

## **Controlling the Influence of the Media<sup>1</sup>**

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### **A. Immerse your children in God’s Word and Sacraments**

Read the Bible daily with your children. Remind them of their Baptism and if they are old enough take them to the Lord’s Table at every opportunity. This is ultimately a spiritual battle. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

### **B. Pray for your children**

James 5:16 (NIV) “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

### **C. Understand how pervasive the problem is and why “Turn it off” is not good enough.**

It is important that your child become media wise. We live in a media saturated society. Your child literally receives hundreds of media messages every day: TV, magazines, billboards, Internet, and radios. Mom & Dad aren’t always going to be around to say, “Turn it off.” Often the TV commercial is on before you have a chance to change the channel. (Also, turning off a billboard is very hard to do.) So it’s important that our children learn for themselves how to think critically about the media and be media literate.

### **D. Teach your children to be a critical Christian thinker.<sup>2</sup> The critical Christian thinker...**

1. has a firmly developed sense of right and wrong.
2. understands that all music, media and entertainment is not harmless fun.
3. recognizes that many who are responsible for the creation and promotion of pop entertainment have, in most cases, values which are contrary to Biblical values.
4. doesn’t see anything funny about his values being attacked, ridiculed, or undermined by pop culture.
5. tries to honor and please the Lord in the choices he makes.
6. knows that God puts a premium on relationships that exhibit mutual respect, dignity and honesty. (People are never to be used as a means for an end.)
7. is willing to suffer the loss of a specific entertainment option rather than allow hostile ideas to enter his mind.
8. understands that God cares about how he spends his time.
9. when confronted with unfamiliar territory he asks advice from parents, pastors and Christian peers whom he respects.

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this outline is taken from numerous sources. Footnotes give credit to the original authors. This outline is not copyrighted. Please feel free to copy and distribute it as much as you like.

<sup>2</sup> 1-9 are adapted from, Robert G. DeMoss, Learn To Discern, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 88.

10. is media literate. He knows that all media messages are constructed. He knows how to ask probing questions to examine these constructed messages such as:
  - a. Who is the author and what is the purpose of this message?
  - b. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
  - c. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented?
  - d. Is this message encouraging me to do something contrary to my values?
  - e. How might different people interpret this message differently?
  - f. What is omitted from this message?

**E. Take Control of the TV Set:**

1. Set a good example. Do not watch shows that glamorize violence or immorality.
2. Do not leave the TV on when no one is watching. It becomes too tempting for children to stop what they are doing and start watching something that catches their attention.
3. Do not keep the TV on during mealtime. It is distracting and inhibits good communication.
4. Discuss the issue of violence with your family. Make it a family decision that violence will have no place in your home—never, under any circumstances. That includes TV, music, and video games. That also includes siblings pushing one another.
5. As much as possible, schedule your children's time. Encourage other activities like sports, hobbies, games, music lessons, crafts, and scouts. Allow only a small time for TV.
6. Discuss a TV schedule. Plan with your family what shows they will watch. Explain to your children what is good about some shows and what is bad about others. Use this as an opportunity to share your Christian values.
7. Watch TV with your children. Talk to them during the show to explain to them the moral (or immoral) implications of what they are seeing. Use this as another opportunity to explain your Christian values.
8. Keep the TV in a place where you can easily monitor what is on and who is watching it. Keep the TV out of your children's bedroom.
9. When a good program for children does come on TV you may want to tape it so the children can watch it again later.
10. Know what your children are watching when they are away from home. Ask what they have watched. Discuss the content. You may want to make a phone call to the parents of your children's friends and share your concerns.

**F. Teach your children how to cut through the lies of advertising<sup>3</sup>**

1. Materialism-Happiness, the meaning of life, and personal fulfillment can come from owning more things.
2. Existentialism- Live for the moment. Right now is all that counts
3. Individualism- The most important person in your life is you. Be sure to always get your fair share.
4. Hedonism- Pleasure happiness and fun are the primary purposes in life. Do whatever it takes to minimize discomfort and maximized pleasure.

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<sup>3</sup> DeMoss, 103-104.

5. Secularism- God is not important. Spiritual doctrines or religious themes are insignificant.

### **G. Recognize the Gimmicks of Advertising**

1. Normalization- Everyone has one. Be part of the crowd.
2. Glamorization- All the cool people have one. You can have one and be cool too.
3. Emotional Transfer- That is so cute. I really like it. (often uses children and animals)

### **H. Make the Most out of Music<sup>4</sup>**

1. Set a family standard. Discuss with your family what kind of music is and is not acceptable in your home. Use this as an opportunity to discuss your Christian faith and values.
2. Buy back your teens CD's that do not meet your family standard. (Of course buy them back at a depreciated rate. These are used goods.)
3. Know what your children are buying and what they are listening to.
  - a. Either go with them when they buy a new CD, or
  - b. Insist on seeing it when they bring one home.
  - c. Look at the label. Note the warning. Note the pictures.
  - d. If you can't understand the lyrics look them up on the Internet.
  - e. <http://digilander.iol.it/lerenti/lyrics/lyrics.htm> or <http://search.lyrics.com/cgi-bin/dir.cgi?etype=odp&passurl=/Arts/Music/Lyrics/>
4. If your child wants to go to a concert, go with him (if possible). Discuss the music and the performance over pizza afterwards.
5. Encourage your children to pray for the rock stars who are not Christians.
6. Encourage your child to listen to Christian music.

