

Media: Friend or Foe?



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

I was doing my “old person’s routine,” falling asleep while trying to catch the news when a story about a man charged in the brutal murder of his young son

caught my attention. I opened my eyes – just in time to see a former neighbor and good friend standing before a judge. Clad in an orange jumpsuit, Jim’s* body was shaking. Tears streamed down his face. The look of horror on my face told my husband something was horribly wrong.

Several years ago when my two older kids and I moved to Des Moines, we found a house apartment in a less than desirable location; however, God gave us awesome neighbors. On one side lived a Vietnam vet who watched our house at night. Across the street stood a barber shop whose owner watched our place during the day. Below us resided a protective body builder. And two houses down on the other side of our apartment lived Jim and Joni. Both graduates of a Christian college, Joni loved her job as a school counselor and Jim worked on his degree with hopes of becoming a family therapist. They were eager to finish this stage in their lives so they could have children.

Though legally blind, Jim managed to play soccer with my son in the backyard. Beautiful, vivacious Joni often took my daughter to the store with her. My kids loved going over to their house. Once these godsends surprised me with a gift of \$200, knowing I was going through a tough time. None of us in the neighborhood had a good air conditioning system, so we spent a fair amount of time outside hanging out. We knew each other well. Eventually we all moved from the neighborhood and lost touch.

Jim received his doctorate, opened a successful

practice, and was blessed with an adorable son and daughter whom he loved to show off.

So...how could he possibly be charged with such an abhorrent crime? The worst I could imagine was that Jim’s vision problems had caused him to accidentally harm his son. The truth was much more disturbing. Unbeknownst to Joni, Jim led a double life. Part of that life involved Internet child pornography.

After years of denying the power of the media, more and more people are aware of and opposed to its ungodly enchantments. A *USA Today* poll found that more than 80 percent of Americans think the biggest problem facing society today is the breakdown of morality, and a vast majority thinks the mass media are responsible for this breakdown. So, as Christians, do we shun this powerful medium altogether? I admit; that is usually my tactic. I rarely watch television. More often than not, when exiting a movie theater my first thought is, “I want those two hours of my life back!”

Yet if I believe the mass media is so compelling, should I not try to find a way to use that influence for good? Jesus creatively used every tool available to reach His audiences. His last supper with His disciples is a wonderful audio visual lesson involving all the senses, reminding us of the gravity of our sins and the price He paid for our forgiveness.

My son Philip says, “We tend to treat symptoms as the disease.” Maybe people spend so much time “vegging” in front of computers or televisions because they have lost their purpose in life. What if, through that computer, they found that purpose?

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*names have been changed

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Plus Much More!