

Sleepovers | helpful or harmful?

I. Pressure

- Modern parents have seemingly forgotten about the overwhelming power of peer-pressure. They gladly send their children to the mall, to their friend's house, or to that digital hangout called social media with little thought as to what influences they're being exposed to. How do I know this? Because they send them to the mall without an FBI wiretap.
- PLEASE PAY CLOSE ATTENTION: Nearly every single sin I have ever worked through with a young person in counseling started as a result of group-think.
- Drug abuse, pornography, smoking, and rape seldom appear in a vacuum. Most of the choices that lead to those ends began while hanging out with a group of "friends."
- PEER-PRESSURE IS REAL, and it seldom pressures our kids to do right.
- Galatians 6:1. "*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*"
- I've dealt with many teens who've been introduced to drugs at their extended family's house. I've cried with children who have been molested at the house of church families. I've counseled many children whose first homosexual encounter happened at a sleepover.
- Welcome to one of the most dangerous cesspools of peer-pressure on the planet.
 - It's generally a group of unsupervised children.
 - It's at night when exhausted adults are sleeping.
 - *It's at home.* Believe it or not, it's this one point that makes sleepovers so deceptively unsafe. For some reason we think that just because our kids aren't in brothel or drug-den that somehow they're okay. Because "*nothing so despicable could ever happen in our home,*" we let our guard down and assume that every word and deed is completely Christ-honoring.
- I used to tell my counseling staff at camp that the boys running around playing aggressively aren't generally the ones the counselor should be focusing their supervision on. It's the knot of "cute," "quiet" girls sitting "sweetly" in a circle talking. Nearly every phone call I ever received from angry parents had nothing to do with their children getting hurt during an aggressive game, it had to do with the wicked words said while everyone was being "quiet" and the supervisors thought they could take a mental break because everyone was sitting down. *Welcome to the incarnation of sleepovers.*

II. Sexuality

- Another oversight of modern parenting is that adults seem blind to sexual issues. I believe one facet of this problem is *not* that most Christian parents deny the sexuality of our world, but that they're blind to the sexuality to which their children are exposed. It's a researched and undeniable fact that many elementary students in the public schools are having sex. Why? Because they're sinful, self-worshipping little people who are constantly bombarded by the music and movies and shows that tell them they should be having sex.

- But for some reason, Christian parents let their kids watch and listen to the same garbage, but don't believe that the Christian kids are experimenting! **THEY ARE!!** They are just as sinful and self-worshipping, and they're filling their minds with the same garbage. What did we expect?!

I. Trust

- My parents shouldn't have trusted me AT ALL. And yet too often they did. I do not fault them completely; I was a fantastic liar, but I'd been caught enough times that even I (the child) was surprised my leash was as long as it was. And it just made it easier to get into more trouble later.
- I've had young people admit to me that they've stolen, done drugs, snuck out of the house in the middle of the night, and had sex . . . but when I or the teen tell the parent what they've done THE PARENT DOESN'T BELIEVE IT! They're so deluded that their "*child would never do that,*" that they don't believe their own children's admissions
 - *Don't just accept your child's version of who will be at the party and what they'll be doing.* Find out for yourself (preferably from the parents of the house they're going to) who's going to be there and what they're going to be doing.
 - *Don't just accept that the house you're sending your child to believes and practices what you do.* I remember being about five when a neighbor's mom encouraged me to do something that my parents would not have allowed. It wasn't anything wicked and vulgar, but it wasn't something my mom and dad wanted me doing. It's true that love hopes all things and believes all things, but we're also called to be wise as serpents and discerning.
 - Has that parent shown clear signs of being Spirit-filled?
 - Do they have fruits that show their faith?
 - If these things aren't true, we'd be wise not to trust them implicitly with the spiritual safety of our children.
- I've spoken with a number of parents who say their children need to learn how to respond to temptation. I agree. The Lord not only knows what we can handle in His power, but He always provides a way to escape. But I want you to consider two things:
 - *Proverbs is replete with admonitions to avoid temptation;* not cut your teeth on it. It's not sound to thrust ourselves or the ones we love into temptation's way without knowing they're ready for it. If there were a ravenous lion in the street, I guarantee you wouldn't let your child out of the house unless you knew she would be safe. Guess what! There is a lion who wants to destroy your child. Is she ready?
 - *We do not know our children as well as God does.* My parents thought I was mature enough to be a good influence on that guy, but they were wrong, and I did not resist temptation. I wasn't ready. I shouldn't have been hanging out with him. Because we don't know our kids like God does, we need to even more careful throwing them to the lion.

I. Other Responses

- First, know your kids. Don't just trust them. Know they deserve your trust.
- Second, you need a plan for behavior. It's one thing to have an expectation for behavior at home, but you also need to have a plan for how your children will respond to other authorities and the types of activities they'll participate in. And speaking of questionable activities . . .
- Third, provide them all the tools they need to stay safe. An article we shared on Facebook told of a family with a simple plan. If any of their children were in a compromising situation with their friends or their friends relatives, all they had to do was text an "X" to dad. The parent would automatically step in to remove the child from the situation without them having to do something dangerous or something for which they were unprepared. I'm not saying that's the best or only idea, but I am saying that was a premeditated parent creating and working a plan. We shared another article where a mother shared her how teaches her kids about "tricky" people. My point is, I don't care if your kids are going to the pastor's house. You need a plan to protect them if necessary.
- And fourth, the best course of action for young children is supervision. I know, I probably sound like some wiretapping governmental conspiracy theorist. But this has nothing to do theories. The fact is that Satan does have a conspiracy to destroy your children. Providing children accountability is never unacceptable. And may I say, if your children get an attitude or fight your supervision, could it be because there's something they want to say or do without yo knowing about it? God says that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. You should have a relationship with your kids, and God should be important enough to them, that having you in and out of their party is enjoyable to them because they like having you around and they weren't planning anything sinful anyway.

Parent.

... a part of the Evermind Ministries family.