

OUR BEST DEFENSE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

By Kerry Hanson Jensen

In one verse of scripture, I found my family's key to avoiding the explicit images that seemed to be everywhere.

I was shopping for school clothes with my nine-year-old son when our conversation turned from lighthearted chitchat to a more serious question. “Mom, why do they have to put that stuff in all the store windows?”

“That stuff” he was referring to was immodest pictures displayed in the windows of just about every shop we passed. Although pictures like these had always been there, I hadn’t paid much attention to them before. But the fact that my oldest son was starting to take notice awakened a new awareness in me. Over the next weeks, I began to see these images everywhere: on television, at the grocery store, at restaurants, in advertisements that came in the mail. I couldn’t get away from them. Some images were so explicit that I began to feel perplexed, and a feeling of alarm began to grow in my heart. How was I supposed to protect my family from the traps of pornography?

Every general conference we hear warnings about its devastating

effects, and we have been acquainted with its victims. We had taken all of the precautions at home with our computer and the media we allowed there, but clearly, unless our children were quarantined, there seemed to be no way to completely avoid seeing unwanted images that might lead to further curiosity. Could my son’s innocent gaze at the grocery store turn into a lifetime struggle with pornography? My anxiety over this issue grew, and I began to feel a sense of helplessness and vulnerability in protecting my children.

Then one day while I was reading in the Book of Mormon, I unexpectedly

found reassurance in 1 Nephi 15. Nephi is explaining Lehi’s vision of the tree of life to Laman and Lemuel when they ask the meaning of the river of water. Nephi answers in verse 27: “And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness; *and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water*” (emphasis added). Lehi’s mind was focused on the tree of life and getting his family to it to partake of its fruit! He didn’t even see the filthiness because of this focus.

That was the answer! Keeping inappropriate media out of our home was a start, but a more direct and conscious effort to teach our children the gospel is what would ultimately be their best defense against anything that could lead them away.

Because of this experience with the scriptures, my husband and I decided to redouble our efforts in teaching our children and thus keep our eyes on the love of God instead of the filthiness in

For those struggling with pornography, resources can be found on the Church’s website overcomingpornography.org and in a recent article by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” in the October 2015 *Ensign*.



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the world. We have felt impressed to focus on three different areas*:

1. Increasing our own personal scripture study and decreasing the “noise” around us. Like Lehi, our minds must be filled with positive things in order to hear the promptings of the Spirit and to keep us focused on anchoring our family in the gospel. My husband and I try to regularly spend time talking about the spiritual needs of each individual in the family and how we can meet those needs and create a home where the Spirit can thrive.

2. Making family scripture study more meaningful. Although it takes a lot of effort just to gather the family

together daily to read scriptures, we are trying to have more discussion when we read the scriptures. We have a wide range of ages with our children, so we read scriptures with the younger kids later in the day and the oldest kids early in the morning when the little ones are asleep so there is less distraction and more opportunity for discussion. We have found that almost daily there is discussion of current events that relates to the scriptures we are reading.

Most mornings are far from idyllic, but with perseverance we are finding that the kids really are listening and participating, even though sometimes it takes a lot of effort to get everyone together.

3. Doing missionary work.

When we bear testimony, the Spirit testifies that what we are saying is true, and our testimonies grow. We are trying to make missionary work a family affair. We talk about sharing the gospel, and we regularly invite friends to our home. We also take every opportunity to have the missionaries and investigators over for gospel discussion. We have had wonderful experiences with new members of the Church and investigators in our home, and it has made an impression on our children as they reflect on their own testimonies and hear those of the missionaries.

I am so grateful for the Book of Mormon and the miraculous way a single verse of scripture has given me reassurance and a clear direction for our family. The scriptures can truly replace fear and helplessness with power and peace. ■

The author lives in Washington, USA.

* Other families might need different areas of focus, such as lessons to teach children about media, our bodies, and healthy sexuality.