



August 2008



## Raising Kids in a Wired World

Today's children are digital dynamos who know nothing else besides a high-tech environment. Parents, meanwhile, are often scrambling to keep up. Technology offers many benefits, but it also can pose hazards for impressionable young minds and hearts.

No matter how comfortable and self-sufficient children seem with technology, parents must be vigilant. You have to watch for obvious dangers such as Internet predators, of course. But you also should be aware of how the digital world can affect your children in other ways, both positive and negative. Consider these factors:

**Technology affects learning styles.** Today's children tend to be proficient multitaskers who are networked learners, rather than linear learners. It's also harder to capture kids' attention these days.

**Social-networking sites affect relational skills.** Studies show that children gain confidence online, which may help them make friends. On the flip side, technology may cause face-to-face interaction to diminish.



**Technology can lead to isolation.** All our gadgets and devices have powerful "connecting" possibilities. Yet when overused, they can create a distance between family members. High-tech families must safeguard their time together—and with God.

### Statistics Show Digital Divide

Many parents underestimate their children's Internet experiences, according to a recent study by Symantec Corp. Some findings:

- Children report spending 10 times more time online than their parents think they do.
- About 20% of children say they do things online that their parents wouldn't approve of.
- Few parents tend to believe that their children are being bullied or approached by strangers online. Yet those things happen more often than parents think.
- More than 80% of children say they're comfortable talking to their parents about online experiences. However, only half of parents have talked to their kids about Internet safety.

PowerSource

### Ask God:

1. For knowledge and guidance as you supervise your children's use of technology.
2. To help your children accept oversight and limits with positive attitudes.
3. To help your children use technology in positive, God-pleasing ways.

### Parenting Insights

Internet expert Tracy Carpenter points out that our information-based society can influence children from a faith perspective:

1. **Image overload**—Children take and manipulate countless photos, which can lead to self-centeredness. It also can make kids crave attention and instant gratification.
2. **Sensory overload**—Parents must make an effort to understand the many ways children communicate today. Take notice of what kids take notice of, or they won't take notice of you.
3. **A new view**—Use technology to find out about your kids' lives and concerns. Also provide a biblical worldview for kids to consider as they use the Internet and other media.

## OpenTheBook

**"He who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps. The Lord himself watches over you!"**

**Psalm 121:4-5**

No new technology will ever surpass God, who knows us intimately and is always available for us. Unlike the information available online, God and his Word offer reliable—and eternal—truth.

### Teachable Moments

1. **Instant Access**—Talk about the now-obsolete communication tools you once used and what it was like before people were always reachable. Share that God hears and answers our prayers any time of day or night.



2. **Technical Difficulties**—When video games malfunction or cell-phone signals fade, talk about what it feels like to lose our spiritual "connection" to God. Then brainstorm ways to get "plugged in" to him again.

3. **It Doesn't Compute!**—When children come across hard-to-believe information online, remind them that not everything they see, read, or hear is true. Then discuss ways to discern the difference between truth and falsehood.



**"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

**The Internet makes it possible to have open dialogue with anyone across the globe. Unfortunately, people in the same household often fail to communicate. Start with these questions:**

1. What might life have been like before computers were invented?
2. What are some ways the Internet makes life easier—or harder—for kids today?
3. What is your favorite thing to do online, and why? What are some things other kids do online that make you uncomfortable?
4. Talk about what God might think about all the technology available today—and how it's used.

## Family Experience: Thou Shalt Surf Safely

**Internet-safety experts recommend that families write code-of-conduct contracts for online use. Spend some time together crafting a contract while discussing God's expectations:**

- **Low-tech life**—Discuss how the Bible and Bible events might have been different if digital cameras, cell phones, and the Internet were available back then. For example, how might the Bible have been produced? How might the early church have grown?
- **Wired expectations**—Talk about the expectations God has for our behavior in various situations. What commandments might he have given for how we use technology to interact with others? How might he want us to use technology to tell other people about him?



- **Set rules**—Agree on Internet-use rules for your entire family. Sample code-of-conduct contracts are available online. Specify where, when, and how long kids can go online. Children shouldn't give out personal information, send photos, or buy or download anything without permission. And they shouldn't meet online acquaintances in person. For a fun visual representation of these rules, write them on tablet shapes. Then display the tablets near your family's computer.



## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Fly Me to the Moon* (Aug. 8)

**Genre:** Science Fiction/Fantasy

**Rating:** G

**Cast:** Christopher Lloyd, Kelly Ripa, Nicollette Sheridan, Tim Curry

**Synopsis:** This animated adventure, the first one created for 3-D, follows three preteen flies in their pursuit to become the first insects on the moon. They hitch a ride aboard the historic Apollo 11 space flight in 1969 and end up playing key roles in the mission.

**Discussion Questions:** What adventure or "mission" would you most like to go on, and why? What obstacles stand in the way of reaching your goal? How is being a Christian an adventure? What roles do you think God has for you to play here on earth?



## What Music Is Releasing

**Artist:** Vanessa Hudgens

**Album:** *Identified*

**Artist Info:** Vanessa Hudgens is best known as "Gabriella" from the Disney Channel's hit "High School Musical" franchise. Recovering from an Internet-photo scandal, she recently lashed out at the "stupid" and "mean" people who leaked the compromising images.

**Summary:** Hudgens' second album addresses relationships, strong feelings, and dating. It contains typical teen talk, as well as some questionable language. Along with familiar pop tunes, Hudgens brings a surprising bluesy sound, along with rap, hip-hop, and heavy dance beats.

**Discussion Questions:** How do you react when other people tell on you? Do you blame them for speaking out or blame yourself for making bad choices? What type of "damage control" do you undertake when trying to restore people's trust in you?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Mega Man Star Force 2: Zerkler X Ninja</i>	The eighth game in the "Battle Network" series involves card-trading and contains mild cartoon violence.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Secret Agent Clank</i>	This gadget-filled espionage adventure has fantasy violence, crude humor, and mild suggestive themes.	E10+; PSP
<i>Hail to the Chimp</i>	Satire rules this political-themed party game. It has a cartoon look but also crude humor, mild violence, and alcohol and tobacco references.	T; PS3, Xbox 360

**GAME RATINGS KEY:** EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



## Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:



- Camp counselors must now deal with parents' "kid-sickness." Involved, safety-conscious parents accustomed to frequent contact are having trouble sending off their young campers.
- *Entrepreneur* magazine named "Trust" as a top business influencer. Parents rely on customer reviews and employee advice when making child-related purchases.

## Quick Stats

- 62% of grandparents say they want to see their grandchildren more. Just 47% of parents say they'd welcome extra bonding time between kids and grandparents. (*Child magazine*)
- In a recent poll, 75% of parents say they don't see any harm in telling an occasional white lie "for good reason." (msnbc.com)

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