

7 Essentials to Porn-Proof Your Child

A study in the southeastern U.S. found that 53 percent of boys and 28 percent of girls (ages 12-15) reported use of sexually explicit media. The Internet was the most popular forum for viewing. (Brown, J. & L'Engle, K. 2009, Communications Research, 36(1), 129-151, X-Rated: Sexual attitudes and behaviors associated with U.S. early adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit media).

To say the “innocence” of our children is under an attack is a gross understatement. For the sake of individual freedom and the gargantuan profits that the porn industry reaps, our generation has provided the enemy a foothold within the boundaries of every child’s life. Beyond heartbreaking, it is now becoming the norm that our littlest ones are exposed to some type of pornography before they reach puberty. Before a boy’s voice begins to change, he will likely view some image of a naked woman. Not only has viewing pornography by our youth exponentially increased, the moral acceptance of consuming X-rated media has equally grown. We are at a critical mass point.

Let’s all be real in admitting that porn is destroying many families. I wish I could say that Christians are automatically fortified against this enemy attack. However, as you and I both know, this isn’t the case. Unless we are intentionally going to battle against pornography, we’re positioning our household to take some serious hits.

“But it is striking to see sexual behaviors and attitudes that were uncommon now becoming part of the accepted, mainstream experience of young people.” The Vice President of the Barna Group added, ‘We expect to see this mindset of sexual entitlement translate into increased appetites for pornography, unfiltered acceptance of sexual themes and content in media, and continued dissolution of marriages due to infidelity. It seems entirely possible that current events such as the Mark Foley scandal, instances of abuse by clergy, and the sexually oriented school shootings of recent months are not mere aberrations, but symptoms of a sexually unrestrained society.’” (The Barna Group; A New Generation of Adults Bends Moral and Sexual Rules to Their Liking)

As a Christian parent, I must face the reality that this enemy lives among us. To be blind or not address the issue of pornography with my children is setting them up to be an easy target. Even as I write this, I am enraged that it is likely that our children will be exposed to some type of pornography before they hit their teen years. The sad reality is that in many cases our children

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aren't searching these images out, these porn-pushing companies are targeting our kids. Not to mention that we live in a culture that is consumed with sex. It's almost impossible to find a popular movie these days that doesn't have some nudity or sex in it. So what's a parent to do?

While we will never destroy the enemy on this side of eternity, we can defeat him! With five children ranging from 5 to 23 years of age, this has been an ongoing battlefield in our home. Given we're involved in online ministry, it's been absolutely necessary that we come up with a battle plan, one that not only provides a solid defensive front, but also unleashes a powerful offensive strike. Unfortunately, it will be a lifetime battle pursuit- one that will require faith, discipline and perseverance. While no battle plan is ever perfect, it is vital that we have one.

At the core of our stratagem, are seven principles, or battle tactics, that have largely defined our ongoing efforts to help our children defeat the *onslaught of porn that will happen*. While your plan may look different, I'm guessing we'll overlap in numerous areas that are timeless principles when it comes to shepherding the hearts and minds of our children.

7 Essentials to Porn-Proof My Children

1. It begins with the unconditional love from mom and dad. Before a child will grasp the understanding of their own sexuality and greater purpose in life, they will understand whether or not they are loved by their parents. So much of a child's developmental formation starts here. God has positioned every mother and father to lay a foundation of love and acceptance within the hearts and minds of their children. As Christian parents, this love affirms that our children were created in God's image and have tremendous value. Whether married, single or divorced, every parent needs to make the child-parent relationship a priority.

Yet, even in the absence of a parent's love, God's love can and will prevail. In a very real way, a parent's love creates the initial relational boundaries that a child so desperately needs in order to feel secure and safe.

2. We must continually point our children to Jesus. If they have Jesus and nothing else, they have enough. This is our greatest life mission as Christian parents: To live in a manner that connects our children to Jesus Christ. While the "results" are all God's, we must relentlessly "fight the good fight." Like many of us, the first verse my children learned was **John 3:16**. As important, our lives need to reflect Jesus to our children. My five-year old knows all too well when my actions don't

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necessarily make God happy. A life of hypocrisy is one of the fastest ways to turn our children off to a personal relationship with Jesus. For me, this means that I will not watch most the movies out there given they almost always have some form of nudity, sex and the other garbage in them. That said, there are some great filters now that remove the junk. Yet, just by removing "junk" doesn't redeem a lacking story line that is void of God-redeeming traits.

