

Raising G-Rated Kids in an X-Rated World

By Ken Gurley

Each day, red tractors pulling long cars draw up to the Ein Gedi Spa. Vacationers hop on board and ride the car to the sea. It is no different at the Ein Gedi Resort. The sea flees from the hotel. Each day, the trek to the beach grows longer.

Which sea? It is called by the Arabs *Bahr Lut*, or the Sea of Lot. It is called by some the Sea of Asphalt or the Stinking Sea. Others call it the Sea of Sodom. We normally call it the Dead Sea.

The surface of the Dead Sea is the lowest sea level on earth. Ironically, the Dead Sea is dying.

Little fresh water comes from the Jordan River. Increased irrigation dominates what little water the historic river possesses. The Dead Sea grows ever saltier. It also grows lower and lower.

There is some talk of building a canal which extends from the Red Sea or the Mediterranean Sea into the Dead Sea. But, the Red-Dead canal and Med-Dead canal projects are at a standstill due to the Palestinian issue.

I point this out for a single reason. It is thought that the ancient ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah lie deep beneath the surface of the Dead Sea. God destroyed these twin cities of the plain with fire and brimstone. So, if the surface of the Dead Sea is falling, it means Sodom is rising.

Wicked cities rise in these last days. The wicked sins for which these cities were known rise as well. Our world grows ever darker and more sinful. The sins of Sodom have become common once again.

Families need to know this. They are at risk. Let's speak candidly: the world steadily grows worse.

Jesus said that because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:12). Like a plague, wickedness abounds. Bloodshed, violence, racial hatred, moral decay, drug abuse, and the collapse of morals abound. Consider the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases, the rampant increase in immorality, the pervasiveness of perversion and unimaginable sins. Sodom is rising.

God has become the unspeakable subject in public schools. In prisons, it is difficult to get the gospel between the bars. Churches are selling out on godliness and decency. Homosexual clergy members are being accepted in major religious organizations! Sodom is rising.

It is no wonder. Television saw an upswing of 2400 percent in positive references to homosexuality in the 90s. By the early part of this decade, there were some twenty television characters on major shows depicting gay individuals. Sodom is rising.

I can't say that illegal immigration is the foremost problem in America right now. What concerns me is the legal infiltration of evil into our homes and communities. The billboards allure. The attire grows steadily more immodest. The adolescent promiscuity, prostitution, abortion, illicit affairs, and vicarious forms of lurid entertainment abound.

This is where the real battle is: the battle for our decency and the battle for our future. The battle is escalating for those raising a G-rated child in an X-rated world.

Now, we have violence in the schoolyard. Threatened repeats of the Columbine disaster appear often. What has happened to our children? Why the increase in youth violence? Wake up, America! A storm is rising!

What would cause an eleven-year-old kid to take up a weapon and murder fellow students? What possess someone to rape, strangle, and murder a fourteen-year-old girl in California? According to the newspaper, at least thirteen people went out to see her body. Some cut souvenirs from her clothing. As reported, "The shock is the shock of the of the encounter with icy indifference, the indifference of the kids in the first instance, but much more importantly, of the culture that produced them... The depersonalization did not begin yesterday; it is not unique to this moment, yet it seems more complete—and they seem more alienated and isolated—than we have ever known before."

It's a world sick with bloodlust and violence. And it only grows worse. According to the Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, while the population has increased 41 percent since 1960, the violent crime rate has increased more than 500 percent and total crimes more than 300 percent. The rate of violent crime in the U.S. is worse than in any other industrialized country. In addition, eight out of every ten Americans will be a victim of violent crime at least once in their lives.

Who is to blame? Some will blame the availability of weapons. Some argue it is the over-abundance of violence on television. Some will say it is the environment. All we know is Sodom is rising.

Christian parents are confronted with a sick culture. Not only is the real world growing more violent, the make-believe world is as well. Video games, movies, and television shows abound with sick images.

You know the stats. Read them anywhere:

- Ninety-nine percent of Americans have televisions in their homes.
- The average American spends around five hours a day watching television.
- Two-thirds of all Americans watch television while eating dinner.
- Six million videos are rented daily in the US.
- Forty-nine percent of Americans say they watch too much television.

(Check www.tvturnoff.org or www.turnoffyourtv.com for the latest stats.)

My concern is for the children. There are at least four thousand major studies showing the harmful effects of television on children.

- Parents only spend 3.5 minutes per *week* of meaningful conversation with each child.
- The average child watches television 1,680 minutes per week.
- Seventy-three percent of parents say their children watch too much TV.
- Fifty-four percent of kindergarten students who were asked whether they would like to spend time with their father or watch television chose the latter.

(Stats compiled by TV-Free America, 1322 18th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036)

I'm not your conscience. I'm not your thought police. I'm not here to make you feel bad. I'm not here to run your life. But, I am here to wake up the sleeping. We have a responsibility to this next generation.

A Christian home should be Christian. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

A Christian school should be Christian. What communion has light with darkness?

A Christian daycare should be Christian. What concord hath Christ with Belial?

A child of God is the temple of God. What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

Some may say I'm narrow-minded. They may be right. But the way to Heaven is narrow too.

What of the fusion of technology all around us? Worldliness is not limited to a certain form of technology. We must be aware of what is coming into our homes. We must make appropriate choices.

Is there a middle ground? Maybe, but who wants to experiment with their children? Who wants this generation to be the guinea pig? Our children are far too precious.

Can we just inoculate the next generation with a little worldliness? I wonder how this squares with "love not the world."

Sodom rises. There is only one answer: godly parents should rise as well.

