

"Flee from sexual immorality."

- I Corinthians 6:18 (NIV)

## THE CHURCH AND SEXUAL ABUSE

BY WALT MUELLER

### TOP 10 ACTIVITIES DONE SIMULTANEOUSLY WHILE ONLINE SEP. AND OCT. 2008 (SOURCE: eMarketer)

1. Listen to music
2. Talk on the phone
3. Watch TV
4. Have a snack
5. Eat a meal
6. Listen to the radio
7. Interact with others
8. Home clerical work
9. Office work
10. Play video games

### YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

"I really don't believe that you will love the same thing when you're 20 as you do at 30. So that was my rule: Before the age of 25, I would never get married. I feel like you have to get to know yourself, know what you want, spend some time by yourself and be proud of who you are before you can share that with someone else."

- Beyonce, 27, speaking about her marriage to Jay-Z earlier this year, *Seventeen*, December 2008/January 2009

Child sexual abuse – defined as an act of assault or exploitation by a person who has authority over or the trust of a child – is at epidemic proportions. Because only 25 percent of cases are ever reported and only one victim in ten will ever take the initiative on their own to tell, the estimates and statistics are extremely conservative. Some experts are now saying that by the time they reach the age of 16, one out of every three girls and one out of every five boys will have been sexually abused.

And if you're tempted to think that this is the kind of stuff that only happens "out there," think again. *Christianity Today* magazine recently reported that over the course of the last three years, an average of 23 new articles each day have appeared in secular media sources revealing sexual abuse allegations in Protestant churches in the United States. Sexual abusers and adults prone to engage in emotional enmeshments with minors will seek out places where kids gather, where trust runs deep and wide, where it's believed that you're safe and where there are few protective measures in place. It's a place where it's easy to groom young victims.

It is estimated that there are now 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse living in America today. Not only do you know victims, chances are that you might be a victim yourself. What can your church do to stem the tide? Here are some suggestions.

First, talk about it. . . . over, and over again. Make sure that everyone in your church – young and old alike – understands the reality and pervasiveness of child-

hood sexual abuse. Not only does this open the door to recognize that sexual abuse is a very real social and spiritual problem that can't be denied, but it will fuel a "what should we do about it?" mentality that leads to the development of healthy preventative and response measures.

Second, establish protective policies in your church and youth group. Work to implement policies and training that will reduce the risk of making it easy to put kids into the hands of sexual predators. Screen your volunteers. Require interviews and background checks. Implement oversight and accountability.

Third, develop a redemptive plan that can be enacted when childhood sexual abuse is discovered. Don't fall into the trap of believing that you have the knowledge and ability to intervene and do what needs to be done from start to finish. You don't. Highly trained and competent counselors must be employed to work with the victims *and* the perpetrator.

Finally, focus on the victim. Believe it or not, they are oftentimes forgotten. There are even situations where innocent young victims are somehow blamed. The church must go out of its way to affirm young victims who come forward. Not only does this promote the process of healing for the victim, but it fosters a climate where other victims too scared to speak come to see the church as a safe place from which to launch onto the road to restoration.

If we are faithful and obedient, more and more of our kids can look forward to a life where things will be more like the way they're supposed to be.

## CPYU TREND ALERT: MUSIC SIMULATION GAMES

It's important for us as parents to not only know and monitor the games our kids are playing, but to even have some fun by attempting to play with them. Now, one of the newer and most popular genres of video games is providing parents and teens a great opportunity to not only spend some time together, but to enter into each other's generational worlds. Music simulation games like the popular *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* accounted for one-third of the growth in the

video game industry over the last year. They're especially popular among girls, as fifty-three percent of those who play them are female. Not only that, these music simulation games have surpassed sports titles in popularity. Have some fun with your kids. Play with them. Talk to them about the music that was part of your world. And, be sure to use your time to teach them to think Christianly about their music choices.

## LATEST RESEARCH: YOUTH ETHICS

A recent YouTube video featured a teenage girl instructing her peers in how to effectively cheat on tests. The tutorial for cheating had over one-hundred-thousand hits during the first week it was posted. In a world where truth is relative and everybody's doing it, cheating among our children and teens has now reached epidemic proportions. The Josephson Institute for Ethics found that seventy-one percent of our kids admit to cheating on an exam at least once in the past twelve months. Forty-five percent admit doing so two or more times.

Ninety-two percent lied to their parents in the past twelve months, and seventy-nine percent did so two or more times. Seventy-eight percent lied to a teacher, and fifty-eight percent admitted doing so two or more times. Parents, right and wrong do exist, and we must be teaching and modeling high standards of morality to our kids on a consistent basis. Followers of Jesus Christ follow Him in His will and His way. That will and way has no room for cheating or lying.



## FROM THE WORD

New Year's is a time when we make resolutions. Typically our New Year's resolutions include the addition of something to our schedules and lifestyles that was never a part of our life, or if it was, it's long since been forgotten. This year, why not resolve to take some things away, rather than add something new? Resolve to take something away from your own busy parental lifestyle *and* to do the same for your teens. By clearing things from your schedules, you'll be providing your family with the gift of much-needed time for silence, reflection, and thought.

All of us, including our kids, need a place to decompress. Jesus invited those who were burdened, heavy-laden, and weary to come to Him for rest. Invite your kids into an un-

derstanding and experience of the "peace that passes understanding" that is theirs in Christ as they take their anxiousness to Him (Philippians 4). Their childhood and adolescent experience should not be all about busyness and activity. Rather, it should be a period of life that includes peace and rest. Give them opportunities to spend lengthy amounts of time in conversation with you and other adults by giving them a chance to talk about life and blow off steam. Invite them into the quiet of God's presence by lowering the noise – both literal and figurative – that tends to characterize so many of our hectic family schedules and lives. Lead them to listen to God through your teaching and as they meditate on His Word. Silence is golden. We need it. And our kids crave and need it too.

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## IN THE NEWS: MEDIA AND LACK OF SLEEP

You might find it surprising that researchers report that seven in ten eight-to-eighteen year olds has a television set in their bedroom. Life in an increasingly high-tech world means that more and more of our kids are able to use a variety of media devices in the unsupervised privacy of their own rooms.

One study recently found that kids with four or more electronic devices in their bedrooms are twice as likely to fall asleep in school or while studying. We shouldn't be at all surprised, as a

majority of kids have cell phones – and many of them are taking those phones to bed, where they spend a good portion of the night texting and talking with friends. Physicians are now linking high blood pressure in children and teens to this media-induced lack of sleep.

What media devices and outlets does your child have in their room? Perhaps some or all of them should be removed. God has established a daily rhythm for our bodies, and that rhythm includes sleep. Are your kids jeopardizing their health?

