

## FROM THE EDITOR

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**O**ur schools can only do so much. A child can spend the entire day learning about the laws of proper speech, but if he comes home to a family that isn't careful in this area, then no amount of instruction in the world is going to save him from the bad speech habits that he will pick up day-in and day-out in his own home.

Long gone are the days of families sitting and watching television together. With the proliferation of handheld devices, along with the advent of DVR and downloading, and, even more recently, producers releasing entire seasons of shows on a single day – all of which has led to the phenomenon of 'binge watching' – people, let alone families, don't even consume the same entertainment anymore.

Gone, too, are the days of the water cooler gatherings in the workplace to discuss what was on last night – as what was on last night differs from person to person, with the choices being essentially limitless. It's not unusual to enter a family lounge and find several teens, each with his own device and headphones, watching something different from the others who are sitting right next to him, completely oblivious to one another.

We spend a lot of time – rightfully – worrying about what goes in and what comes out of our mouths. But that's not the only one of our senses that we need to be concerned about. In addition to the tongue, the eyes and the ears also have to be carefully looked after. The things with which we come into contact affect us profoundly and permanently – they touch us, they stay with us, and they influence us. Once seen, they cannot be unseen; once heard, they cannot be unheard.

Unfortunately, Hollywood has conditioned us to think that age is the sole determination as to what is appropriate for us to consume, with content warnings on everything from music, to movies, to video games – when the truth is that age has little, if anything, to do with the matter. Some things are simply inappropriate no matter what the age. And the truth is that such content warnings often only serve as fuel for the fire, causing young people to want to see what all the fuss is about.

What does it say about us as a society that we find "entertainment" and "relaxation" in watching, reading, listening to, and even playing video games containing graphic and gratuitous depictions of: abuse, murder, death, suicide, rape, sex, adultery, forbidden relations and relationships, criminal activities, and violence? And exposure to such things, especially violence, desensitises us, making us simultaneously less sympathetic and empathetic towards the feelings of others, as well as more aggressive and liable to cause others harm – and these are only the effects that we are able actually to measure.

To make matters worse, how many of us can honestly say that we know what our children are looking at, listening to, and being influenced by? We wouldn't want our children experiencing such terrible trauma and tragedy in their own lives – nor would we want them emulating such overly glamourised negative lifestyles and behaviours – so why on earth do we let them be repeatedly exposed to these things, day after day, in the first place?

Concern for the pollution of our physical environment has been largely embraced around the world – with people literally sifting and sorting through their own filthy, dirty rubbish to separate out things for recycling. It's time we embraced, with at least as much enthusiasm, a concern for the pollution that is taking place regarding our spiritual environment – including our own souls and the souls of our children – and that we make a point of separating ourselves from the toxic rubbish that surrounds us and pervades our lives.

It's what educators like to call a "teachable moment", but, like most such moments, the greatest lesson comes from the choices that we make and the examples that we set. Teaching a child the ability to discriminate, to know what is okay and what's not, what's appropriate and what's not – that's the job of a parent, ideally with the help and reinforcement of the school, as well as the surrounding community.

**ROBERT SUSSMAN,**  
EDITOR

ON THE COVER: ACCORDING TO THE MAGAZINE SMITHSONIAN, THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN APPLES AND TEACHERS DATES BACK TO WHEN COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ROOM AND BOARD FOR LOCAL TEACHERS. GIVING A TEACHER AN APPLE WAS ONE WAY OF SHOWING APPRECIATION – AND THE LINK BETWEEN THE TWO HAS ONLY GROWN STRONGER WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME.



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