The greatest "filter" is not man-made. It is the Holy Spirit-God Himself dwelling within the hearts of our children through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If they have Christ, they will learn to hold fast to what is good and see pornography for what it is-evil (**Romans 5** and **Romans 12:9**).

3. At the earliest age, our children need to understand that their relationship with God is the most important thing in life. A question all my children heard growing up on a regular basis was this: "What are the two most important things?" The answer- 1. To love God, and 2. To love others. God is the foundation that everything rests upon. He defines their life mission. The sooner they truly embrace this truth, the sooner they will begin to put on God's full armor of protection and experience the pure peace and protection that comes with humbly walking with God (**Ephesians 6** & **Micah 6:8** & **Philippians 4**).

As they learn more about God, they'll also learn more about God's model of sexuality and the sacredness of marriage. This is so important given the world's message on this topic these days. It's critical that we uplift truth around their God-given gender versus the lies that the world is uplifting.

4. What's wrong before God is never right before us. Another simple question or test we used to determine if something is right or wrong is this: Is God glorified by this? Two of my favorite verses that many people have put to memory are **Romans 12:1-2** and **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. Both deal with the reality that our bodies and everything we do in them should be for the purpose of worshiping and glorifying God. If our children and youth understand that their bodies, in Christ, are not their own but are a "temple of the Holy Spirit" and that God resides within them, it will make a difference in their lives.

At the same time, we need to be ready when temptation does overcome them. We've all been there. This is where God's amazing mercy and grace prevail. If and when one of our children stumble, it's an opportunity to be there for them and help them grow through it. This is another

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reason why it's so important that we set the example. I pray that dads adopt a "no compromise" battle strategy for their own lives. Our kids need to see that this enemy can, indeed, be beaten. Men, we need to lead this battle charge. Our kids are watching and learning from everything we do...or don't do. That's why our own marriages can be used by God to display what true love looks like.

5. Be intentional about engaging their hearts and minds on a regular basis. There is a reason that we're instructed to "*set our minds on things above*" (Col. 3:2) and to think about things that honor God (Philippians 4:8). Ultimately, this is where the battle is fought and won. What consumes a child's thought life, i.e. what he set his hearts on, will control his life actions. Within an age appropriate manner, it's essential that we create an open forum of conversation around this topic and help them apply God's Word in their lives (John 17:17). Our youth are saturated with online media that is available and accessible around the clock via their online devices. This is the stark reality: Our children will be tempted on a daily and weekly basis--just as we are.

I can't go to an online news site without seeing some scantily dressed woman beckoning me to click through. For my older children and wife, this "enemy attack" is an entry point into further dialogue about our battle plans and discussing ways we can overcome our temptations (1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Cor. 10:5). Know this: If we're not engaging their hearts and minds, I can guarantee you that the enemy will be.

6. Take the lead in keeping each other accountable in this area. I ask my older children on a regular basis about their screen time. Filters are great but they can be easily bypassed or manipulated. The greatest filters are the Holy Spirit and disciplined lives that are transparent before God and each other. From a very practical standpoint, we have passwords on all our devices to protect our youngest ones from ever picking up a device and going online by accident. Yet, even with this safeguard, we must be diligent in our daily efforts. Like owning a firearm, having online access/Wi-Fi in your home necessitates great care and ongoing consideration. We would never think of leaving loaded guns laying around the house. While a different form of danger than firearms, open access to online devices can be devastating to your child's life.

When it comes right down to it, many of us are expecting our kids to succeed in an area where most men have failed. We all need defined boundaries, especially our children.

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7. Realize that it's an ongoing battle that requires an ongoing plan, and resolve to be there for your kids. Over the years the goal has remained the same: To glorify God with our lives as we train our children in God's ways. Yet, living in an ever-increasing tech-savvy, sex-saturated world means our methodology needs to be somewhat fluid. What may have worked a few years ago may no longer get the job done. It pains me to think about what my five-year old will face in her lifetime. Yet, regardless of what this world will throw at us, I resolve to set the example for my family and pray like crazy. I truly believe that every wife and child needs to know that their husband/father lives on the battlefield for their well-being.

As a parent, it's our responsibility to protect our little ones and train them to be battle-ready. By God's grace and power, we can defeat pornography. Yet, it will be a lifelong enemy that will not give up easily. As shared, I live on both sides of the battlefield. On one side, I'm actively shielding my little ones and doing all I can to cultivate their hearts for Christ. On the other side, are my adult children. They have fully stepped onto the battlefield. This reminds me of one of the most important essentials—the power of a praying parent that never gives up.

By God's grace, our children will prevail. – **JT Waresak**