**Protecting Your Children**

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One New Year's weekend, three girls in their early teens were walking home from a neighborhood store. As they approached their subdivision, a young man about 18 years old exposed (flashed) himself to them. They hurried home, shocked by what occurred.

One girl's father was home, and when he heard what had happened, he rushed out the door hoping to find and detain the young man. He was unsuccessful, but he did file a report with the police.

As the girls were being interviewed by the police officer, they showed a wide range of responses. One was in tears; another was seething with anger; the third sat quietly, dazed by what had happened. The officer said that men who do this are typically repeat offenders and usually don't stop until they get caught.

Children are being sexually exploited world wide. In Asia and Russia, sex trafficking of youth plagues the culture. In Europe and North America, a steady barrage of graphic sexual media strips the innocence of youth. Perhaps most disconcerting are news reports that some victims from the tsunami are being sexually molested in refugee camps.

As fathers, we need to speak up against sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual behavior. The pendulum of protection needs to swing toward the security of our children. Creating an environment of sexual safety and consideration will be a huge boost to them as they seek to make wise choices and navigate the waters of their culture.

What will you do to protect your children? One great strategy is to maintain open lines of communication when there is no crisis. Then, they'll be much more likely to come to us with anything that is on their hearts. And if you don't feel qualified to deal with a specific issue, make sure to find someone who is.

**ACTION POINTS**

* Talk with your children about what they should do if they are ever "flashed" or approached by someone in an inappropriate way.
* Give your children specific guidelines about what is and is not appropriate regarding how they dress; who should and should not touch them in certain ways; when, where, and how long they can be alone with a girlfriend or boyfriend; etc.
* Tell your older children the importance of learning control in sexual matters. Use illustrations that point out the consequences of the lack of control.
* Revisit your family's standards about TV, movie, radio and Internet use. Discuss with your children why it's wise to be careful about what they watch and listen to.