



Sleepovers

We are children of the light, not children of the night. Night's redemptive value is primarily for our body's reconstruction, passively. Shakespeare said, "Sleep doth knit the raveled sleeve of care." The Scriptures say, "He gives his beloved sleep" (Psalm 127:2). Ben Franklin said, "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Night was designed to be surrendered to our Maker... a forced daily Sabbath, if you will. We grow to trust Him while we sleep. We cannot protect ourselves while we slumber, nor can we make our hearts go on beating.

This reappearing nightly Sabbath is a blessed thing when entered into rightly. When we defy that order and try to continue "living" in the night, our moral resolves go down, our guard goes down. People who remain awake into the night may find themselves in slippery places, whether they are alone or with a group. Many an addiction and perversion is started there. "Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Historically and scripturally we see a different pattern with godly persons who chose to rise early, habitually. The story is told of an old inn keeper who watched two men at his inn over a period of time. Night after night, one staggered to bed at 3 in the morning after a wild evening, whereas the other rose early at 3 for prayers. They passed one another in the hallway. The end for the one was ruin; the lifelong practice of the other led to influence. One died early; the other died a ripe old man, "full of sap and very green" (Psalm 92:14).

When we are presented with an invitation for a sleepover for our children, let us pause and ask, "What good thing could ever come of the night that could not be done *BETTER* in the day?!" Why would we go there ourselves, let alone send our children to spend their night in such a fashion? Let us remember that the universe is not a neutral place. It is contested at the highest levels of the spiritual realm. The devil is the ruler of darkness (Ephesians 6:12). He "stalks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He who stalks, be it the devil or man, stalks best after dark.

At the core of the problem is a loss of control over our children. Even if another family *APPEARS* to be model, we all know of stories of pastors, youth directors and priests who spoke one life, yet lived another. Not allowing your children to do sleepovers means you *REALLY* believe that the heart “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). The redeemed are, for now, delivered from the *POWER* of sin in their own life, should they want it, but not from its *PRESENCE* -- either in themselves or others. The scriptures warn us to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” in our relating towards others (Matthew 10:16).

What people will do in the flesh is one thing, but in our day and age we have the further complication of what uncontrolled (unmonitored) media influence will be at someone else’s house, in the middle of the night. Because 99% of our culture’s media productions (videos/TV/DVDs) are evil either overtly (you can recognize it instantly) or covertly, wherein the lead actor (whom our affections have been groomed to be with and for) is, in fact, rebellious in subtle ways, one must be vigilant in censoring this input for our families.

Our neighbors may be “fine” people, but their screen is not. One must remember, though, that most of the culture, feeding upon such a diet, has virtually no built in restraints upon their own conduct. So we can surmise that our neighbors may NOT be “fine” people behind closed doors. For many, the Ten Commandments have become the ten Suggestions, which have become the ten Slippery Solutions, which have become the ten bad memories to Snuff out. We’re left with whatever feels good to our neighbor -- whether it involves our own children or not.

The clincher is that even if there were NO media to fan this deviant behavior, mankind would not have to be exposed to it at all for us still to have an insurmountable problem. Sadly, in time, man’s own heart would devise it. In light of this general depravity, how could left-alone-children’s-sleepovers be safe, by any stretch of the imagination?

It is bad enough for adults to choose to be night-crawlers, but to subject their children to the influence of other children, with no adult supervision, in the wee hours of the night, is most unwise. Children have a very limited experience base from which to make discerning decisions. They are at the mercy of their own naiveté and weakness for peer pressure...longing to BE-long, regardless of the compromises it involves.

Just out of curiosity, to see how widespread such a problem is, last convention season I asked parents in several large workshops in different states to relate/write down any trouble they encountered at sleepovers in their own childhoods. Here are just three of the MANY, overwhelmingly regretful, responses.

“My husband was introduced to pornography at a sleepover in junior high -- of which his parents are still oblivious to this day.”

“My sister was raped at the age of six at a sleepover she and I attended. She was raped by our friend’s father.”

“My brother hosted a sleepover with a friend. His friend ended up raping me. He was from a Christian home and I was a devastated young teen. Who would have known such a thing would happen in my own house?”

Someone I know was exposed to Ouija boards, crazy-8-balls and levitation experimentation at a sleepover.

One mother summed up the whole matter well by saying, “I worry about my boys being exposed to bad language, dirty jokes, pornography, and doing things they’ll regret later, all at sleepovers. Without adult supervision, kids can make very poor choices. Also, it’s difficult to know if a parent is really as nice as they seem, or if they’re a pervert. Most of my boys’ friends go to public schools, so their parents don’t have the mindset that sheltering one’s children is a good thing.”

One may feel AWKWARD refusing another parent’s invitation for a sleep-over party, on behalf of their children, but that is better than feeling AWFUL for the rest of your life for marring your children with some unforeseen and ruinous event. We can respond to these invitations simply with words like these: “We have a policy: we just don’t do sleepovers. We feel strongly that anything that is truly worthwhile can happen BETTER during the day.” And leave it at that.

We may not convert the world on this point, but, no doubt, our standard exerts a kind of shame over those who have given up caring for the next generation...those who don’t mind repeating the tragedies of their own childhoods, with their own children.