A divine motif—I don't know what else to call it. But it is seen throughout history.

When evil rises, godly people rise. When Israel did wrong, God raised up judges. When believers failed God, a remnant was preserved. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raised a standard.

Being godly parents is no absolute guarantee you'll have godly kids. Doing a good job of training children and teens provides no airtight promise that they're going to turn out exactly right. You and your mate might walk very close to God today. You might have begun to walk with Him soon after your child was born. You may have had the highest hopes for your child, but you're not experiencing the delight of your heart. At least, not yet. Nothing thrills us more than to know that our children are walking in the truth and nothing hurts us more than to realize they're not.

—Chuck Swindoll

Godly parents need to rise to the task before them. It means rising to relationship. Josh McDowell frequently says of family life, "Rules without relationships lead to rebellion."

I read the story recently of a father who was sitting at the dinner table with his son. His son wouldn't drink his milk. His dad told him that he was not leaving the table until he drank his milk. An impasse emerged. Suddenly, the father had an idea. He thought, "I know this kid." He poured himself a glass of milk and sat down opposite his son, looked him in the eyes, and said, "I'll race you." They each drank the milk as fast as they could. When they both finished, the son asked, "Two out of three?"

Do we know our kids? We need to get involved in our children's lives. Know what video games, what music, and what images they are pumping into their minds and spirits. Know what websites they've been on lately. Know their friends. Know what is happening in their lives.

You are not their ATM machine at the mall. You are not to read the newspaper when they need help with algebra. You are not to go out with the guys when you could be playing games with them. They won't be around always. Rise to relationship.

We also must rise to intentional parenting. Parent by design, not by accident. Parents usually go wrong in a couple of areas.

First, they err in not having a strategy. They let the kids decide how they are to be parented. King David pictured a beautiful life for his son, Solomon. He asked God to give his son a perfect heart to keep His commandments, to build a Temple, and to please God. He had a plan. He worked the plan. He parented intentionally.

One of the greatest things that ever happened in our children's lives was Vivian Blaylock, my father-in-law's sister. Having no children of her own, she left a portion of her estate to our children—the proceeds of which paid their way through college. She designed it. She wanted to do it. She intended it.

Children left to happenstance don't fare well. Plan a future for them.

Second, parents misstep when they have no boundaries. Some parents avoid setting curfews, drawing lines, and writing rules.

Recently, I read that Dennis Rodman and Howard Stern share one thing in common: each experienced the lack of affection of one or both parents. Rodman's father walked out on him when he was three years of age. Stern's mother told him often that he was worthless.

A parent who provides no structure for a child is not showing love. Rules, enforced in love, show a child that he is wanted, treasured, and valued.

An infallible way to make your child miserable is to satisfy all his demands.

—Henry Home

To raise G-rated kids in an X-rated world, you must parent by design. You must rise to a new vision for your family.

Don't sell the kids short. Children have the power to one day bless you or curse you. Invest in them everything you can.

David painted a bright future for Solomon and he prepared him for it. He stockpiled the building materials his son would need to build the Temple. The next generation builds from the efforts of the previous one.

We are not sure if the apostle Paul had any children. He did, however, have many sons in the faith, one of whom was Timothy. Into Timothy, Paul poured much:

Others will sell out, Timothy.

Their love will wax cold.

Don't grow disillusioned.

Remember how I have lived.

Remember my teaching.

You know my faith and my patience.

Continue...

Continue...

The next generation is to be continued. What you start, they may finish. Share your hopes and dreams. Invest in them God's Word. Impart to them what is valuable to you.

Mother Theresa received a Nobel prize for her work. When she was asked, "What can we do to solve the problems of the world?" She replied, "Go home and love your family...."

Get your children around you and bless them. Predict a bright future for them. Don't sell them short. Don't give them to the world.

Have you ever wondered what caused God to destroy Sodom? Is it solely because of the wickedness? That certainly played a major role. But, remember that He could not find ten righteous people in the city. For want of ten, God destroyed them all.

Sodom is rising. But we are rising too.

Parents are joining forces. Parents are locking arms.

Our level of commitment must exceed that of the world. A godly example is more powerful than the world. When children see Jesus in their parents, Hell is stymied.

As beautiful a plan as David had, this is where he failed. Solomon suffered from David's moral failure. David was raised as the unwanted, forgotten child. He seemed to ignore the sins within his own family. But his failure was seen by his family and Solomon learned by example.

Even a man after God's own heart can fail. David failed and his failure was magnified in Solomon. We read that his son's heart was turned from God by strange women.

Solomon accomplished the short-term goal: He built God's house. He failed in the long-term goal: He did not set his heart on God.

The greatest way to raise G-rated children in an X-rated world is for parents to live godly before their children. Purity is almost contagious. Those who live godly lives pass on a godly heritage.

I read the recent story of the Methodist pastor who announced his retirement here in Houston. In his final words to the congregation, he told the story of his father dying when he was only twelve years of age. At the funeral, one person after another took him by the shoulders and said to him, "Your father was the kindest man I have ever met." The now-retiring pastor said, "I determined then and there that I would be like my dad."

God, I want to be just like you. Because they want to be just like me.

The Dead Sea is falling. Sodom is rising. The X-rated world of an ancient day returns. And Jesus said that as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man. Lift up your eyes. Don't give up now. His return is soon.

Lot, his wife, and two daughters: four people in all. God sent two angels. Two angels had four hands—enough to take Lot and his family by the hand. Heaven gives enough power for your family to be saved. Let's make the Rapture a family affair. God gives you the power for your family to be saved.