



from the desk of

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Us Against them, Part 2

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. John 15:19 (NIV)

Anyone remember the old computer term, “garbage in, garbage out?”

It has to do with whatever information you put in the machine, that’s the kind of stuff you’ll get out.

Is it really any different with our children (or us, for that matter)?

There has been a lot of research on how media affects children. I’m sure that you are at least a little aware of this. The site Lifehack.org* gives the following stats on how pervasive media has become in the lives of our children and youth.

- 42% of children 0-8 years old have a TV in their bedrooms
- Children under 2 spend an average of 23 minutes a day reading and 53 minutes a day watching TV and videos
- 73% of parents say they would like to limit their children’s TV watching.

*<http://cdn-media-2.lifehack.org/wp-content/files/2013/09/media.png>

I won’t go into the details here, but if you’d like to see some stats you can go to the end of this blog.

That media influences are increasingly becoming more influential in our children’s and teen’s lives is abundantly clear. Just look around you (and maybe not farther than your own family) at how many children are locked into their own devices. We have SUV’s that have screens right there in front of the children to keep them entertained. Children have their own personal devices so that they don’t get bored (and since when is “boredom” a bad thing - it *can* lead to creativity).

All this being said, that children and youth will have “devices” in their hands isn’t going away. It’s what they do with them. (Some of our middle schoolers said that at their school the boys aren’t allowed to take phones with them into the restrooms - I’m guessing that they aren’t checking on the weather).

Focus on the Family offers these suggestions:

Here are a few guidelines from Bob Waliszewski, author of *Plugged-In Parenting*:*

- 1) Have an honest and ongoing discussion with your children about the importance of protecting their minds. In fact, Waliszewski recommends having this talk at least twice a year.
- 2) Use a filtering software like [ClearPlay](#) for playing DVD and streaming movies in the home. Set it to remove unwanted violence, profanity, nudity, and sexual dialogue and content.
- 3) Make it a habit to read movie reviews from [PluggedIn.com](#) to find out about what is in the movie before choosing it to view in your home or at the theater. You can also follow up with a discussion about the movie afterwards. If you are making decisions on the go, [get our free mobile app](#).**
- 4) Model wise entertainment decisions. It's an absolute certainty that if you say one thing and do something else, your children will pick up on it sooner or later.
- 5) Consider putting your family media guidelines down in writing.

*<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/promos/family-safety>

**<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/ministry-programs#mobile>

Advice from a site like Focus on the Family is solid. One site I looked at (called "Common Sense Media") did have a number of positive points - but as a secular site their recommendations did need some filtering. One person on that site had the comment that "Fifty Shades of Grey" was ok for teen readers. While this isn't the prevailing bent of this site, one just has to be careful with their suggestions. (...and *I'm not* suggesting getting Grey for your teens!).

A site devoted to families with a bit more of a bent toward activism is the American Family Association ([afa.net](#)). If you think anything I've said so far is concerning, go to their site for a while - but they also give ways you can voice your concerns. You owe it to yourself to check this site out as well.

As the children grow up into tweens and teens it only gets more difficult to help them with the content that they are exposed to. That doesn't mean that you don't stop trying to shape their own "filters" however. It's a great life skill to have.

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

DCE Randy

Below are the "other stats" I mentioned (from <http://www.csun.edu/science/health/docs/tv&health.html>) in case you weren't worried already:

CHILDREN

Approximate number of studies examining TV's effects on children: 4,000

Number of minutes per week that parents spend in meaningful

conversation with their children: 3.5

Number of minutes per week that the average child watches television: 1,680

Percentage of day care centers that use TV during a typical day: 70

Percentage of parents who would like to limit their children's TV watching: 73

Percentage of 4-6 year-olds who, when asked to choose between watching TV

and spending time with their fathers, preferred television: 54

Hours per year the average American youth spends in school: 900 hours

Hours per year the average American youth watches television: 1500

VIOLENCE

Number of murders seen on TV by the time an average child finishes elementary school: 8,000

Number of violent acts seen on TV by age 18: 200,000

Percentage of Americans who believe TV violence helps precipitate real life mayhem: 79