

Family Matters

Chapter 16

By Dale Payne

Guarding Our Homes

A Biblical Response To Secular Influences And The Family

Here is a strange phenomena. We as parents are extremely concerned about guarding the front door of our home which might expose our family to destructive influences to our children's lives, and we should be concerned. The world is imploding morally and socially all around us, and it isn't getting any better with age. We take great pains as parents to protect our families from the bad guys by keeping the front door locked, deadbolted, with a shotgun and pepper spray ready to protect our children from exposure to drugs, rapists, gangs, predators, rioters, bullies and thieves. We go to great lengths to put up security cameras and doorbell alarms and feed a big dog with big teeth to help keep us safe and secure at night. Yet we seem to have forgotten all about the the back door of our home which we have left wide open to other subtle, dangerous, worldly influences we allowed accidentally into our home through our kids exposure to social media, gaming, and bad friendships. We even will drive our kids places to make sure they are safe, yet we seem oblivious to what is happening in the back seat of our vehicle, or when we are not around with them at school, with friends, or when they are privately on their smart phone (which they are on 24/7). One parent informed me that her son didn't have a Facebook page, but I told her I was just on his site. She was shocked and completely unaware. Kids are doing things with technology we as parents have no idea. They are good about lying or hiding the truth. They know how to use a computer and smart phone better than most adults. Sadly, the lack of trust is a huge problem with this generation.

Nothing in our world is neutral. Everything has the power to influence – for good or bad – moving us either toward God or away from Him. The question is to what extent are you going to allow your kids to be influenced and how are you going to intentionally offset this secular influence. The age of technology is accelerating at unbelievable speeds, and we cannot escape it. It is here to stay. We as parents must have greater discernment (wisdom) in the things that potentially may harm our families' minds through what enters their eyes and ears by their digital devices. We are experiencing a complete loss of innocence in our youth these days. What used to be adult conversation 50 years ago is now common among our youth. Ideas do have consequences. Technology does influence. Knowledge does have an effect. A constant bombardment of immoral themes will have a devastating effect on our children. The places where our kids spend most of their time and energy will be the greatest influence on their life. Don't be fooled. Which will make the greater impact - 4 hours at church a week or 84 hours weekly with their hands and minds in a depraved culture on their phones? Which will leave the greater imprint? How much time do you spend with your kids

to offset that negative input they receive every single day? We can't lock them away in a closet, but we must be much more involved in our parenting than just handing our kids a phone, tablet, or computer, and hoping everything is going to turn out ok. Don't assume your kids are genuinely saved or are bulletproof from temptation. Even good kids can be tempted with the deceitfulness of sin in this sinful world. Parents are the gatekeepers. We can not get sleepy and doze off at the wheel.

Allow young children to have creative, technology-free play time unplugged. A child-centered home is one where the parent does everything for the child and is at the child's beckoning call. A healthy family is one that teaches children to play on their own without dependence on a device or screen. Do not allow them to grow up too fast. Protect their innocence. Let them dream, build, create, play make-believe, run, climb, and hide – outside if at all possible. Don't expect your children to be adults in their thinking and abilities. Give them ample time in their childhood to discover their world. Step into their imagination and have fun with them. The mind of a child is full of images which the child knows to be unreal.

T. C. Trumbull said, "It is by the dolls and other playthings of childhood that some of the truest instincts of manhood and of womanhood are developed and cultivated in the progress of all right child training" (p.168). Some of the best times I have had with my young children was when we built forts in the living room using couch cushions, searched for Easter eggs in the backyard, played in the sandbox, played trains and pirates throughout the house, read storybooks at bedtime. We did so many other fun things than just watch TV or swipe the internet on our smartphones. I may be a dinosaur, but we still have chosen not to have TV or cable reception. We do watch movies, but it is limited in our lives. I have fought hard to not let my smartphone dictate my life, despite the pressure from others who are addicts. I will not let technology rule my life or my family. Others may. I cannot.

Direct your child's playtime to be free from the controlling influence of secular media. Limit their TV, gaming, and social media time – if any. Allow it only after school, homework, and chores are done faithfully. Never allow children or teenagers access to passwords or unsupervised down-time. Don't be in a hurry to get them a smartphone just because everyone else seems to have one. Cell phone worship will be their downfall. Choose to do without TV or cable. Wisely select movie viewing (use Clear Play). If you don't control the secular world, it will control you. Guaranteed!

Neil Postman in his book Amusing Ourselves To Death said, "Between the ages of six and eighteen, the average child spends some 16,000 hours in front of the screen, whereas he only spends 13,000 hours in school. During the first 20 years of an American child's life, he will have seen over one million commercials at a rate of 1,000 per week." Most families had a TV in every room which was on most of the time. These facts were based on a 1985 study – can you imagine what they are today? The single most powerful mind-altering device on the

planet at that time was the television - responsible for shortened attention spans, reduced linguistic power, limiting a child's capacity for abstract thinking – which was replaced for a short time by the desktop computer. Now it is being replaced again by the smartphone. Now a child can carry their own screen with them in their back pocket and have direct access to anything they want on demand at the swipe of a finger. What more can you expect but, garbage in, garbage out (GIGO) or “monkey see, monkey do”. (Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves To Death, New York: Viking, 1985, p.104,105)

We must train our teens not to be in perpetual adolescence. They should be known more for their Christian character and servant's hearts, than their gaming skills, Facebook posts, favorite YouTube stupid videos, Instagram posts, or TikTok. *1 Corinthians 13:11 says, “When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child, when I became a man, I did away with childish things.”* When you have a thirty-year-old son who still lives at home and can't keep a job because he is addicted to computer games or binges on Netflix or YouTube videos all day long and on into the night, or he never puts down his smartphone, you have a real problem. As long as you feed him, baby him, supply his electricity, never move him out of his entitlement mentality, or break him out of his zombie fascination, he will never grow up or leave his slothful position. A Biblical mental program cannot coexist with worldly programming. Godliness and worldliness cannot coexist.

The greatest disqualifier of teenagers today is pornography. It finds its way into the hearts and minds of our kids. Many admit to first viewing pornography in grade school. We cannot let our guard down with our computers or any questionable magazines that come in the mail. We cannot allow our children to have smartphones with internet access without close scrutiny. Social media is a pit for destructive viewing. It will quickly rob your children of their innocence. The first indication of their lustful struggle might be a teenager's low entertainment standard in their choice of music or movies. If your son is a regular consumer of whatever the world dishes up, then he is being seduced. There is no way that young men can be entertained by movies which include partial nudity, removal of clothing, steamy bed scenes, immodestly dressed women, bikinis, or coed physical contact, without being aroused by those visual images. It is not just entertainment, and we are not just amoral machines. If he watches vile moves, he is being disciplined by raunchiness and immorality. If your son resists your putting parental controls on movie viewing or certain types of music, think twice why there is conflict. The content of those media choices is luring his lustful desire and he is seduced. Sexual immorality always is accompanied by lying. Usually the pattern of lying starts early before the immorality does. Be aware of what comes out of their mouths. It is pointing somewhere. Daughters can be drawn to steamy romance novels or chick flicks which present sex as casual, an expression of love given without consequence, and satisfying. Our daughters are vulnerable emotionally on social media where they pour out their souls to anyone who will listen. Emotional promiscuity cannot be a part of a believing teenager's life and digital world.

Covenant Eyes is a great accountability program to help guard our phones and computers. **Clear Plays** is also a good movie filter which can accommodate DVD's and streaming on our TV or computers. Parental control settings and ad block is helpful, but is not a fix-all. Even some of the kid friendly funny websites are not moving our kids toward Christ. Be very careful. There are many ways around parental guidelines where kids can view inappropriate and even sinful images. Don't fall asleep on duty. Your kid's mind is at stake.

Tedd Tripp said, "When we allow our children to become independent decision makers, we give them a false idea of liberty and a mistaken notion about freedom. Freedom is not found in autonomy, it is found in obedience" (Ps. 119:44,45). One example of this dichotomy is with the question of "Who says?" If the parent gives up the decision making and allows the child to be the decision maker, when it comes to choices of music, food for dinner, choices of friends, or styles of clothing, the child becomes the boss and the parent is only on the sidelines able to make suggestions which remove their parental authority (SACH, p. 27,31). One example of this is how a family decides what to eat. Rather than asking the child, "What do you want to eat?" which puts the responsibility for the decision solely on the child thereby making the parent a short-order cook, the parent should plan the menu and communicate possible options for the family menu and ask for input from the family. Free will is never completely free. We have free will based on the limited choices we have. We never have absolute freedom to do whatever we want whenever we want to. It might be more prudent to give your child certain choices within the basic guidelines you as parents have set for your family based on principles which are governed by the Word of God. Be very careful that you don't give too much freedom too young in a child's life, or they will grow up with an entitlement mentality that you have created. As your child matures and demonstrates wisdom and Biblical discernment, you can trust your teenager to make right choices on their own regarding clothing, friends, music, media, etc.

A child's room should never be seen as a place of complete privacy to carry out whatever they wish to do behind closed doors without any adult supervision. As long as they are under your roof, there is no such thing as complete independence or autonomy. There should be no locks on their doors. We should respect a child's need for some privacy especially when getting dressed, but not to the extent where there is no accountability or unsupervised behavior. We should always knock before we enter. This open-door policy should also be communicated regarding their phones, computer, and vehicles. You as their parent have the right to check where they have been, who they are texting, or talking with. Be very careful, before you allow them the privilege to have a smartphone or tablet, that you communicate the rules of engagement. No child should think it is their property and you as their parent have no rights to hold them accountable. They need to know they can lose that privilege by unacceptable behavior or wrong attitudes. Also, they should know that if their grades are not maintained or certain expectations are not met, those privileges will be the first to be removed.

