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A Disrespectful Culture

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

“Our children live in a culture of disrespect, and the cost is incalculable,” says Peter Yarrow. Statistics show 160,000 kids are afraid to go to school, and well over 30 percent of today’s children admit to being bullied at school. Yarrow, of the Peter, Paul, and Mary singing group, sees this culture of disrespect as a “national crisis.” Yarrow, along with his daughter, is making a difference in Illinois public schools by implementing his program, Operation Respect. He attributes much of this growing epidemic to the dehumanizing entertainment children have at their disposal.

The National Institute on Media and the Family is singing the same tune, as their research shows that even children who consume media violence early in the school year are more likely to see the world as a more hostile place and act more aggressively later in the school year.

This recent finding is an important one because of several implications. Multiple types of media violence exposure, including television, video games, and movies were considered; and the findings suggest that this type of media exposure may be related to lower grades in school and physical and verbal aggressive behavior.

The children who displayed antisocial and aggressive behavior are the ones who were more

likely to be rejected by their peers, which leads to more educational and social problems for the child. Media violence appears to affect all children, boys and girls, and affect those who were already aggressive as well as those who were not.

This study also found that if parents are more involved in their children’s media habits, the risk of antisocial behavior is decreased. That’s where you, the parents and other important family members,

come in! Who is teaching values to your kids? Is there more influence from the media than from you? We live in a culture that is now being identified as a culture of disrespect, and Christians are not immune nor are they necessarily non-participants. Violence and aggressive behavior do not teach the value of respect.

A culture of disrespect is part of a “co-violent” society, one that celebrates mayhem while simultaneously condemning it. While violence and the media are inevitable, exposing ourselves to the negative aspects of it over and over reinforces the disrespectful aspects of our society. It is penetrating the hard-wiring of our children’s psyches.

Perhaps we should not be surprised at this. God’s Word predicts that Jesus will return at a time of unprecedented crime and violence (Psalm 119:126). But let us be committed to sacrifice some of our wants to the needs of our children.

Children need to see respect, hear it, breathe it, and feel it over and over again. I encourage you to take note of the values you are teaching those children for whom you are responsible by the types of media and the words and actions you are condoning in your home.

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