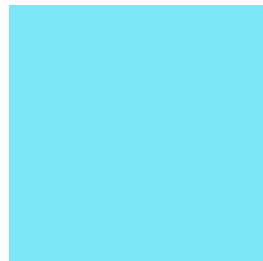
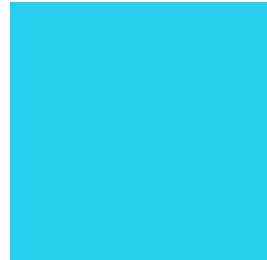
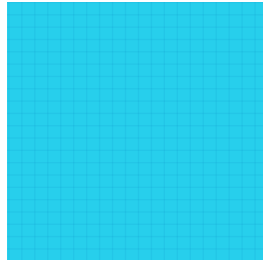


PARENTING THE INTERNET GENERATION

A BLUEPRINT FOR TEACHING DIGITAL DISCERNMENT





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Introduction

Thank you for downloading *Parenting the Internet Generation*. I trust you will find the information in this e-book incredibly helpful.

This e-book can be used in a number of different ways. Maybe you simply want to read the book front to back. That's perfectly fine. There are discussion questions included at the end of each chapter that you can answer for yourself. Take note of the prayer included with the discussion questions, as these are tailored to each chapter. This book can also be used as a study, maybe one chapter at a time with your spouse, or even with an adult small group. In a small group setting, the discussion questions can create a multi-week study.

However you choose to use this e-book, please know that its content has been carefully and prayerfully created. We understand how important this topic is. After all, we've been helping families create safer online experiences for over 15 years with our cutting-edge accountability and filtering solutions. We want to do whatever we can to help you create a culture of accountability in your own home. Please enjoy *Parenting the Internet Generation*.



CHAPTER ONE

A House in Ruins: How Porn is Harming Our Kids



Chapter 1

Maxim. Esquire. Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition. Cosmopolitan. Even with the waning popularity of print magazines, “lifestyle” periodicals like this can be found in nearly every pharmacy, gas station, and grocery store in America. Often the covers of these magazines epitomize our society’s sexual standards. Filled with images of barely clothed women with a come-get-me look on their faces, magazines like this present images of the “ideal” woman and share about how the ideal man can merit such women.

The UK also has its own popular “lads’ mags.” Martin Daubney was *Loaded* magazine’s longest running editor, and he incarnated the *Loaded* brand, saying the essence of the magazine’s message is to perpetuate the belief that male adolescence can be prolonged indefinitely. You have the rest of your life to grow up—enjoy the good times that youth affords for as long as you can.

But something in Daubney’s mind began to shift several years ago.

He was invited to sit in on a class of young teen boys and girls at a school with a fantastic reputation in North England. Jonny Hunt, a sex education consultant, stood before the class and asked the students to write an A-Z list of the sexual terms they knew, no matter how extreme. There they sat donning school uniforms—wide-eyed, shy, high-pitched voices, barely adolescents—writing all the sexual terms they could remember. When Hunt pinned their lists to the board, every adult in the room was startled about how much they knew: their index of terms surpassed even the knowledge of the education consultant.

After sitting in on several more classes like this and interviewing some of the children, Daubney writes, “It seemed as if the children’s entire expectation of sex had been defined by what they see in online porn.” Young girls spoke of how boys expect porn-style sex in real life. Boys and girls spoke of how they stumble across the most grotesque material imaginable online. Daubney asked the teens, “On a scale of one to ten, how likely would you say it is that boys and girls your age are watching porn online?” The reply was a chorus of tens, nines and one eight. All the students admitted their parents had no idea what they were watching.

Eric Spitznagel, writing for *Details* magazine, says, “By the time they’re in high school, America’s porn-fed youth have already amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of smut.” Spitznagel was not writing this out of *concern* for teens, but looking in on their experiences with a middle-aged jealousy. Gone are the days of curious pre-teens stumbling on a father’s “stash” of magazines in the closet. Boys and girls now consume hardcore online video material *en masse*.

Porn By the Numbers

It is not an overstatement to say that in today’s world, porn has become the norm.