Media Influences:

“We cannot invite the secular culture into our homes and expect its voice not to be compelling to us or our children.” (Instructing A Child’s Heart, p. 16. Tripp)

Psalms 101:2-4 “I will be careful to lead a blameless life... I will walk within my house with a blameless heart. I will set nothing wicked (worthless/vile) before my eyes... I will not know wickedness.”

Philippians 4:8 “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.”

Job 31:1,7 “I have made a covenant with my eyes... If my heart has been led by my eyes...”

Psalms 12:8 “The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men.”

Psalms 119:37 “Turn my eyes away from worthless things.”

Proverbs 4:23 “Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life.”

Proverbs 23:7 “As a man thinketh, so is he...”

Proverbs 23:17 “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.”

Luke 11:34-36 “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light, but when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it then that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

Ephesians 5:3 “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place.”

Ephesians 5:15,16 “See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeem the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Romans 16:19 “I want to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

James 1:8 “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 4:8 “Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded.”

Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

The Negative Effects Of Technology:

Technology shapes our minds and changes the way we think. It can alter our attention span. Three minutes is the duration or extent of how long kids can last on an idea before they are bored. Adults can't even process more than a few lines of text or email before they lose interest. They tell us our email or blog is "too long" or they quickly scan the first few lines and then move on. Because we constantly need to make decisions on the web, coupled with the torrent of information linked to everything we read online, it overloads our working memory and impedes our ability to retain. It breeds superficial thoughts and limited understanding, not to mention impatience. By things coming in rushed short bursts, it doesn't allow people to think deeply, linger long on an idea, or savor or even finish a thought. Mark Loughridge's blog in "Gentle Reformation" April 16, 2016 said, "Our use of technology radically shapes and reshapes our cognitive processes. But where the internet differs (from a book) is that it seriously overloads our working memory to the extent that we cannot file and filter the information we take in." "I find I am less able to remember what I just read, but I am able to remember where to find it." "My mind seemed to have become like a web browser—retaining little, but filled with bookmarks of where to find things. It was as if I had outsourced my memory to the internet!" Nicholas Carr, in his book The Shallows: "What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains," writes, "The influx of competing messages that we receive whenever we go online, not only overloads our working memory, it makes it much harder for our frontal lobes to concentrate our attention on any one thing." Our brains become adept at forgetting and inept at remembering. Children are losing their ability to be creative and be critical thinkers, and their ability to remember is diminishing." *1 Peter 1:13 says, "Prepare your minds for action."* How can you prepare if your mind doesn't remember what you just read?

<<http://gentlereformation.com/2016/04/16/outsourcing-memory-and-wired-for-distraction/>>

The Shallows: What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains, Nicholas Carr
12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You, Tony Reinke, Crossway, 2017

Every available moment people are glued to their screen. Families will sit silently in a restaurant each on their phones and no one will be talking. We are guilty of cell worship. If you don't believe me, try putting yours down for a day or week and see if you can think without it. You check it even when it doesn't notify you. It is changing all of us in ways we have no idea. It has changed our youth irreversibly. Our phones have become our focus. Kare Anderson, a tech researcher concluded that giving undivided attention is the first and most basic ingredient in any healthy relationship. Others know what's the center of our attention and thus what controls our life. Kids know what holds their parent's attention. When you are constantly on your phone, you are not giving attention and valuable time with your kids.

<http://headhearhand.org/blog/2012/06/06/a-black-book-or-a-black-phone/>

“A Letter To My Boys” by Renee Robinson

<https://renee-robinson.com/a-letter-to-my-boys-the-real-reason-i-say-no-to-electronics-repost/>

We have so many “friends” but we are even more lonely. *Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man of too many friends will come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* From their first ability to hold a device, we allow our children access to games or websites for “kids” where they can learn meaningless facts simply by watching with no interaction or communication skills needed. Without the device, they cannot sit still or focus for any short amount of time. Our kids don’t know how to spell anymore. We have lost the value of the printed page. Teachers who deal with tech in the classroom are struggling to implement policies that enhance learning, rather than what they experience of student addiction, decline of face-to-face socialization, deskilling, endless distraction, demand for instant gratification, information dependency, and separation anxiety if students are parted from their devices. Some are removing smartphones completely from the learning environment. One student acknowledged, “I never realized how much my smartphone was taking over my life.” Some say they miss the experiences of childhood that no longer exist. Because of the dominance of smartphones, people can’t read maps. Reading and writing on paper has become antiquated. Why memorize information when you have Siri and Google? There is some talk of the future of implanting smartphones in the human body, which is funny. For many, it already is a reality because they are joined at the hip with their phone.

There are camps where parents, who feel they have lost their kids, can send their children who are obsessed with their smartphones or computers, to help them remove their enslavement to technology. Several of these kids were addicts to *Fortnite*, *Snapchat*, or *Instagram*. Wilderness therapy organizations are seeing an increase in teens coming to get treatment for their technology addiction. The camp’s goal is to refocus the children on reality rather than digital media. They take the kids on backpacking, climbing, or rafting trips and places where there is no access to technology, to give kids a break from the control of the web. Technological dependence is now linked to mental health issues (a 2018 study published by *NeuroRegulation*). Excessive screen time is linked to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* surveyed 15-16-year olds and found associations between frequent social media use and symptoms of ADHD. “Gaming disorder” is now an actual mental health condition in the *International Classification of Diseases*, where gaming takes priority over other daily activities and is negatively affecting important aspects of life – social, personal, family, educational, and occupational. There is just something wonderful and freeing being in God’s great creation without a phone or computer with no internet service. (<getpocket.com>; Pocket Worthy: “The Tech Generation Goes To Wilderness Therapy”) (Outside Magazine, 9/7/2018)

It also should be telling that the two biggest tech figures in recent history seldom let their kids play with the very products they helped create. Steve Jobs, former CEO and cofounder of *Apple*, who is now deceased, revealed in a 2014 *New York Times* interview that he limited how much technology he allowed his kids to use at home. His kids were prohibited from using the newly-released iPad. They even had a no-phone policy at dinner. His kids didn't get smartphones till they were 14. Bill Gates, former CEO of *Microsoft*, also limited the amount of time his children could be on technology. His daughter was said to have developed an unhealthy attachment to a video game which he then set a cap on her use. Many Silicon Valley executives who are parents, are strict with tech use due to harmful effects of increased screen time. Many ban gadget use on school nights. Maybe these tech CEO's know something that the rest of us don't. Chris Anderson former editor of *Wired* and CEO of *3D Robotics* said, "We have seen the dangers of technology firsthand. I've seen it in myself, and I don't want to see that happen to my kids." Other execs limit certain devices and even replace iPads with actual physical books. "Children under 10 seem to be most susceptible to becoming addicted." Many execs have a strict "no screen time during the week" rule. Some parents forbid teens from using social networks except for things like *Snapchat* which deletes messages after they have been sent, so that they don't have to worry about saying something online they will later regret. Some wait until their children are 16 before they give them a smartphone with a data plan. The #1 rule was there was no screens in the bedroom. "45% of teens surveyed said they are online on a near-constant basis." "The average American spends 5 hours a day on their phone; averaging about 2000 tapping or swiping from the time they get up to the time they go to bed." (*New York Times*, "Steve Jobs Was A Low-Tech Parent", 9/10/2014) (*Popular Science*, "Industry insiders don't use their products like we do. That should worry us.", August 3, 2018) (Steve Jobs biographer Walter Isaacson)

Chris Weller writing for *Business Insider* (10/24/2017) in the "*Independent*" stated that "a teen's (8th graders) risk for depression increased by 27% when they frequently use social media." "Children who use their phones for 3 hours or more a day are more likely to be suicidal – now even greater risk than the US homicide rate." Psychologists are now going on record to say that smartphones are dangerous for teenage brains. There is an addictive power with digital technology. The average age for a child to get their first phone is 10 years old.

The Bible's Response To A Distorted View Of Reality:

Titus 2:12 "Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age."

Ephesians 4:17-19 "Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts. They having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

Romans 12:2; 13:13,14 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." "Let us behave properly as in the day... and make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lusts."

2 Corinthians 10:5 "Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

Jeremiah 4:14 "Wash your heart from evil..."

The Bible Speaks Against Certain Influences On The Family

Matthew 6:19-21 "Where your treasure is... there will your heart be also."

Mark 4:19 "The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."

1 John 2:15,16 "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone does love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all this is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world and the world is passing away."

Technology Questions:

- What we watch directly influences what we do. How is your family being influenced (good or bad) by the media?
- How much time does your family watch TV, are you on social media, or are on your computer, or smartpone each day/week? Is it healthy?
- How many rooms in your home do you have a TV or computer?
- How many family members have a smartphone with internet access?
- Do you have the TV on while eating meals or while you do other home related chores?
- Who are your child's friends on Facebook? Where do they go?
The things that are influencing them are influencing your child.
- Where are your children going inside their virtual world?
- Have you ever considered getting rid of your TV reception or cable connection? What would be the effects of that decision on you?
- How much does your smartphone control you? Your kids? Can you live without it? How young should a child be given a smartphone?
- What is the general attitude your family exhibits toward each other or things at home that need to be done when you are not all online?
- Is your default when nothing is happening (boredom) to immediately reach for your phone? If you can't find it, do you react in a cold sweat?
- Have you allowed your child to watch TV or use their smartphone without permission with no restrictions on how long or what they can watch. Excessive leniency allowing him freedom to choose may direct your child to think his decisions are his own and cause him to dishonor his parents.
- What type of video is your child watching on YouTube? What also is

available to them on the side bar at a touch of the finger?

