

THE TENTH RULE OF LIFE

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Rule 10 from Bill Gates to teenagers:

'Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.'

It is difficult to conceive the difference that has occurred over the last 70 years in our society. 70 years ago people were so involved in the act of making ends meet and providing a good life for the family that they didn't have time to sit and relax in coffee shops. Nor did they have the amount of time to put into leisure pursuits as we do today. My grandfather worked in a coal mine and in those days there seemed to be far more hard physical work done than now where so much of our work is automated.

Think of the Walton family and how they gathered around the radio in the evenings under candlelight. I still remember doing the same thing at our house in New Zealand. We did not initially have electricity and had to see by lantern light at night. What a great quality of life we had back then though! We made our own fun, created our own games, made rope swings tied to tree branches and, most importantly, we spent time talking to one another. As kids we had fantastic imaginations.

So what has happened to people's imaginations today? I can tell you what has happened. Our misguided choices have robbed us of personal conversation, of bright imaginations and we suffer from the near-disappearance of our own family values. Television and the movies have created the new norm for our society. Our personal moral and ethical codes have been shot to pieces by the sheer volume of the 'anything goes' messaging that spews off the screen. Parents have a real battle on their hands trying to instill and keep strong family values when kids' TV and movie heroes are saying the opposite. Kids get the idea that all the junk they see on TV IS REAL LIFE. They become numbed to the horrors of tragedy and the verbal and emotional abuse they see on the screen. With both parents working, the TV becomes the babysitter that is too often unmonitored.

With such a huge paradigm shift through the years, teens may get the idea that work revolves around their own lives rather than the other way round. You have heard of the saying, "I work to live, rather than live to work?" In the old days there was barely any time given for workers to eat their lunch let alone stop for coffee breaks. These days most businesses have their own coffee makers and it is normal to head for the coffee machine first thing in the morning and also at regular intervals during the day. I am constantly amazed at the waste of time I

see in the workplace as people stand around chattering instead of keeping to their delegated breaks.

I can't help but think that the credit card has also been the undoing of our society today. As long as they have somewhere to get money from, people will do what they want rather than what is necessary to stay out of debt - e.g. the 40-hour week. Borrowing money for vehicles, computers, and clothing has become the norm. Everyone lives off their card and kids often live off their parents.

This was never the real world although I am afraid to say it has become so. Teens need to learn to become accountable for their own ethical, moral and financial lives and we, as parents, are charged with the responsibility of training our teens to do so. We need to stand against what is being dictated by the TV and movies so our kids have a richer experience and will pass these values onto their children.

We need to protect their imaginations by ensuring they play together instead of ogling the box or playing with hand-held devices. Restrict their cell phone access and encourage them to spend face-to-face time with their friends. Show them the value in an honest day's work for honest pay.

Children learn reality and develop their work ethic by observing us and listening to our teachings about life. It should not come from the unreal view of life portrayed by television. Let's raise our kids to reach the potential and purpose God implanted in them even before they were born. There is no place for young adults who approach their life and work with mediocrity.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.