

Not My Children!

Most of us have seen the card-pack form of advertising in which we receive a bundle of postcard-sized ads related by some common theme like family life, church ministry, or home schooling. A pack recently sent out was devoted to youth ministries in the church—and was it ever an eye-opener!

Bear in mind that these ads are directed at youth workers in Christian churches (words in quotation marks are directly from the ads):

Item—There is a deal for a series of videos with titles that promise edifying themes: “Aids Among Teens”; “Shattered”; “How Far Is Too Far?” The videos are touted as “changing the way thousands of youth ministers communicate with their teens.” (“Their teens”? Since when did youth ministers take over the raising of our youth?)

Item—Another video, with the eye-catching headline, “It’s Killing Our Kids.” This one is about alcoholism.

Item—Here is another resource on AIDS, a book. This one is headlined: “Why AIDS Is Exploding and No Teen Is Safe!” It continues: “Just being a Christian doesn’t keep teens or church members safe from AIDS! ... No youth pastor, health professional or thought leader [sic!] should be without these new facts!”

Item—“Your kids have seen MTV. Now take them to the edge.”—promoting a quarterly video magazine for kids. (Whose kids have seen MTV!?)

Item—Speaking of MTV, another card has this come-on: “Reach the MTV generation” with a series of videos on “hot topics.” Here are the only hot topics mentioned in this ad: “Sex”; “Suicide”; “Racism”; “Abortion”; “AIDS and STD’s”; “Homosexuality.” We are assured that each video “is packed with info that is guaranteed to get you kids talking.” No doubt! But about what?!

Item—Finally, a youth group resource is introduced with these comforting words: “You know teenagers face some tough decisions—sex, drugs, the occult. Television and popular music won’t help them make Christian choices. They need guidance from the Bible, but the old teaching methods just don’t work anymore with this new generation.” (You mean like fathers and mothers teaching their own children and sheltering them from hands-on exposure to the evils of the world?!)

You see, the depressing assumptions exhibited in all of these and similar ads are these: (1) Christian young people are exposed to the basest evils around. They watch MTV, pair off and get involved sexually, have contact with alcohol and drugs or those who do, consider suicide because life is so depressing. In other words, Christian children are not distinguishable from the world’s children. They are swimming in the cesspool of our degenerate age. (2) It is

the job of the church, and in particular the youth pastor (usually young, inexperienced and single), to guide our children through this difficult period. (3) The “old” ways of training children don’t work; we need new methods to match a new generation.

Has it really come to this? Is this actually the way it is in America’s homes and churches? Well, no wonder our nation is in trouble. No wonder the church is so ineffective. No wonder teens rebel against parents and depart from the faith.

But there is nothing inevitable about all this. We make choices and live with their consequences. We parents control how our children are brought up, for better or for worse.

All I can say is this: as for me and my house, things are not the way they are portrayed in the card-pack advertisements and, by God’s grace, never will be! My children do not watch MTV; they don’t even watch TV. My children do not pair off with the other sex; they don’t even spend much time exclusively in the presence of other children. My children are not at risk of contracting AIDS or other sexually-transmitted diseases, although they do understand the sin that leads to such. My children are not depressed by life and cannot fathom the idea that someone could want to end his life; they find life exhilarating and beautiful. My children are not entrusted to peer-oriented groups under the guidance of novices; they are trained by their parents in the context of the age-integrated communities of family and church. My children do not need innovative, entertaining ways to reach them and teach them; they receive the parental love, teaching, and modeling that children have always needed.

Call me old-fashioned, but God’s ways work! “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). Give me the ancient ways of peace and blessing any day!