- Do you find yourself and your kids easily distracted from a thought or task? Is your thought process sharp and your memory as clear as it once was? Do you find yourself disconnected and fragmented in your thinking? Are we like Pavlov's dogs who have been programmed that if we hear a "ding" we immediately check our email or Facebook, or a new post – only to try to return to a task or thought that has long flew away? Even when there has been no alert on our phone, we check it anyway.

TV/Movie Filter Devices:

www.ClearPlay.com

TV Guardian (close captioned – limited filtering)

Movie & Game Reviews:

www.christiananswers.net

www.movieguide.org (Dr. Ted Baehr)

www.kids-in-mind.com

www.pluggedin.com (Focus on the Family)

www.commonensemedia.org (secular)

Media Conversations:

www.mediataalk101.org

“Teaching media discernment in the light of following Christ”

“Biblical help for a media saturated society”

“Every song is a sermon, every movie a message, every TV a teacher, every word a weapon, and a picture's worth a thousand words.”

www.protectyoungeyes.com (social media apps and parental controls)

www.captivatedthemovie.com (107 minutes)

Family Friendly Videos/DVDs: (each family must decide)

Internet Issues:

Social Networks: Facebook/Instagram/Twitter (Emotional promiscuity)

YouTube/iTunes/Google

Parents, once freedom is given, it is very difficult to remove. Carefully consider granting the privilege of a computer or smartphone only after you have seriously thought through the dangers, the negative influence it may have, the known benefits, the possible secrecy, and the long-term cost to you and your teen (example: Social Media platforms, computer gaming, unsupervised texting). Wasted time can never be recovered. Would you give your sports car

keys to your 15-year-old to use unsupervised without restrictions? Make sure you talk through safeguards and restraints together.

- What access privileges have you given your kids?
- Do you have an open-door policy in your kid's room?
- What safeguards have you put in place? Are devices password protected?
- What are the areas your family is most vulnerable?
 - Neglecting to log out or put your computer to sleep safely where the kids can have access.
 - Blocking certain content, but leaving other sites wide open. (Wikipedia, Google pics, iTunes, YouTube all have backdoors in to unacceptable pics and video content.)
 - Enabling "New Private Window" browsing which leaves no footprint of where anyone has visited online.
 - Blocking your home computers, but not being able to control what other friends post which your kids have direct access, or may be viewed at a friend's house without your knowing.
 - Certain firewalls work in a business/school, but not on a mobile unit. Put accountability software on all devices.
 - **Covenant Eyes** may not be compatible with a university's firewall IT and may need to be disabled but in doing so, that firewall may not be able to catch everything coming in that is destructive to your student.
- What are your kids viewing?
 - How often do you check their history or cookies? (These are a roadmap to where they have been) (If the history has been cleared...guess what...)
 - How often do you check their Social Media posts or access?
(Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Youtube up/downloads)

Internet Filtering And Accountability Software:

www.NetSafetyResources.com

www.CovenantEyes.com (1(877)479-1119)

www.Internetsafety.com (Safe Eyes)

www.Familysafemedia.com (Bsafe)

www.guardwaveinc.com (Ishield)

Social Networks & YouTube:

The Web is now a place to express yourself - anything you want to share about yourself including interests, activities, thoughts, pictures, video, etc. The internet is changing the way people interact, shop, conduct research, and find entertainment. Social Network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Bebo are communities to share information. One's "friend" list (known as "contacts", "fans", "followers") are those we want to stay in contact with. It allows people to broadcast their point of view or vent their emotions to the world. Sadly, most people can't

keep up with but a handful of people, even though they may have 500+ people in their friends list. People present themselves in a certain light (which many times is actually not the case). It is easy to lie about yourself. It is also difficult once something is posted to take it back. There is no real age verification. A suggestion to parents is that if you allow your child to use a social network site, that you become a member as well and add each other to your friends list so you can keep posted on your child's page activity. Caution your child about putting out personal information on any surveys or questionnaires. It is said that 71% of teens have a profile on a social network site. 47% of those have a public viewable site. Know the privacy settings and limit who has access to what. Remember, you may control your child's site, but you cannot control your child's friend's sites and what they post. Teach your child the importance of a good reputation online and accountability for what comes out of their minds directly to their fingertips. Words have meaning and consequences. Have online integrity.

YouTube and Vimeo is amazing. They are the most popular sites on the Web. Anything you want to fix, it is there on how to do it. Any music artist probably has a music video. You can upload personal videos for all to see. It is said that more video uploads happen in 60 days on YouTube than all three major US networks have created in 60 years. History, hobbies, music videos, funny videos of animals, Dude Perfect, current news events – everything you would want to see - and all that is destructive to your family as well. Be cautious of allowing your kids to be unsupervised on YouTube. You can block some things under the “safety mode” feature, but it does not catch everything. Each video side bar gives you options for similar videos, and yet sexually immoral videos are just one click away. In 2009 the Media Research Center (mrc.org) published a report on the huge amount of sexually suggestive content that was on YouTube. They examined the most popular YouTube searches for the word “Porn” which yielded 330,000 results. The study reported on the top 157 videos with a million views or more. Two thirds of the videos advertised themselves as being pornographic. Profanity is commonplace in the title and comments below the videos (“Eye-Opening YouTube” Media Research Center, mrc.org). Children can upload inappropriate private content they have created on their phones or computer webcam. The “community guidelines” monitoring is done by self-checking known as a flag system. However, there are things that are unacceptable that slip by and are available for younger viewing. There is a YouTube app for smart phones which you may need to block. You may consider blocking YouTube all together because of it being too high of a risk for your kids.

Cyberbullying:

Have your children been a target of threats or offensive bullying online? One out of ten kids surveyed admit to being bullied. Have your children ever themselves been guilty of harassing or slandering another online? Does your child ever exhibit any unusual behavior like depression, withdrawal tendencies, or hypersensitive attitudes? Have your kids ever posted any incriminating or embarrassing photos or video of another or even themselves for everyone to see? These contacts can come through instant message, email, or Facebook. Teach your

kids to ignore the bully tactic and let you as their parent know what is happening. Have them log off and change their password when someone is targeting them. Many social network sites have security or privacy features. Caution your kids from taking online quizzes or answering personal questions or profiles about themselves online.

A way to check on your child is to type their name (or screen name, nickname, email address, mobil #, home address) in the search bar (like Google.com with their name in “”). You can also search their history or cookies to see where they have been. Some websites which monitor cyberbullying trends are <stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>, <wiredsafety.org>, or <cyberbullying.us>.

Online Predators:

David Finkelhour, Director of *Crimes Against Children Research Center* commented that predators are criminal seductions that take advantage of child or teenage vulnerabilities. The offender lures teens after weeks of conversations where they play on the teen’s desire to be liked, or desire for romance, or express sexual curiosity, and then lure them through flattery and manipulation, into encounters that are sexual in nature, usually with people who are considerably older than themselves (without knowing). Kids first exposure is usually in chat room sites where they are willing to talk about sex online with strangers and where they have a pattern of risky behavior on the web. Most sex crimes against youth are committed by offenders who do not hide their age or sexual intentions. Sadly, teens will agree to physically meet with the predator and some describe themselves as being “in love” with their online friend. At risk teens are those who are willing to post seductive pictures of themselves online and express an interest in romance.

Stats regarding this state 76% of victims are between 13-15 years old. 75% of victims are girls, and 99% of offenders are male, with 76% being older than 26. 76% of first encounters happen in online chat rooms. 64% of offenders had communicated with their victims for over a month online. 83% of those victims who met their offender face to face willingly went somewhere with them.

Parents must have specific standards as to what is and what is not appropriate to post online, but also have conversations with their kids about talking to strangers and being flirtatious online, as well as be vigilant keeping children accountable for where they go and who they are talking with online. If a child is exhibiting being withdrawn or secretive behavior, parents must follow up with the reason behind their actions. A predator is not usually a stranger because the victim feels they know him or her well because of the amount of time they have been on the web talking together. Questions to ask your child are: has this person asked you for personal information? Have they talked about sex? Have they asked for pictures of you or sent you gifts? Have they asked to meet you in person? If so, contact local law enforcement or the Cyber Tipline www.CyberTipline.com or call (1-800-843-5678).

Computer Gaming:

“I just spent 3 hours playing Battle Field, and this last round I had 150 kills, I destroyed numerous enemy vehicles, aircraft, and equipment, and died 19 times. So... do we play it again or go to the next scenario?” Sound familiar?

Resource: A Student’s Guide To Gaming, by Reagan Rose “Track Culture” (\$3.99)

The world of gaming is rapidly changing. Kris Graft said that 80% of U.S. children are gamers (<gamasutra.com/view/news/>, 12/3/2009). 51% of those are male between the age of 9-14. The graphic quality today brings a sense of realism like never before. We now have options like Wii, Xbox, PlayStation, and specific high-powered gaming computers which come with direct internet access. Our kids are not only playing with those in the room, but can be linked with hundreds of players worldwide. I have enjoying playing some computer games with my kids, but I have found that I need to guard my family from the influence these games can have on us (content, time management, enslavement, desensitization, etc.). It is easy to get hooked. Be cautious. It can rob you of your joy, syphon away your limited time, and it will turn you and your kids into mental zombies – all starting at your fingertips. Have you lost your kids to gaming? Are they already gone from years of staring at a screen?

