. Often children are considered to be "cool" if they wear similar clothes, behave in a similar manner and talk like their IDOLS. Some children may feel left out if they do not join in with this attitude and the "in" crowd. Often they want to listen to certain types of music in order to belong.

Parents need to understand how much pressure children, and especially teenagers, receive from their peers. It may not always be necessary for parents to forbid some music. Parents need to get to know about popular groups. Check the lyrics of the songs and be aware of the lifestyles of the musicians in order to show your children what is right or wrong. Make children aware of the fruit of the singers and their "endings". Watch the "Hells Bells: The Dangers of Rock" videos where you will get helpful information to understand how music influences our society.

There are also useful sources of information on the Internet which can help you to check music. For example "www.av1611.org" is a web-site run by Geoff Goldwin, author of "Dancing with Demons", which shows the latest groups and pop/rock-stars. The lyrical content of current songs is also detailed, and there is a listing of rock musicians who died an unnatural death, in accordance with scripture (see 2. Peter 2:22).

Be there to help, and think about what you went through at school. If you have trained your children well from an early age they should not need too much convincing that certain types of music are wrong. However, if you have begun training later (e.g. if you have been recently saved and you have teenagers) then you will need to gain advice and have patience. This is a spiritual matter and, as with everything else, your prayer life will play a vital part in the success or failure of the training you give your children.
**PC-Games**

While computers are wonderful tools and there are educational games, these games represent only 1% of all those available. 90% of computer games can be classified as VERY dangerous. Even if their names sound "good", they may actually proclaim horror, murder and violence (e.g. in the game called "Messiah" a character - an angel - comes back to earth and has to possess the bodies of different individuals to fulfil his task).

Most of these games are designed to be highly addictive and require hours to play. This is especially true of the "console systems" which are units that connect to your television and you play with a hand controller. This includes Play stations, Nintendos and Sega systems.

Many games promote satanic philosophy and are far more dangerous than a movie or music, because in these games *the person playing controls the action* rather than sitting back as an observer. Also, most games have a soundtrack composed of modern techno music, industrial hard-core or rock music which a player is exposed to at the same time!

The vast majority of all games are excessively violent and as technology improves, so does the level of violence and how graphically it is presented. Most also involve the player being the "bad guy" and to play the game they must prey on the innocent and commit murder, robbery and a host of other crimes. Evil games and actions are seen as being "cool" and as each new game is released it seeks to outdo every other game before it.

**Examples include:** "Carmageddon" in which a player is involved in a car race where points are awarded for the number of pedestrians you can run over, with bonuses for executing people in special ways! The "Vampire" series involves a player actually being a vampire and sucking the blood of their victims to increase in power and challenge the next opponent.

There are also a multitude of RPG (role playing games) which mirror "Dungeons and Dragons" mentioned previously and basic "fighting games" which pitch two players together in an arena who then try to kill one another. All of these games are frighteningly popular and some have progressed to the Internet where people play one another on-line.

Often your child will hear from friends about games which can be played on the Internet. One popular on-line game is called "Quake". An international Clan-Network has grown in which players use different characters to play a game of "life and death".

The game developers are even aware of what they are creating with these games! For example, read what is written on the inside cover of ALL Play station games:

"For your health rest about 15 minutes for every hour of play. Avoid playing when tired or suffering from lack of sleep. Always play in a brightly lighted room and stay as far from the television screen as possible." There is also advice to see a doctor if you experience: dizziness, altered vision, muscle twitching, other involuntary movements, loss of awareness of your surroundings, mental confusion and/or convulsions."

What better indication of demonic influence could you find? These games are devious and VERY DANGEROUS. The industry is also one of the fastest growing in the world today and children are exposed to it everywhere. You need to be aware of this and the threat posed by such computer programmes!

There are educational games that can be useful to help children learn. For 4 years and up, "Disney's Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree Storybook" is a game with noises in which kids learn to match things. For older children, there are programmes such as "Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia" and "Microsoft Encarta Atlas". These interactive reference software programmes come with sound and video. For this type of software, parents should be aware that a license must be purchased for the programmes and that computers much meet certain hardware requirements (sound card, microphone, speakers, minimum Pentium 133, 32MB RAM, disk space, etc.).

**EVERYTHING KIDS VIEW SHOULD BE CHECKED FOR ITS CONTENT NO MATTER WHAT FIRM IT COMES FROM!** Get to know these games yourself. Do not just put in the CD and walk away, but see what your child and you can learn.

**Internet**

Guiding children and teens in Internet use is similar to guiding them in the use of other things that share elements of benefit and danger.

A computer with Internet access in the home may not seem dangerous at all, but its dangers are more subtle. As an unregulated medium, the Internet provides children with equal access to material which is educational or entertaining and to material which is erotic or violent. Parents should NOT give free run on the computer. It must be viewed and used as a tool only - and not for time-wasting entertainment! God commands us to redeem our time!