### **I. Use the Internet Cautiously<sup>5</sup>**

1. Be aware of the concerns:
  - a. Children can easily link onto a page with information, pictures, or conversation that parents deem too sexual, violent, racist, or offensive.
  - b. In chat rooms the child may become a target of unwanted attention from adults, older teens or other children.
  - c. Children have become a target market on the net, with companies offering prizes, games, etc. for family information.
  - d. Some commercial sites, seemingly offering educational information or entertainment, are really deceptive advertising selling products to children.
2. Know what you can do:
  - a. Use Internet blocking software or filtering system. (*Some you load onto the computer at home, others can be activated through your Internet provider.*)

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from DeMoss, 113-120.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from "The Internet and your Family" by the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org/family/interfamily.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/interfamily.htm), and "Internet Filters: Making Web Surfing Safer for Children" by the National Institute on Media and the Family, [www.madiaandthefamily.org/research/fact/internet.shtml](http://www.madiaandthefamily.org/research/fact/internet.shtml).

*Teens who know a lot about computers may be able to bypass the filtering system.)*

- b. Talk to your child about Internet safety.
- c. Set limits on the amount of time your child can spend on-line each day or week. Consider using an alarm clock or timer in case you or your child loses track of time.
- d. Do not let surfing the Net take the place of homework, playing outside or with friends, and pursuing other interests.
- e. Make sure your child knows that people on-line are not always who they say they are and that on-line information is not necessarily private.
- f. Teach your children the following:
  - ☛ NEVER give out personal information (including name, address phone number, age, race, school name or location, or friend's names without parental permission).
  - ☛ NEVER use a credit card on-line without parental permission.
  - ☛ NEVER share passwords, even with friends.
  - ☛ NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone she meets on-line, unless parents approve of the meeting and go with your child to a public place. Teenagers in particular need to be aware of the risks.
  - ☛ NEVER respond to messages that make her feel confused or uncomfortable. Your child should ignore the sender, end the communication, and tell you or another trusted adult right away.
  - ☛ Never use bad language or send mean messages on-line.

## **J. Use Video Games wisely <sup>6</sup>**

1. Avoid the bad games
  - a. Problems are resolved quickly with little personal involvement.
  - b. Information is given using little or no personal effort.
  - c. The best way to solve a problem is to kill or mutilate the source of the problem.
  - d. Contains foul language, scantily dressed images or any immoral behavior.
  - e. Instinctual reactions are of more value than thoughtful, responsible behavior
  - f. Personal imagination in problem solving isn't important and not really needed.
2. Look for good games
  - a. Problems are solved through patience, personal initiative, perseverance, tolerance, and flexibility.
  - b. Gathering information requires work. Information must be carefully analyzed in order to make informed decisions.
  - c. Complexity is usually involved in defining and solving problems.
  - d. A solution in one instance might not work as a solution in another instance. Thinking skills such as planning, decision-making, organizing information, predicting outcomes, experimenting with trial solutions, evaluating ideas, analyzing solutions and their consequences, will make you a winner.

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<sup>6</sup> Bob McCannon, *Media Literacy Catalyst Resources* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: New Mexico Media Literacy Project, 1998), 122, taken from the New Mexico Media Newsletter, Summer 1995, page 10.

3. Become aware of the video game ratings system:
  - a. EC: Early childhood, 3+
  - b. KA: Kids to adults
  - c. E: (Everyone) As of January 1998
  - d. T: (Teens) 13+ will contain some violence mild profanity and sexual themes.
  - e. M: (Mature) 17+ more intense violence, profanity and sex
  - f. A: (Adult Only) 18+ extreme graphic violence and sexual themes
  - g. RP: (Rating Pending) Product is waiting final rating.
  
4. Other Helpful Tips:<sup>7</sup>
  - a. Limit game playing time. (Recommended: no more than one hour per day.)
  - b. Play the games with your child to become familiar with them.
  - c. Help the children in choosing which games to buy.
  - d. Require that homework and jobs are done before playing video games.
  - e. Do not put a video game set in a child's room where they can shut the door and isolate themselves.
  - f. Talk with your children about the contents of the game.

**K. Become aware of the resources that are out there.**

1. Search for “media literacy” on the Internet. You will find all kinds of material—some good and some useless.
2. Go to [WWW.CMLI.ORG](http://WWW.CMLI.ORG)
  - a. for free links to many good sights.
  - b. to purchase books and tapes.
3. Go to [www.mediaandthefamily.org](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org) for many ideas, resources and reviews.
4. Go to <http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/HomePage> for a wealth of other media literacy information.

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<sup>7</sup> *Effects of Video Game Playing on Children*, by the National Institute on Media and the Family, [www.mediaandthefamily.org/research/fact/effect.shtml](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org/research/fact/effect.shtml).