There are several things parents should consider. Do you know what the content is of your kid’s computer games? Children are becoming more desensitized to various forms of evil today (violence, vulgar language, immorality, sensuality, and witchcraft), and many parents are clueless to what their kids are really playing several hours a day. Killing doesn’t even phase us anymore. The sheer number of uncut violent Hollywood movies we watch, and the realistic death and mayhem in gaming these days is unbelievable. We have become numb to violence and murder (Gen. 6:11; Ps. 11:5; 17:4; Prov. 3:31; 21:7; Hos. 4:2). Kids use virtual weapons to kill the enemy, with blood realistically splattering on the screen, and they think nothing of it; sometimes they actually laugh at the experience. (Interestingly, several of those who have committed mass murders in the U.S. have been gamers.) Many game themes include theft, stalking, murder, sexual fantasy, and nudity where characters act out specific inappropriate behaviors. Human life is not valued, but survival of the fittest is promoted whatever the cost. If you die, you just respawn at another location and get another opportunity to retry at your mission – without any real life consequences for your actions, other than losing time or a few points. Games detach kids from reality. They live in a fantasy that does not exist. I am not saying all war games are evil. I have enjoyed playing some of them with my sons and extended family. But I have to admit, the graphic detail and the extreme violence in many games these days are not healthy and are a great concern to me. I am encouraging parents to act with caution and Biblical discernment as to what a child plays on a consistent basis, and what effect it is having on our sons or daughters. A child cannot spend hours in those fantasy worlds and it not affect them for evil, or rob their joy and ability to focus on more important things. Gaming is addictive and irreplaceable time will slip through our fingers.

There is also a potential danger with all these online multiplayer games with harmful interaction with predators or other individuals who you probably wouldn't want in your home – yet virtually they are right there. Be cautious of webcams and chatting face to face. Not everyone who says they are who they are – are who they say. With the ability of voice masking, you cannot know for sure the age of other gamers. Many game consoles have direct internet access where even “adult games” can be accessed. Know your console settings and parental controls. Be aware of game ratings and what is included in the game scenario. Limit the type of games your kids play. Put the console in a public place, not in a private secluded room. Don't let your kids be unsupervised. Discourage downloading free games. Contrary to popular belief, being a great gamer is not a Biblical character trait to be admired, nor one that enhances a child's reputation, nor a great quality to use on a job resume, nor is it a great boasting line to use to get girls interested in you. If you have a son who is 30 years old, still living at home, and who is unmotivated to get a job or finish school because of time spent gaming, you have created a real problem. Yes, you, because you have allowed them to develop this habit of bondage. I believe unbalanced gaming is the #2 disqualifier of “Christian” teenagers and college students.

The Bible speaks in principle to this:

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 “Do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD.”

Psalms 11:5 “The wicked and those who love violence His soul hates.”

Psalms 17:4 “I have kept myself from the ways of the violent.”

Proverbs 3:31 “Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways.”

Psalms 12:8 “The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men.”

The Question Of Time Management: (Stewardship)

How are your children learning self-discipline and time management?

How much time are you and your children on your smart phones?

How much time is your child gaming or on social media daily?

Is it out of balance?

What parameters have you set up to limit their screen time?

Remember, your children will reflect your values, habits and use of your time.

*Ephesians 5:15-17 “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, **redeem the time**, because the days are evil. Therefore, **do not be unwise**, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

Psalms 90:12 “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

- Parents, do not allow the TV, computer, or game console to become a make-

shift babysitter. You can't have influence if you are never around.

The Question Of Self-Control:

Is your screen controlling you? Can you walk away and refocus, or are you enslaved to your phone and in bondage to your gaming computer?

Is gaming all your kids can think about?

How much money have you allowed your kids to spend on buying new games?

How much money have you let your kids spend on newer, faster computers?

*1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial... **I will not be mastered by anything.**"*

*1 Corinthians 10:23 "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial... **not everything is constructive.**"*

*Romans 6:16 "You are **slaves** to the one whom you obey..."*

*2 Peter 2:18,19 "...by appealing to the lustful desire of sinful human nature... they promise them freedom, while they themselves are **slaves** of depravity – for a man is **a slave to whatever has mastered him.**"*

*Psalms 19:13 "Keep your servant also from willful sins, may they not **rule over me.**" (119:133)*

- What is your child's attitude when you ask them to put down their phone, tablet, or turn off their computer, or how do they respond after they have been playing on their computer gaming for several hours? Do they have sudden withdrawals or a serious allergic reaction? Are they agitated or resistant? Maybe things are out of balance.

Sexting:

Sexting is texting which involves sending erotic or sexually flirtatious, suggestive messages, photos or videos by mobile devices to friends. *The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy* did a survey in 2010 of teens ages 13-19 and young adults between 20-26 years of age, and found that 20% of teens have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves, and 39% sent sexually suggestive messages. 71% of teen girls and 67% of teen boys said they posted this content to a boyfriend or girlfriend. 21% of girls and 39% of boys sent such content to someone they wanted to date or hook up with. Most saw this as flirtatious or wanted to feel sexually attractive. In 2018 the *JAMA Pediatrics* study revealed that nearly 27% of teens receive sexts and 15% are sending sexts. 4% of 12 year-olds have sent or received sexts (jamanetwork.com/journals, "*Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth*", 172:4; 327-335). People are now seen as avatars or objects, not human beings with value and conscience. The problem is that digital images can be easily passed on to those who were not intended to see them, and digital messages are almost impossible to delete from the web. 25% of teen girls and 33% of teen boys surveyed said what sexual "selfies" they originally sent of themselves to one person was actually distributed to the general population. Legally, sending a nude or seminude image of a minor is considered child

pornography and is a felony. *Ephesians 5:3,4* says, “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints, and there must be no filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting which are not fitting...” *1 Corinthians 6:18* says, “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

Internet Pornography:

Dr. Mary Layden said, “Pornography, by its very nature, is an equal opportunity toxin. It damages the viewer, the performer, and the spouses and the children of the viewers and the performers. It is toxic miseducation about sex and relationships. It is more toxic the more you consume, the ‘harder’ the variety you consume, and the younger and more vulnerable the consumer.” (*Covenant Eyes 2018 edition, “Porn Stats”, p. 30*)

Clay Olsen, Co-Founder and CEO of “*Fight The New Drug*” said, “This material is more aggressive, more harmful, more violent, more degrading, and damaging than any other time in the history of the world. And this generation growing up is dealing with it to an intensity and scale no other generation in the history of the world has ever had to.” (McDowell, Leahy, Olson, “Forum: Talking to Students”, *The Set Free Global Summit, 4/6/2016*) (<https://fightthenewdrug.org>)

Damon Brown said, “If we invent a machine (computer, tablet, smart phone), the first thing we are going to do after making a profit is use it to watch porn... DVDs, the Internet, cell phones, you name it, pornography planted its big flag there first, or at least shortly thereafter.” (“PCs in ecstasy: The evolution of sex in PC games”, Computer Games Magazine, May 2006). “In 2012, 44% of adult industry executives and stakeholders believed mobile devices would become consumers primary porn viewing devices” (*The 2012 XBIZ Research Report: “Attitudes, Views, and Trends Impacting the Adult Entertainment Industry”, Spring 2012*). This is particularly troubling in light of *Pew Research Center’s* 2018 findings that 9 out of 10 Millennials own smart phones.

The question is not if your child will ever see porn, it is a matter of when and how. Is any child or teenager safe? The first viewing can implant images forever on a child’s mental hard drive. One exposure can create a lifetime of habitual viewing and mental and sexual struggle. Internet pornography is teaching our children straight from the pit of hell how and what to think about their body, sex and sexuality, and marriage. Evidently, it is said that if you use medical terminology it is not pornographic. Just like if you call it art it is not nudity. Really? According to the world’s most popular porn website, in 2017 there were 81 million daily visits with 50,000 searches a minute (<https://fightthenewdrug.org>). Symantec, an anti-virus software company, did a study in 2008 analyzing 3.5 million online searches done in a six month period and found that

“sex” was the #4 most used term, and “porn” was the #6. In 2006 an analysis of one million hits to Google’s mobile search sites showed there were more than 1 in 5 searches for pornography. **Do you think we have a problem? Absolutely!**

If the power of sin is so perverse and our hearts are so prone to sexual immorality either in thought or body, our sons and daughters (and each of us) need to know how to resist temptation, repent for a change in our heart’s desires, and set up good protective boundaries in our use of technology so that we do not allow “*sin to reign in our mortal bodies*” (Rom. 6:12). Romans 13:14 says we should, “*Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*” 1 Peter 2:11 urges us to “*abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*” Titus 2:12 instructs us (as parents) to “*deny (or say NO! to) ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age.*” To righteously do this in our homes, it definitely involves addressing heart issues, but it goes far beyond the heart (which until the day Christ takes us home is still vulnerable), to making radical amputation of potential areas of temptation and stumbling. Ephesians 5:3 says, “*But immorality or any impurity... must not be named among you as is proper among the saints.*” In other words, “Don’t even go there.” If you don’t want to slip, don’t walk where it is slippery. Have you ever fallen on the ground when you didn’t recognize black ice?

With our smart phones, porn is right at our fingertips. There is no firewall, no perfect filter or parental control to keep them from all inappropriate material. Have you given your child a smart phone lately? If you haven’t, maybe you should rethink what challenges will come with giving that device, and what you need to pray through about that decision. How will your kids do with a ticking time bomb in their hands or in their back pockets?

