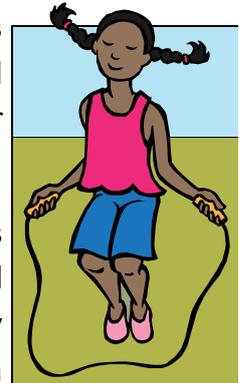




Denied Innocence

Remember the jingle? Maybe it was true once upon a time that little girls were indeed little girls, shielded from adult ideas and activities and allowed to simply be children. Today, however, one could be excused for asking the question, “Are our girls growing up too soon?”



Just recently I attended a presentation at church which opened my eyes to the growing sexualisation of young girls in our culture. ‘Denied Innocence’ left me disturbed and challenged, as I was pushed out of my naïve comfort zone and forced to take a good look at the world in which we live. Wendy Smith, a member of our congregation in Moree and the presenter of ‘Denied Innocence’, was so moved by a similar presentation she attended at the Katoomba Women’s conference in 2009, that she believed it important to bring this message to people in other areas. It is a message well worth hearing for parents and grandparents today.

The threat to our children’s innocence is very subtle, and can begin as early as baby-hood. ‘Sugar and spice’ may now be replaced by crude humour on babies’ outfits. Shops sell them, people buy them. Girls as young as 6 years are introduced to ‘girly’ magazines which encourage them to become focused on how they look, how to apply make-up, what to wear, how to dress to attract boys, how to have relationships with the opposite sex. For girls a little older, similar magazines give details on how to date and how to have sex with your boyfriend. Shops sell these magazines by the thousands, people buy them, and our girls are exposed to ideas that are unhealthy and inappropriate for their age.

The media bombards our girls with images and thoughts of being physically beautiful and attractive to males from a very young age. We may think that we are not influenced by this movement, but just like the ‘frog in the frying pan’, I suspect that we are mostly unaware of what is happening around us. We may see young girls wearing high heels, make up, or sexy clothes, and think it is cute, without realizing the damage it is doing to their view of self. Puberty can be difficult enough without the confusion and insecurities that these images and messages bring. There is a price to be paid, and we see it in dysfunctional behaviours such as anorexia and bulimia, just to name a few.

The ‘Denied Innocence’ presentation did not end on a bleak note, however. We were challenged as Christians to not only be aware of the destructive influences around us, but to take a stand against them, for example by refusing to buy certain products, or to speak out and/or pray against the movement. We were encouraged to be godly parents in the face of ungodliness. This is not necessarily a message we want to hear, but it is a message we need to hear as parents in the 21st century.

Wendy Smith is keen to spread this message to church and community groups, and is willing to travel whenever her work and other commitments allow her to do so. MU in our Diocese (Armidale) has just made the decision to sponsor Wendy to take this presentation to any church in the area which is interested. If any MU group in other Dioceses is interested to know more about the 'Denied Innocence' presentation, or Wendy's availability, please contact Moree Anglican Church on 02 6752 1103.

(Sharon Kirk, MU Diocesan President & Community Education Coordinator, Anglican Counselling Service - Diocese of Armidale. May 2010)