

## **SHIELD'S UP CAPTAIN!**

Do you remember watching the original Star Trek? Spaceships - Aliens - Strange New Worlds (I know you can hear the theme song in your head!). As the Enterprise was buzzing around the galaxy some unknown ship would eventually be detected and Captain Kirk would say, "Shield's Up!" Often it was the Klingons sneaking around with their cloaking device so they could pop up in front of the Enterprise and blast it with its disruptor cannons. When this happened all kinds of havoc would break loose and, as they traded photon torpedo volleys, Sulu would yell, "Shields at 50% captain!" Another volley would ensue, panels would short circuit and an expendable crewman would pay the price.

### **So what's this got to do with our youth?**

As our kids buzz around the Internet they can encounter strange new worlds. Worlds where people aren't wearing clothes and they're doing things that shouldn't be seen. Kids don't always encounter these "worlds" on purpose. Often the purveyors of porn (Klingons) sneak around the Internet cloaking their true intentions. So your kid is innocently surfing the net then "Blam" a porn page pops up to attack. The problem is that many times no one is around to yell "Shields Up". Worse, even if someone could, many computers don't have any "shields" (Internet Filtering software). Your child is defenseless as the porn volley hits them over and over. This kind of exposure to porn can cause confusion about sex, distort their views and can quickly become addicting.

### **So parents.... what are you going to do to start winning the battle?**

This may be a corny analogy but things that are new, unusual, and forbidden naturally make kids (and the rest of us) curious. We should expect that kids will seek out Klingons, if just out of curiosity. That makes it absolutely necessary that we keep "Shields up" on our home, school, and even church computers, as well as our kid's cell phones. Web sites like My Space and YouTube may appear harmless enough, but they are not. Check it out!

Note: In order to visit your child's My Space account you must first be accepted as their "friend" or you cannot see their profile. Ever been on YouTube? You can view just about anything.... there are minimal "Shields". For example, do you want your kids to know how to load and smoke pot from a bong? It's there in living color! How about specific details on using condoms?

### **YouTube is a dangerous place!**

First, we as a church need to admit we have a serious problem and must begin to do something about it. We spend so much time solving problems half-way around the world (good stuff) yet we turn a blind eye to problems right here at home.

No parent wants to think about his child viewing pornography, but it often happens. Some researchers have stated that the average age of exposure to pornography is down to eight. Before the days of the Internet, children were typically between the ages of eleven to thirteen when they began by viewing soft-core pornography found in magazines like *Playboy* (Rob Jackson, MS, LPC, LMHC, NCC).

Today your child lives in a culture where pornography abounds. They may be seduced daily (friends, cell phones, internet, music, movies, books), and we need to bear this fact in mind whenever we have the occasion to redirect them away from pornography. It is also important that you not direct all your efforts toward your sons at the expense of your daughters. Pornography and other sexualized media adversely affects girls as well as boys and can often lead to significant damage in their ability to form healthy relationships as an adult.

A Girls Scouts survey found that teen girls believed they could do the following without their parents' knowledge:

- 86 percent – chat in a chat room
- 57 percent – read their parents' email
- 54 percent – carry on a cyber romance
- 46 percent – set up a meeting with someone they met online
- 42 percent – view a porn site

Source: Whitney Roban, *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2002, p.11.

75 percent of girls say their parents have rules for the Internet. 43 percent of girls admit to breaking those rules.

Source: Roban, *The Net Effect*, p. 13

A recent survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy released a survey that said “20 percent of teens have posted nude photos or video of themselves on the Internet” The porn purveyors are winning the battle for our kids' minds. Where do you think they're getting the idea that it's ok to take their clothes off, take pictures or video of themselves naked and post it on the Internet or on their cell phones (called sex-ting)?

**More than half (55 percent) of children** ages 12 to 15 say they do not tell their parents everything they do online.

*Source: The UCLA Internet Report 2001 – “Surveying the Digital Future,”* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Communications Policy, 2001), p. 80.

Well, enough said. So, how do you counteract this ungodly environment? How do you minimize the impact of this immoral, violent environment on your children?

Pray for them.

Talk to them.

Spend time with them.

Set a standard of speech and behavior in your home.

Police their internet time (My Space, YouTube, view their internet history, favorites).

\*\*\*Remove the internet from their room!\*\*\*

Censor their TV and movies.

View their cell phone pictures, contacts, and text messages.

Know their friends and the families of their friends.

Get involved at their schools.

Know what they are being taught and reading.

Do not let them get in a compromising situation they are not mature enough to handle.

Ask God to protect the young people in your life. They cannot remain innocent in this culture but they can remain pure with your input and God's strength.

**Do not let it be said of you that God is not mentioned in this chapter of your life.**

**Resources to help assist you in safe-guarding your children**

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting.aspx>

[www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com) for movie and music reviews

**xxxchurch.com** website: X3watch accountability software. You will be notified by e-mail when your child has visited a porn site.

If you have any questions, or wish to discuss this sensitive issue, please call Shawn at 937-4974.