The *Barna Group* conducted a survey in 2014 and in 2016 in the US and found 63% of men ages 18-30 viewed porn several times a week. 21% of women from the same category view porn weekly. 90% of teens and 96% of young adults are either encouraging, accepting or neutral when they talk about porn with their friends. Teens and young adults aged 13-24 believe not recycling is worse than viewing pornography. Only 43% of teens believe porn is bad for society. Of 13-24 year-olds, only 57% believe a fully nude image is pornography. Many of the respondents acknowledged that they had looked at pornography before puberty. 57% of men and 69% of women have received a nude image by way of a device. 49% of young adults say all or most of their friends use porn regularly. *Barna* found that among teens age 13-17, 8% intentionally sought porn out daily, while 18% sought it out weekly. 51% of teens and young adult women surveyed have sent nude sext images via text, email, or apps. *Barna* found that 41% of Christian young men ages 13-24 use porn at least once a month. Those who identified themselves as “Fundamentalists” are 91% more likely to look at porn (McDowell, The

Porn Phenomenon, 2016, Ventura CA: *The Barna Group*, p. 41) (Covenant Eyes “Porn Stats” 2018, p.8,18,22)

Congress commissioned a report done in 2004 finding that 70 million individuals visited pornographic websites each week, and about 11 million of them were younger than 18 (“Protecting Kids Online”, *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2004). A Canadian study in 2007 of students age 13 and 14 found that 35% of boys had viewed pornographic videos “too many times to count.” The third *Youth Internet Safety Survey* was published in 2010 regarding when youth were unwillingly exposed to nudity online, 15% were 10-12 years old, 23% were 13-15, 28% were 16-17. Can you imagine how a 10 year old will process seeing nudity at that age and how that will affect him or her the rest of their lives? We are not talking about art without clothes, we are talking about real-time people who one can interact with.

According to the *Covenant Eyes 2018 edition “Porn Stats,”* it referred to a study done by *Cyber Psychology and Behavior* in 2008 that 93% of boys and 62% of girls have been exposed to internet pornography before the age of 18. 35% of those have viewed porn on multiple occasions. 14% of boys and 9% of girls were exposed to porn before age 13. 83% of boys and 57% of girls surveyed have seen group sex on the internet. 35% say their first exposure was through a computer on the internet. 79% of unwanted exposure take place in the home. 40% of unwanted exposure is the result of an innocent word search. 69% of boys and 55% of girls have seen same-sex intercourse. 39% of boys and 23% of girls have seen sex acts involving bondage. 18% of boys and 10% of girls have watched rape or sexual violence online. 15% of boys and 9% of girls have viewed child pornography. Only 3% of college males and 17% of college females have never seen internet pornography – meaning that 97% of college males and 83% of college female students have viewed porn. 64% of college males and 18% of college females admit to viewing porn weekly.

These are shocking facts that show the overall numbing effect of a generation of kids raised on pornography where 2/3 of young men and 1/2 of young women surveyed now believe viewing porn is an acceptable practice. There is a close association between frequent exposures to sexually explicit material and permissive attitudes toward sex, having multiple sexual partners, and the acceptability of casual sexual relationships without needing any affection between partners. Many youth are mimicking behaviors they have viewed on the screen. Half of today’s male college students and nearly one third of female college students report being exposed to porn before their teenage years, as young as 10-12 years old. (Sabina, Wolak, and Finkelhor, “The nature and dynamics of Internet pornography exposure for youth.” *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 11, 2008, pg. 691-693)

In 2012, *TRU Research* conducted online interviews with teens ages 13-17 and parents and found that 71% of teens have hidden what they do online from their parents by clearing browser history, deleting viewed videos, lying about browsing, using their smart phone instead of a computer, disabling parental controls, or having email or social media accounts unknown to parents. Of these, 32% admitted to intentionally accessing nude or pornographic content online. 43% did so weekly, while only 12% of parents knew their teens were struggling with porn. (Jamie Lee, "The Digital Divide: How the Online Behavior of Teens is Getting Past Parents", McAfee.com June 2012). Cox Communications in June of 2012 did a survey of Tweens (preteens) on internet usage and found that 44% of those surveyed admitted they looked at things online which their parents would not approve. 81% of those said it happened at home. 48% of those said it happened at home when their parents were home.

According to the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, prolonged exposure to pornography leads to:

- Diminished trust between intimate couples
- The abandonment of the hope of sexual monogamy.
- Belief that promiscuity is the natural state.
- Belief that abstinence and sexual inactivity are unhealthy.
- Cynicism about love or the need for affection between sexual partners.
- Belief that marriage is sexually confining.
- Lack of attraction to family and child-raising.

(Dolf Zillmann, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 27, August 2000, p. 41-44)

These are staggering facts. From my involvement with youth and college age for the last 35+ years, **I believe pornography is the #1 disqualifier of "Christian" teenagers and college students** in America. We need to address the effects of "the years the locust has eaten." The availability of porn instantly at our fingertips is devastating to our youth (and adults). Just informing them of the dangers of the web and teaching them Bible passages is not enough to stop the overwhelming temptation presented daily from this depraved culture. Most precautions parents put in place aren't enough to block all exposure to porn. We have to fight a battle for the hearts and minds of our kids. We are losing them at every point. By keeping up with the latest technology, we are actually doing in the next generation of young people. It is everywhere – at every click – every swipe. It is an epidemic of seismic proportions. Anyone who says it isn't as bad as it is, is fooling themselves. This will affect your kids future marriage and family if you don't take drastic measures, if it hasn't already done so in your family without your knowledge. Even good Christian families are at risk – both boys and girls. Technology is at the heart of everything we do. We can't seem to live without it, but as you can see, it is killing our families living with it.

Our U.S. Department of Justice put out a statement saying, “Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent and obscene material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.” (“Post Hearing Memorandum of Points and Authorities, ACLU v. Reno, 1996). At the click of a button or a swipe of a finger, literally hundreds of millions of pornographic images and videos are available online, much of which require no age verification to view. Many kids get exposed by doing innocent word searches or by clicking on “teaser” advertisements, or misspelling the link, or accidentally using a close name of a popular website, or local side news “advertisements” or YouTube sidebar options. When your child searches for pics on certain topics, porn pics are thrown in with the variety of choices they searched. Just being overly curious and searching sexual words puts them immediately in the cesspool of immorality. I have been amazed by doing simple innocent searches for basic pictures for a Power Point presentation, *Google* took me places I never intended to go. Pornographic junk mail will show up in your email inbox (hopefully your spam filter catches most of it, but it doesn’t always). The porn industry uses anonymizer websites which bypass firewalls and blocking software. Once logged into an anonymizer, your child can go wherever they want and it will look like they were only on a neutral site. Train your kids not to click on anything that is unfamiliar (but sadly, they do when unsupervised). Move your computers to a public location in your home. Amanda Zurface wrote a piece called, “Survey shows why parents should keep smartphones out of the bedroom.” (*Covenant Eyes*, 5/10/2018). She found that 88% of the students ages 10-15 intentionally viewed porn with their smart phones (57%) in their bedroom (61%) when they were bored (48%). The *Barna Group* published its study “The Porn Phenomenon: The Impact of Pornography in the Digital Age” which found that 48% of Tweens 9-12 have smart phones, and of those, 72% sleep with them in their bedroom, as well as 88% of teens 13-17 have a smart phone, and of those, 82% sleep with their phones. Parents need to understand this fact and not allow their kids to use their devices in their bedroom. The major problem today with smartphones and tablets is that everything you can do on your home computer, you can do on your mobile phone, which most kids have and take everywhere.

Parents, if your child has already viewed porn, your response to this should be based on how much and how long it has been going on. It is important to talk through exactly to what extent they have been exposed, and what form it came to them. You will need to discern whether this is initial curiosity of the body of the opposite sex or if it involves lustful desire and masturbation (usually with feelings of shame and guilt) or if it has become a habitual pattern accompanied with risky behavior or if it has become an addictive dependence craving for a more graphic experience or if it has now moved to perverted sexuality (homosexuality, transgenderism, bondage sexual experimentation). Check your child’s browsing history on each device and browser (Safari, Firefox, Chrome,

Internet Explorer, browsing apps on mobile devices, etc.). Check back log for several months of history. Check your cookies, if possible, which are a roadmap to where they have been. Make note of the websites. Carefully visit them if you want to see what they are viewing. If the history has been cleared, it is highly probable they are trying to cover their tracks. Be aware of the “incognito” mode of the “private browsing” window which can be used to hide all activity after closing. Beware of allowing usage of Siri which can bypass some parental controls by a child’s voice command. Autofill may also be a hint of past terms used. Review all mobile phone or tablet installed apps. Some apps may be disguised or labeled as something else. Instagram and Snapchat contain back doors to sexually explicit images. Set up restrictions to prevent your child from installing unwanted apps. Now might be a good time to ask if your child has done anything in real life physically with someone that they regret. Don’t assume your kids are virgins or innocent on the web. What we think about affects how we act. All sin begins in the mind before it is ever acted upon. There is a downward progression of sexual sin from lustful desire, to sexual impurity, to sexual immorality (fornication/adultery), to even sexual perversion (same-sex, transgender issues). The law of diminishing returns holds true. What satisfied yesterday will not satisfy tomorrow. Sin always has cousins.

The Bible speaks to the sin of pornography. The Greek root word is “porneia” and is translated sexual “immorality” where we get the word “pornography.”

