



Watching Out for What Your Child Watches

Editorial Comment by Warren Krug

(November-December, 2003)

Children may have more trouble learning to read if they live in homes where the television set is on most of the time. So says a report released in October by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children's Digital Media Centers.

The report was based on a survey of parents. It found that youngsters up to six years of age spend about two hours a day watching TV, playing video games, or using a computer.

That's the same amount of time they spend playing outdoors and three times as long as they spend reading or being read to.

The study also found that one-third of the children have TV's in their rooms and a similar proportion live in homes where the TV is on most of the time.

In these "heavy TV households" only 34% of children ages 4 to 6 can read, compared to 56% in homes where the television set is on less often.

While some people might be surprised that the survey indicates *only* two hours a day of TV watching and video game playing, the conclusion that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of television viewing and the ability to read well shouldn't surprise anyone.

Television is like many other gifts God has given us. It can be used for good or for evil. Even things like guns and drugs when used by the right people for the right purposes can be a blessing.

Television has much potential for good. Cable channels such as the history and nature channels can teach children and adults much about the world God gave us and how people sometimes sinfully misuse His gifts.

Television also has much potential for evil. The obscenities, immorality, and near-pornography of many TV shows, even in prime time, is most discouraging. And children need to be trained to spot the evolution propaganda inherent in many of those nature shows.

Also, while some churches have used television to help spread the Gospel, some religious programs obviously have as their main goal to take in as much money as they can.

The bottom line is to use television wisely and by no means allow it to impair a child's Christian growth or his ability to read wholesome material—such as the Bible, for instance. *LSI*

—Warren Krug, editor