

For Want of a Mother, the Village Was Lost

By Erin Pickett



Recently, my husband and I discussed our game plan for representing sexuality to our preteen girl. Not surprisingly, we have two very different notions on how to proceed.

It was a conversation that began as a reaction to my comments during what would have been a nice family movie, except for the single scene where the hero “cheats” on his girlfriend with another girl. My daughter, quick to pick up on injustice, stated that it “wasn’t right” of the boy to betray his girlfriend that way. “Ah,” I pointed out in what I thought was a classic teachable moment, “But if they had both decided to abstain until marriage, it would not even have been an issue”. My husband looked disgruntled.

Later in the movie, the hero’s girlfriend fears she is pregnant (clearly we’re not watching Disney). Once again, I can’t help reinforce the previous lesson: in a relationship where abstinence is practiced, this bad situation never could possibly come up. This time, my husband commented that I needed to “let this go”. Which I did. But a few days later, sitting around a sandwich and soup lunch without our daughter, he revisited the topic with me.

My husband’s position is a common one in this day, and can be summed up like this: They’re going to do it, so let’s just make sure they’re doing it in an educated manner. One parent who wrote to the *Washington Post* in reaction to their May 5, 2005 coverage of the Montgomery County Sex-Ed Video echoed this sentiment: “Our children are going to talk about (and eventually act on) sexual urges with their peers, no matter what we do as parents. The more opportunities we have as parents and educators to get them to want to talk about it with us, the better.”

No matter what we do as parents, our kids are destined for premarital sexual contact? No matter what? So why talk to them about it at all? Ah, for informed decisions. May I suggest that I was perfectly informed as a teen on all manner of risks and diseases of the day, and that didn’t stop me from acting as unsafely as any teen feeling their immortality would? We’re not in a world lacking for information, my friends. We’re in a world lacking morals, and lacking boundaries.

What is wrong, I proposed during this recent conversation, is what one generation tolerates, the following generation condones. This pushing of the envelope is being assisted socially through the media, the internet, movies, TV shows, and now school systems threaten to take the offensive position. Today in the news is a quiet ruling in California about how much right parents even have to make the final decision about what their kids are taught. The ruling: parents do not have that right. According to the ruling, the judges “hold that parents have no due process or privacy right to override the determinations of public schools as to the information to which their children will be exposed while enrolled as students.” Hold your seats, parents, because that ruling all the way over in California will reach out to bite us all in the end. No matter whether you expect your children to abstain until marriage, until they find the “right someone”, until they are mature enough to “handle it”, our schools will have an equal right to espouse the (increasingly permissive, accepting, and “do what thou wilt”) popular social teachings regarding your progeny’s sexuality.