*1 Corinthians 6:13 “The body is not for **immorality** but for the Lord...”*

*1 Corinthians 6:18 “Flee from sexual **immorality**. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”*

*2 Corinthians 12:21 “I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, **immorality**, and sensuality which they have practiced.”*

*Galatians 5:19 ‘Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are **immorality**, impurity, sensuality...’*

*Ephesians 5:3 “But **immorality** or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you as is proper among saints.”*

*Colossians 3:5 “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to **immorality**, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed which amounts to idolatry.”*

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 “For it is God’s will... that you avoid sexual **immorality**...”*

*Romans 13:13,14 “Let us behave decently, not in orgies... sexual **immorality** and debauchery... rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”*

*Hebrews 13:4 “The marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually **immoral**.” (“ pornos”)*

Matthew 5:28 ‘Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’

2 Timothy 2:22 "Flee youthful lust... but pursue righteousness... along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Peter 2:11 "Abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul."

1 Corinthians 2:11 "Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?"

James 1:14,15 "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death."

Job 31:1,7,9,11,33 "I have made a covenant with my eyes, how then could I gaze at a virgin. If my heart followed my eyes... if my heart has been enticed by a woman. Or if I have lurked at my neighbor's doorway...that would be a lustful crime." "If I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart."

Proverbs 5:3-20 "Do not go near the door of her house" "At the end of your life you will groan when your flesh and body are spent"

Proverbs 6:23-35 "Do not lust in your heart after her beauty" "Can a man play with fire and not get burned" "No one who touches her will go unpunished" "The man who commits adultery lacks sense, whoever does so destroys himself" "His shame will never be wiped away."

Jeremiah 4:14 "Wash your heart...how long will evil thoughts lodge within you?"

James 4:8 "Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded."

Titus 2:12 "Say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age."

Galatians 5:24 "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."

Tim Challies in his article "Porn-Free Family Plan," said, "I want to protect my children in a world like this, but I want to do more than that. I want to disciple my children to live virtuously, to use these new technologies for good purposes instead of bad ones. I believe this is a crucial part of my calling as a parent." He outlines in a great article exactly how in a step-by-step guide, to protect all your home devices and due-diligence with your children in this vital area of life. ([challies.com /articles/the-porn-free-family-plan](http://challies.com/articles/the-porn-free-family-plan); 4/15/2014) ([challies.com /articles "When parents feel like we are mostly failing most of the time"](http://challies.com/articles/When%20parents%20feel%20like%20we%20are%20mostly%20failing%20most%20of%20the%20time), 3/6/2020)

Online Habits:

Having integrity means to be undivided. It means to always hold to the same conduct regardless. It is who we are when no one is looking. What we do in private and in public should be consistent. We shouldn't portray one thing in public and another on the web. We understand there are consequences to what we do and say, because ultimately we will stand before God for every word (*Matt. 12:36,37*) and action (*1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:17*). Nothing is hidden that will not be revealed (*Lk. 8:17*). If we believe stealing is wrong, then don't download copyrighted music, videos, or material (*Eph. 4:28*). If time is precious to us, then we

should be selective how we spend our time on the web (*Ps. 90:12*). If we value truth, then we should portray ourselves truthfully to others on the web (*Eph. 4:15*). If we value sexual purity, then we will not put before our eyes any vile thing (*Ps. 101:3*). When we do a search online, we should have an end goal in mind, not just idly wander the web. Idleness, boredom, or loneliness creates an opportunity for temptation or compromise. We as parents need to prepare our kids for the day when the fences will disappear and they will have to navigate the web on their own without their parent's supervision, with their own conscience guiding them.

Families may want to develop an online commitment to integrity or moral purity and include expectations and Bible passages which direct the family's online behavior. It should apply to every person regarding every device or computer. It should communicate a system of accountability for all online use which includes what sites we can visit or not visit, who we are accountable to, how much time we spend and when we can schedule time online. Our family's goal is to be honorable before God in what we watch or fill our minds with and how we spend our time. *Covenant Eyes* is a great personal accountability resource we have used with our family to help with internet use (CovenantEyes.com or 1(877)479-1119).

I can't tell you what to do for your family, but I can suggest you put ***Covenant Eyes*** on all your computers and devices. I suggest you wait until your teens are mature enough in college, demonstrating trustworthiness and moral purity, before you get them smartphones with data plans. I am a dinosaur. I can't access all the bells and whistles on my phone, but sometimes we've got to take drastic measures during drastic times. Each family needs discernment in this area of using technology. It is only going to get worse with this technologically savvy generation who have grown up with immorality all around them. The porn industry is only getting smarter in how they package their destructive poison to a curious and lustful young audience.

Look Up - By Gary Turk

"I have 422 friends yet I am lonely
I speak to all of them every day yet none of them really know me
The problem I have sits in the space in-between
Looking into their eyes or at a name on a screen

I took a step back and opened my eyes
I looked round and realized
This media we call social is anything but
When we open our computers and it's our doors we shut

All this technology we have it's just an illusion
Community, companionship, a sense of inclusion
When you step away from this device of delusion
You awaken to see a world of confusion

A world where we're slaves to the technology we mastered
Where information gets sold by some rich, greedy b_____
A world of self-interest, self-image, self-promotion
Where we all share our best bits but leave out the emotion

We're at our most happy with an experience we share
But is it the same if no one is there?
Be there for your friends and they'll be there too
But no one will be if a group message will do

We edit and exaggerate, crave adulation
We pretend not to notice the social isolation
We put our words into order till our lives are glistening
We don't even know if anyone is listening

Being alone isn't the problem let me just emphasize
If you read a book, paint a picture, or do some exercise
You're being productive and present not reserved and reclused
You're being awake and attentive and putting your time to good use

So when you're in public and you start to feel alone
Put your hands behind your head, step away from the phone
You don't need to stare at your menu or at your contact list
Just talk to one another, learn to exist

I can't stand to hear the silence of a busy commuter train
When no one wants to talk for the fear of looking insane
We're becoming unsocial, it no longer satisfies
To engage with one another and look into someone's eyes.

We're surrounded by children who since they were born
Have watched us living like robots and think it's the norm
It's not very likely you'll make world's greatest Dad
If you can't entertain a child without using an iPad

When I was a child, I'd never be home
I'd be out with my friends, on our bikes we'd roam
I'd wear holes in my trainers and graze up my knees
Or build our own clubhouse high up in the trees

Now the park is so quiet it gives me a chill
See no children outside and the swings hanging still
There's no skipping, no hopscotch, no church and no steeple
We're a generation of idiots, smart phones and dumb people

So look up from your phone, shut down the display
Take in your surroundings, make the most of today

Just one real connection is all it can take
To show you the difference that being there can make

Be there in the moment as she gives you the look
That you remember forever as when love overtook
The time she first held your hand or first kissed your lips
The time you first disagreed but still loved her to bits

The time you don't have to tell hundreds of what you've just done
Because you want to share this moment with just this one.
The time you sell your computer so you can buy a ring
For the girl of your dreams who is now the real thing

The time you want to start a family and the moment when
You first hold your little girl and get to fall in love again
The time she keeps you up at nights and all you want is rest
And the time you wipe away the tears as your baby flees the nest

The time your baby girl returns with a boy for you to hold
And the time he calls you Grandad and makes you feel real old
The time you take in all you've made when you're giving life attention
And how you're real glad you didn't waste it by looking down at some invention

The time you hold your wife's hand, sit down beside her bed.
You tell her that you love her, lay a kiss upon her head.
She then whispers to you quietly as her heart gives a final beat
That she's lucky she got stopped by that lost boy in the street

But none of these times ever happened.
You never had any of this
When you're too busy looking down, you don't see the chances you miss

So look up from your phones, shut down those displays
We have a finite existence, a set number of days
Don't waste your life getting caught in the net
Because when the end comes, nothing's worse than regret

I am guilty too of being part of this machine
This digital world we are heard but not seen
Where we type as we talk and read as we chat
Where we spend hours together without making eye-contact

So don't give in to a life where you follow the hype
Give people your love, don't give them your "like"
Disconnect from the need to be heard and defined
Go out into the world, leave distractions behind

So, look up from your phone, shut down the display

Stop watching this video, live life the real way.”

Genius (<https://genius.com/Gary-turk-look-up-annotated>)

YouTube: “Look Up - Gary Turk – Official Video” 61.5 million views as of 11/1/19

Fantasy And Your Family:

Fantasies are stories which teach moral principles (fiction, folklore, fantasy, fairy tales, fables, nursery rhymes) and are great reading for the family. Fantasy can be a legitimate and valuable tool for teaching. Don't confuse the line between what is reality and fantasy, or what is right and wrong. Clear lines should be drawn between objective good and evil in good fantasy. There should be no confusion as to which is which. Not all fantasy, whether in book or movie, is best for your children. A child's imagination and creative thinking should be fed and nourished. Here are some questions to discern what is best.

- What is its meaning and what effect does it have on the reader?
- What are the underlying assumptions of the story?
- Does it make evil repellent or attractive? Is vice a virtue?
- Is there any confusion or fuzzy lines between what is good and bad?
- Is it difficult to decide who is the hero and who is the villain?
- Does it make a child want to imitate (emulate) the good character's courage or the bad character's behavior?
- What consequences are there for wrong behavior?
- Does it present suffering in a way that a child sympathizes with those who hurt or does it give the impression that hurting others is pleasurable and acceptable?
- Does good, justice, and mercy triumph in the end? Is there hope?
- Is there objective good and evil, or relative good or evil?
- Is it close to reality (blending/Magick and occult practice) or is it imaginary (unrecognizable) and reflective of a different reality and is symbolic of Biblical supernaturalism and the battle between good and evil?

Isaiah 5:20 “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness.”