Also, as an interactive medium, the Internet brings people together. The same channels of communication which can connect children to distant friends and relatives can also connect them to strangers with bad intentions. In particular, chat-rooms, because of their level of anonymity, are often visited by adults who pose as children. Ernest Allen, president of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children points out that youths often "view cyberspace as a variation on their computer or video games and are not on guard against harmful on-line relationships."

The basic steps of protection include setting good boundaries, avoiding trouble spots, maintaining an overview and providing a good example.

**Setting Good Boundaries**

Three aspects of providing boundaries involve computer location, time restrictions and "technological walls".

**Location of the computer:** It is best to only have Internet access on computers in an open family area
where use can be monitored. This reduces temptation in a major way.

**Time restrictions:** Limiting Internet use to certain hours sends the message that late-night surfing is off-limits and that on-line use should be balanced with other activities.

**Technological walls:** A variety of tools give parents the opportunity to remove offensive material from the breadth of content available to their children. Filter programs can be bought which monitor the Internet access. Before purchasing any computer material or programs for the purpose of monitoring the Internet contact the Assembly's Computer Department and gain advice.

### Avoiding Trouble Spots

Children can bypass inappropriate material if they have help to avoid trouble spots. To that end, parents should ensure that children avoid unmoderated newsgroups, unmonitored chat-rooms, and unfiltered search engines.

### Maintaining an Overview

While it is important to trust your children, you should also verify your trust by monitoring your children's Internet use. Every once in a while, check the file history in your browser to see which sites have been visited.

An annually updated list of recommended PC games, books and web sites is available from the Sunday School Department. These lists include suggestions for different age groups and various sources where parents can gain further information.

### SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES

It is the parents' responsibility to train up their children according to God's ways (Proverbs 22:6). Though parental authority does not always fit the fast-spreading new views of social equality taught through the media and schools, we must obey God.

These suggestions will help you teach your children to make the right decisions when they are faced with the evil in society today.

**For Young Children:**

1. Share your observations. Spark awareness in young children with comments such as, "That monster looks mean!" or "That creature reminds me of a dragon," along with "Did you know that in the Bible, serpents and dragons always represent satan and evil?"

2. Teach young children a Biblical attitude towards evil before they become attracted to and tempted by ugly characters and violent behaviour. Make comments such as, "Who would want to play with that evil monster? I don't even like to look at him."

**For Older Children:**

When your children want a new game, toy, video, CD, etc., ask them questions such as:

1. What does this teach you? (e.g. about power, about magic, about God, about yourself?) Discuss both obvious and subtle messages.

2. Does it have anything to do with supernatural power? If so, what is the source of that power? Does it oppose or agree with God's Word?

3. What does it teach about violence or immorality and their consequences?

4. Does it have symbols or characteristics that link it to the New Age or occult powers?

5. Does it build a Godly character?

**For the Family:**

1. First, look at God's view of contemporary toys, games and cartoons. As a family, read Scriptures such as Ephesians 5:8-16; Ephesians 6:10-17 (the armour of God); Philippians 4:8-9; and Colossians 2:8. Compare them with the kinds of values encouraged by Pokemon and other role-playing games.

2. Model wise decision-making. Children will see and copy what parents do and say. Don't be a hypocrite! Discuss with your children why you would not want to buy certain things for yourself or participate in certain activities. Be open with your children and they will learn from your example.

Check your children's free time activities. What kind of games are they playing with their friends? What kind of activities are done during a school trip? Do they trade their toys and games? Do you know which games, books and tapes can be found in your children's rooms?

Involve your children in creative hobbies, such as music, sports, practical things like looking after their pets or helping out with jobs around the home. Teach them to be respectful and caring towards elderly or disabled people. These things will build up their character and help them to make wise decisions and stand up for their beliefs.

Search for good nurseries (kindergartens) and schools for your kids. In particular, when you move into a new area, find out about the local schools. Ask about their curriculum, disciplinary policies and procedures. Attend parents' meetings which are organised by the school. Talk to other parents and teachers to explain your point of view, and work together with parents who share your standards and opinions.
Get to know the families of your children's friends to see how they live. Make your home a place where young people will want to come; otherwise they will soon find a place outside your influence.

Parents have a big responsibility to raise up their children according to God's Law. They need to guide them and train them in the Truth. Children are a precious, yet temporary, gift from God. Parents will be called to give an account of their actions on Judgement Day! They have to use the valuable time when children are young to talk with them, listen to them and prepare them to be strong in their ability to stand up for "good" and turn away from "evil". Satan is waiting to get them any way he can. Are your children protected from his devious ways? Are you training them to stand firm in the Lord's battle? The time is so short and the cost so high. Your defences must be strong to win the victory!

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land... but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."  
ISA 60:18

Some scriptures to study:

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