

¶¶ for Parents

April 18, 2005

Maintaining a G rated school in an R rated culture

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Matthew 18:6

In any group of covenant families, there are times when issues of community standards are raised. Most Christians of good will want to set a high standard without becoming Pharisaical. As the verse above reminds us, it would be a serious thing to rob a child of innocence or cause him to sin.

Having lunch with our children gives me a chance to interact with them on an informal basis. When I share a joke, they naturally want to reciprocate. To my surprise, I have had to do more editing this year than in recent memory. While none of the items I have asked students to refrain from are in the "adults only" category, they often depict distasteful bodily functions (especially fascinating to little boys). My general response has been that we don't speak of these things while others are eating.

Teachers have also reported to me recently of stories repeated from movies that seem too mature for some of our little ones to have seen. Although we have spoken directly to the parents of these students, I thought it may be helpful here to talk about standards for our whole school.

While we realize that standards regarding these things may differ from home to home, it is important to show deference when in the fellowship of other Christians. Some may qualify as "weaker brethren" (Romans 15:1) while others may actually be provoked to sin. Showing deference means not living for ourselves alone, but considering the sensibilities of others.

Some parents might feel that this is teaching their children to be duplicitous, or hypocritical, but all families do this in some form already. Some family business is harmless (birthday surprises) and some requires discretion (why Uncle Ted can't visit us any more). It is appropriate to teach our children how to be discrete, deferential, and inoffensive.

I tried to teach my own boys about "real life" in Biblical terms. By reading the Bible to them from an early age, I was able to provide a context for the seamier side of life in terms of what God expects of us. Hence, the first time one of them heard the word "gay" at school, I was able to relate this term to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. This context prevented him (and his brothers) from thinking this is a subject to make rude jokes about or to use in name-calling with their friends. I would hate for a covenant child to first encounter this concept in one of the regrettable Sodomite television programs which are so prevalent.

Would you have a talk with your child about appropriate public conversation? Can we keep it G rated while at school? It's one more way that we honor God: by respecting the sensitivities of others.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Romans 12:10