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 “...you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a sooth-sayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD... You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.” (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,7,27)

1 Timothy 4:1 “...In the latter times some will depart from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...” (Acts 8:9-24; 19:19)

Resources:

Fantasy And Your Family, Richard Abases, Christian Publications, Inc. 2002.

A Landscape With Dragons: The Battle For Your Child's Mind, Michael O' Brien

What About Harry Potter?

Let's look at one example with what has been put in print and pray for discernment. Harry Potter does not outline the technical teachings of Witchcraft or Wicca, but the series does present witchcraft and magickal practices used by Wiccans in an unhealthy way.

Here is what has been said concerning Harry Potter.

"The phenomenal interest aroused by the Harry Potter books... indicates a burning desire on the part of young and old to enter the enticing world of magic." (The Gnostic Society, 8/4/2000)

"It is good to see that the bestselling series of books in the western world is such a positive tale about witches and wizards." ("The Children of Artemis", Wicca Website)

J. K. Rowling has admitted a lifelong fascination with the occult. Her novels borrow heavily from occult lore, history, beliefs, legends and practices. (1999 interview with Barnes/Noble)

"The series, both as books and in the movie form are a wonderful metaphor of how we as Witches/Wiccans/Pagans/ Magickal people perceive our own spirituality/ work/studies, and our vision of the world. The symbolism is strong, and I have found myself reacting so many times, by reading between the lines and looking beyond the exaggerated way their magical acts and spells is depicted, and reacting positively, thinking, 'This is So right!' Even as I think Quarrel himself has said it so plainly, although he was serving as host for Lord Voldemort, 'There is no good or evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it.' This might actually offend some, but it hides one of the great truths of Witchcraft, that there is no White or Black Magick, there is only Magick, and it is the use we make of it that defines its purpose, although we usually see a dark use of Magick as weakness, rather than strength." (Wiccan article in Pagan Perspectives #1420 on 10/24/2001)

"Rowling has done her homework. Her hidden references are so numerous, and her knowledge so deep, that I'm certain she has done much research on the subject of real sorcery. Many of her characters are named after famous occultists of the past, many of her fantastic spells actually exist, and her magical creatures are straight out of ancient mythology. She is writing about the same witchcraft that I study at home... I recognize much of Rowling's work from Middle Age grimmer I've read. These have a historical basis. And I will be more than happy to share it with you." ("The Harry Potter Witchcraft Spell book") Rowling's use of occult symbolism has resulted in some striking parallels to real-world magick.

Believers:

Believers are called to expose evil (*Eph. 5:10-13; 2 Cor. 2:10,11; Acts 26:18*) and not to give the devil an opportunity (*Eph. 4:27*). C. S. Lewis said, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

The Powerful Influence Of Literature:

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated; by the other, virtue (which is health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed." "A love of reading is an acquired taste, and the habit of reading is formed in childhood." "Unless a parent cultivates a taste for right reading of every sort on a child's part, that child can never be at his best in the world..." (Trumbull, p. 103,105)

Literature has great power and there is great value in our use of imagination. Kids have lost their ability to dream, to imagine, or be creative. We have become a culture of one-way visual stimuli where we turn off our brains and are not actively engaged with our minds in a creative use of imagination. We sit and stare at a screen rather than stand and think. We have lost the tactile use of turning pages which has been replaced with scrolling and tapping. What we read directly influences how we think. Do you as a parent have any idea of what is being taught to your children in school books (magazines) or books that your child is personally reading? Encourage your children to read good books on history, Missionary biographies, Christian fiction which awakens the imagination. The greatest book that must be read early to children is the Bible, nothing else compares and is life transforming.

A great place to summarize what a child is reading or hearing is at the dinner table. A parent can encourage specific topics of conversation at family meals which open up discussion on what the children are reading and thinking about, and interact as a family on subjects that truly matter.

The Powerful Influence Of Friendships:

H. C. Trumbull said, "It is doubly important that a parent be alive to the importance of guiding his every child in the choice of his companions and in his relations to those companions whom he has without choosing." "Because a child's companions are so influential, it is the more important that they be closely watched and carefully guided by the child's parents." "The responsibility is upon the parent to see to it that the best available companionships there are cultivated and the most undesirable ones are shunned. Neglect or carelessness at this point may be a means of harm to the child for his lifetime. It is the parent's duty to know who are his child's companions, and to know the character, and course of conduct, and influence upon his child, of every one of those

companions separately.” “It devolves upon a parent to see to it... that his child’s influence over his very playmates is for their good, while his good is promoted by their association with him.” (p.115,117,118).

An old saying goes, “A person is known by the company he keeps.” Bad company does corrupt. We become like those we spend time with. Do you know who your child hangs around? It is a fact of human nature that young people are more prone to follow a bad example than they are to set a good example. Rarely does a child have the courage or capacity to elevate himself beyond the age group in which he associates. Rebellion seeks out the rebellious. Misery loves company. The defiant seem to find each other. If you don’t want to fall, don’t walk where it is slippery. Sadly, many teens are more worried about what their friends think of them and long for their approval, rather than care as much what their parents or God thinks of them and live for their approval (*Prov 29:25; 1 Pet. 4:4; Is. 51:7; Matt. 14:5; Mk. 15:15; Jn. 12:42*). Peer pressure is living in the fear of man, rather than in the fear of God and seeking His approval. We as parents need to guard our children from the bad influence of wrong friendships, whether they are from school, on sports teams, in the neighborhood, at work, or online, and especially other adults in their lives. The Bible warns us against bad friendships and the consequences that may follow.

Psalms 101:6,7 “My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me. He who walks a blameless way is the one who will minister to me. He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house. He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.”

Proverbs 1:10,15 “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent...My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your feet from their path.”

Proverbs 13:30 “The companion of fools will suffer harm.”

Proverbs 14:7 “Stay away from a foolish man, for you will not find knowledge on his lips.”

Proverbs 22:24 “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.”

Proverbs 23:20 “Do not join those who drink too much wine...”

Proverbs 24:1,2 “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them. For their minds devise violence and their lips talk of trouble.”

Proverbs 24:21 “Do not join with the rebellious...”

Proverbs 28:7 “He who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father...”

Proverbs 28:24 “He who robs his father or his mother... is a companion of a man who destroys.” (29:24)

Proverbs 29:3 “...He who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth.”

Psalms 26:4,5 “I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.”

1 Corinthians 5:6 "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

1 Corinthians 5:11 "Do not associate with anyone who calls himself a 'brother' (Christian) and yet leads an immoral life."

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning."

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14 "Don't associate with a so called 'brother' (Christian) who does not live according to our (Biblical) teaching."

Romantic Inclinations:

We also need to warn our children of immoral friendships which might draw our sons or daughters into promiscuous sexual relationships. We need to be vigilant as to who our children date or are spending time with alone. Never assume all is good.

I was in line waiting for a ride at an amusement park years ago with several youth and watched as a young couple in front of us felt free to physically touch each other everywhere while the world was watching. Finally, I had enough. I walked up to the young man and asked him if he planned to marry the girl. He sheepishly said he didn't know. I then said, "You really need to stop, because you are playing around with another man's wife and he won't take it too kindly." Glad to say he didn't slug me in line, but the point was made. Treat the coed you are with the same way you would want someone else to be treating your future mate. Recreational dating or sexual exploration should not be allowed. If there's no intentions to pursue marriage, then what is the point to date and be physically involved? Sex is reserved only for marriage (*Heb. 13:4*), but sadly many teens give their heart and body away to someone they will never see again or who had no desire to be committed to them in a godly marriage. There are plenty of shipwrecks in this youth culture. Don't let your kids be one of them.

Dads, we are the gatekeepers of who our sons or daughters date or flirt with on social media. Don't let your children go out the door of your house until you know their date's intent and have peace that sexual purity is of utmost importance to them, as much as it is to you. What do you know of this individual? Can you trust them with your son or daughter? What would cause you doubt? How do they act or dress? What is their attitude? How do they drive? What comes out of their mouths? What safeguards are in place to guard their sexual purity? The only righteous place to find gratification of one's sexual desires is in a godly marriage (*1 Thess. 4:3,4; Prov. 5:15; Heb. 13:4*). What your teen wears sets the tone for the rest of the evening. Sensuality is not helpful for sexual purity. Keep modesty, virginity and self-control key Biblical training points with your kids. Dads, you especially need to lead your family in who your kids spend time with and what they are feeling regarding their coed relationships. In the movie "*Despicable Me*", Gru asked his oldest daughter who she was texting. She responded, "O just a friend... does it matter...?" Gru said, "No, it doesn't matter, UNLESS IT IS A BOY!"

God never allows us to be tempted beyond what we as believers can bear. *1 Corinthians 10:13* says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Teach your teenagers they may need to look for an exit – they may have to turn down a questionable date or not ask out a questionable person. They may need to call you to come pick them up or get another ride home if their date comes on strong physically. You may need to equip your girls with pepper spray and teach them self-defense. They may need to flee (*2 Tim. 2:22*) if it gets tempting. That goes for both boys and girls. The best defense is a good offense. Never go out with someone you can’t trust or has shown signs that they are untrustworthy. Dads, if your daughters do this right, they can use you as their buffer to accept or decline dates. “Thank you for asking me out, but I am under the authority of my father, and any guy I date needs to ask my father’s permission first.” You can bet the guy will think twice of messing around with that conversation on the table. A story was told of a young man who asked to date a father’s daughter, and when he arrived, the dad took the boy out in the garage to show him his gun collection. He showed him all his other “babies” and clearly communicated to him how important it was to take care of his prized possessions. The young man got the picture and was put on notice. If you value your life, don’t mess with daddy’s little girl.

