

# Discussing the Internet and Social Media

(excerpt taken from Parenting Techies workshop)

What are the chances that our children will grow up to become adults without seeing an explicit image? It's just a matter of time. If you don't talk with them openly and regularly and prepare them, they won't be equipped to handle it correctly. IT WILL HAPPEN! Most probably on accident, but if you think you can wait until they are 15, you've waited too long.

The most important thing is their heart. If you don't have their heart, you have little influence.

Love.

Relationship.

Connecting.

Being engaged.

Spending time with them.

What's the best way to show them your love and care? Be engaged. Give them your time. Nothing speaks louder to them than when you spend time with them. In the role of parenting, you cannot underestimate the power of quantity time. Quality is essential, but quantity cannot be neglected. If your kids are spending more time with friends who may not share your convictions and values about life and God, you may not have the impact you think you have. *Quality time without quantity of time leads to kids whose hearts are still far from us.*

WARNING: When they share something that makes you want to erupt or flip out; you must remain calm. Don't raise your voice, over react or start hyperventilating. You obviously know what this will do to any future conversations. Yup.

Remain calm. Talk. Ask questions. Get to know them: what they are thinking; what they've done; what their friends think. You get the picture. Pretend like you are talking with your boss or close parent. Show respect. Listen. Ask more questions.

*"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry." James 1:19*

The Bible is full of wisdom. Do this and you will find that you will have some great conversations with your kids. They will trust you. They are smart. If you ask the right questions, you can lead them to the right answers. Another result is that you will know them. In fact, you will know them better than anyone else. Just a reminder, our kids don't have many people, if any, that they can open up with and be completely transparent. And...If you think they are open with friends, do you really want another 14 year old giving them advice on faith and life?

Guide them to God's Word for advice. Show them what God's Word says. BUT...

Know when to tell them what to do. Know when to let them choose. Know when to let them fail. (Let them fail a little at home while you are still close by to help. (Pssss... That time is coming.)

Tips for talking about internet use with younger kids:

- Ask them why they like the video games they play. Play their games with them, so you know what games they are playing (and you should be approving every game and app first).
- Talk about balance. What are the pros and cons about playing video games vs. playing outside? (Don't forget to set time limits with them.)
- Tell them what pornography is: pictures of people without clothes on OR people with only their birthday suit on.
- Why do you think God wants you to wait until your married to see another boy or girl in their birthday suit? (He wants it to be special; something for you to experience with the person you will marry. He wants you to save your eyes too.)
- If a person without clothes on flashes on the screen, I'd like you to turn your eyes and I want you to tell me. Will you do that?
  
- What could you say to a friend that shows you a picture like that?

Ask questions: (We can learn so much from our children if we just ask questions):

- What age is a good age to join social networks? Why do you think most of them set the age to 13?
- What kinds of things should not be shared online?
- Do you realize many people can read what you write, but may not know the context (if you are being sarcastic, etc.)
- Have you seen any of your friends post something that made them look foolish?

For teens: You will want to stay engaged:

- Ask them what apps are popular right now and why are their friends using them?
- Show them online articles or newspaper clippings (if you still use one of those things) that reveal the terrible things that can happen. Not to scare them, but to show them the reality. Expose them a little to reality and let it teach them. It also gives you another voice, another advocate for your case.
- When you see something online, ask them what they think about it. It could be a risqué picture or a comment about something or someone. Ask: What does this say about that person? Do you think they value who they are? What is really important: inside beauty or outside? Do you struggle with this?

Don't shy away from tough questions.

It's part of being a guardian!