Solomon warned his son to stay away from immoral women.

Proverbs 2:12,16,18,19 “To deliver you from the way of evil... from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words.” “Her tracks lead to the dead, none who go to her return again...”

Proverbs 5:1,3-9 “My son, give attention to my wisdom... for the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech, but in the end she is bitter...her ways are unstable... keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house.”

Proverbs 6:20,23-33 “My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother... reproofs for discipline are the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart nor let her capture you with her eyelids.... Whoever touches her will not go unpunished... the one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense... wounds and disgrace he will find and his reproach will not be blotted out.”

Proverbs 7:1,3,5-27 “My son... keep my commandments and live... write them on the tablet of your heart... that they may keep you from an adulteress ... who flatters with her words... dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and rebellious...with her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter... So he does not know that it will cost him his life... Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths...”

Genesis 39:7,8,10 “(Potiphar’s) wife looked with desire at Joseph and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused...’ (Potiphar) has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?’ As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her.”

Parents, help guard your children’s hearts. Have your children be clear what their intentions are with others? Don’t leave anything for the imagination. One may accidentally interpret certain actions as a romantic advance, while the other may just be trying to be friendly. *1 Thessalonians 4:6,7* says, “*That no man transgress and defraud his brother (or sister) in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things... for God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.*” To defraud is to falsely lead someone to believe something that cannot righteously be fulfilled. Emotional promiscuity is leading another to believe something sexually you are unwilling or unable to provide without sinning. Don’t build romantic attachments when marriage is still well out of the picture. A young man should never play around with a young girl’s heart – and vice versa. A teenager should not try to win the heart and affection of someone they are not seriously considering to marry. Don’t let your 15 year-old go steady with anyone. They are not ready for a serious relationship and have a lot of time to mature ahead before they can even consider getting married. A young man should not seek a wife until he can financially support one.

Don’t light a fire until you know how to handle it safely. I remember many Fourth of July’s where we had a Roman Candle as part of our fireworks. Once the candle was lit, the holder had to hold on for dear life, because it went off with a flurry of flame and sparks. Most people who held it had a look on their face like, “What do I do with this thing now...?” Solomon said, “Don’t awaken my love until she pleases” (*Sng. 2:7; 8:4*). *Proverbs 5:15,18,19* says, “*Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well... let them be yours alone... rejoice in the wife of your youth. Be exhilarated always with her love.*” This is not a group experiment. You don’t try it before you buy it. This is one place our kids are not to share with others. Sexual expression is reserved for marriage only. Today, in this sex crazed culture, it is expected that a romantic couple will be sexually active. Many teenagers and collegiates think that anything short of intercourse is acceptable – which it is not. *Ezekiel 23* is clear about sexual sin.

Nurture Good Godly Friendships:

We should encourage our children to nurture healthy, godly friendships and relationships. Choose wisely who you hang around. Find a good church with a good Bible teaching youth group and encourage your kids to develop long lasting quality friendships. What better place to find a future mate than in your own church. Invite your kid’s friends over and evaluate their character, their behavior, what comes out of

their mouths, what they value, what their attitude reflects, or their attitude towards authority. You will never know them until you spend time with them. Create a kind of home environment where kids want to be at your house which allows you greater supervision and insight into your kid's friends, instead of someone else's home. We made our home a fun place youth wanted to come to.

The Bible has much to say about pursuing godly friendships.

Psalms 14:5 "God is present in the company of the righteous."

Psalms 101:6,7 "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me. He who walks a blameless way is the one who will minister to me."

Psalms 119:63 David said, "I am a friend to all who fear You."

Proverbs 2:12-15 "Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men..."

Proverbs 12:26 "A righteous man is cautious in friendships."

Proverbs 13:20 "He who walks with the wise grows wise..."

Proverbs 27:5,6 "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."

Proverbs 27:9,17 "A man's counsel is sweet to his friend." "Do not forsake your own friend..." "Iron sharpens iron, one man sharpens another."

1 Samuel 23:16 "Jonathan... helped (David) find strength in God."

Job 6:14 "For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty."

Questions:

- Who are your kid's friends? Who are they talking to?
- What kind of person do they hang around at school, in your neighborhood, in the youth group, on their sports teams, or interact with on their phones or on social media?
- Where do those kids stand morally or spiritually?
- How is their relationship with their parents?
- What are those kids doing, what are they listening to, what are they posting on social media, what comes out of their mouths, how do they dress, how do they talk about their parents, what are your kids watching while they are at their friend's homes, how clued in are you to your kid's friend's lives? Your child will become like who they spend time with.
- What behavior does your child exhibit when they are around certain friends? Is it Christ-like if your child professes Christ?
- How are you guarding your boys from unacceptable seductive young women, or your daughters from unacceptable aggressive lustful young men? Dad, you are the guardian and protector of your family.
- Are your kids guilty of emotional promiscuity with others online or on their

phones where they are dumping their emotions to their friends, which should be reserved and protected only for their future mate?

- What kind of influence are your children's friends having on them? Is it for good or bad? What must you do to protect your son or daughter from those individuals? What do you need to talk through with your children for them to understand what is at stake?

The Powerful Influence Of Music:

Monkey see, monkey hear, monkey do. Nothing is neutral! All human actions have a moral component and direction. Music will either point toward or away from God. It is either aiding or hindering us in our maturity in Christ. What moral themes are presented with your kids iTunes selection? What YouTube music videos do they watch? What music says and what music means is very important. The meaning is essential in examining whether it is sinful or not. Another indication of direction is as my child listens to a certain type of music, who does he or she identify with? If the wind unmistakably blows in a bad direction, do we want them to go there? Today's secular music glorifies every evil thing – rebellion, lust, sexual immorality, sexual perversion, arrogance, revenge, illegal activity, racism, sensuality. You become like who you listen to. One's attitudes and desires are shaped with what enters the mind and affects the will. The immoral lives of every musician are reflected in their music. What kind of music and what kind of musician are your kids listening to regularly?

Romans 16:19 "I want you to be wise in what is good, innocent in what is evil."

1 John 2:15,16 "Do not love the world nor the things in the world... for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away and also its lust..."

Ephesians 2:2-4 "You used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Satan), the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful natures and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

2 Peter 2:18,19 "For their mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity - for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing, perfect will."

Ephesians 4:17-19 "You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to

indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way..."

Romans 13:13,14 "Rather, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (flesh).

I would encourage you to survey the music you listen to as a family and what influence the world is having on your children in a subliminal way. Those secular themes DO have a numbing effect on the minds and hearts of you and your children. I once was driving 30 minutes to work and usually listened to the radio on my commute. I was trying to figure out why I was being tempted in my thoughts toward immorality when I wasn't chasing after sin. One day the station aired its mission statement. I was shocked that it was so blatantly against everything I knew God wanted me to be filling my mind. That was the last time I turned to that station. With that choice, that source of temptation ended. We have made a choice as a family to limit the secular music we bring into our home and it has made a difference in the thinking and moral choices of our kids. YouTube music videos adds another dimension to how we process music. The subtle themes become not so subtle when we see what the song really was meaning visibly. What comes into our ears and eyes goes directly to our heart and mind. "Be careful little eyes what you see... be careful little ears what you hear..." We need to protect our kid's innocence. I am not championing isolationism. We can never protect our child from every evil influence. We are just not that good or righteous ourselves. However, I do believe we as gatekeepers must protect our children from evil influence and teach Biblical convictions, prudence, and discernment. Their dependence must be on the Lord, and not on themselves in this depraved world. God calls believers to be separate, to be in the world but not of it (2 Cor. 6:17), to love not the world nor the things in it (1 Jn. 2:15-17). If we are honest, music does affect us, for good or bad. We need to be prudent to which music we should allow into our minds and hearts. As parents, we must be discerning as to what we will allow into our homes. This may be an open door we should close.

Adult Outside Influence:

(Teachers, professors, coaches, bosses, our kid's friend's parents/relatives)

- What adults are talking to your children? Don't assume everything is good.
- What books/materials are your children being asked to read in school by teachers?
- What false secular thinking is being presented by other influential adults?
- How are you combating false ideas your children are hearing daily from others?

1 John 4:5,6 "They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood."

Our kids will listen to and be with other adults – there is no way around that fact. The power of contrary influence and suggestion is always present. The question is, are our kids able to discern truth from error? Are they strong in their convictions and can weather opposing viewpoints? How much influence or impact are these other individuals having on our children or teenagers? Are we able to counter that influence with our own presence and Biblical convictions to help them make wise choices? No one is neutral – no coach, no teacher, no friend’s parent, no boss. Everyone comes with their own secular viewpoint about life and morality. Don’t be fooled into thinking that others do not have a significant impact on your children. If your children are spending several hours daily with other adults who are unbelievers, and only 30 minutes or less with you each evening, who is going to influence whom? Choose who your kids sit under. Make sure they are not countering everything you are teaching, or you will be setting yourself up for conflict, and your children for wrong influence. Children and youth are impression-able. In the end, make sure there is a distinction between those who are God-honoring and those who are hell-bound.

Teen Creed (author unknown)

“Don’t let your parents down; they brought you up.
Be humble enough to obey; you may give orders someday.
Choose companions with care; you become what they are.
Guard your thoughts; what you think, you are.
Choose only a date, who would make a good mate.
Be master of your habits, or they will master you.
Don’t be a show-off when you drive; drive with safety and arrive.
Don’t let the crowd pressure you; stand for something or you’ll fall for anything.”