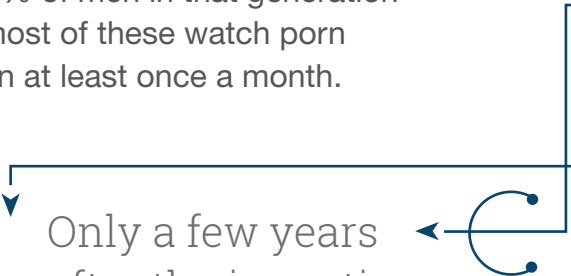
About 20 years ago, the U.S. Department of Justice stated, “Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.” Remarkably, this was said before the iPhone, before the advent of 4G networks, and before the term “Wi-Fi” was even trademarked. Only a few years after the invention of the web browser, porn had become a noted problem among young people.

The statistics are bleak and are trending in a disturbing direction—unless, of course, a massive culture shift begins today. Just ask the Millennial generation—the first to grow up with Internet technologies in the home. Today, 79% of men in that generation say they watch pornography at least once a month (and most of these watch porn several times a week); 64% of women say they watch porn at least once a month.

Watching porn is, quite literally, the norm.

- About 90% of boys and 70% of girls, ages 13 to 14, have reported accessing porn at least once.
- 35% of boys reported viewing porn online “too many times to count.”¹
- 70% of boys and nearly a quarter of girls say they have spent at least 30 consecutive minutes viewing Internet porn on at least one occasion.²

Among youth, *watching* porn is not only common, *becoming* porn is also on the rise.



Only a few years after the invention of the web browser, porn had become a noted problem among young people.

Social media has become a display case for common teenage insecurities. Girls post videos on YouTube asking random millions if they are pretty or not. Instagram shows an endless number of provocative tween and teen bikini photos to attract the attention and jealousies of their peers. Boyfriends and girlfriends masturbate for each other on Skype. Teens use Snapchat and other apps to send nude images and videos of themselves to one another, believing it will disappear.

danah boyd, founder of Data & Society Research Institute, says there's a "cultural logic" behind teen sexting—sending sexually explicit text messages. For many teens, sexting is the modern day version of safe sex or flirting, a way to proudly display their sexuality to someone they love.³

Disgruntled ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends post sexual images of their former lover online—a phenomenon called "revenge porn." Sexual images like this are often the catalyst for "slut shaming," a vicious form of cyberbullying.

- 30% of 17-year-olds have received a sext.⁴
- 60% of teens in the UK say they have been asked for an explicit photo or video of themselves.⁵
- 22% of young adults aged 18-24 consider porn to be good for society, and 8% of that age group actually think it is "very good for society".⁶
- When used to prioritize what people consider immoral, teens and young adults consider "not recycling" to be more immoral than viewing pornography.⁷

Pornography is powerful sexual education. It not only turns people on: it leaves them wanting more of what they saw.

Study after study shows the more often young people seek out and consume online porn, the more likely they are to have a "recreational" attitude toward sex,⁸ see premarital sex in a positive light,⁹ and have sexual intercourse with a friend.¹⁰ In a study of youth between the ages of 10 and 17, researchers found a significant relationship between frequent porn use and feelings of loneliness and major depression.¹¹

As a pediatrician for over 30 years and as a consultant for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Dr. Sharon Cooper has seen the devastating impact pornography can have on the mind of a child. She explains pornography is neurologically more damaging to a child than to an adult for at least two reasons.¹²

1. Children have an abundance of “mirror neurons” in their brains. Mirror neurons convince us that when we see something we are actually experiencing it. If you’ve ever been watching a sporting event where someone suddenly gets clobbered in the face with a ball, your body might automatically recoil as if you were the one who was hit: those are your mirror neurons firing. When a man watches pornography, his mirror neurons activate, eventually triggering an erection because his body now believes it is experiencing sex.¹³ With the abundance of mirror neurons in children, researchers believe this makes pornography “more real” to them.
2. Children have an immature prefrontal cortex. This is the area of the brain that controls judgment, controls impulses, and regulates emotion. This region of the brain isn’t mature until between ages 20-22. Because children have such a weak prefrontal cortex, they lack the “executive control” to stop the flow of emotions and sensations that come from watching porn.

Parents are the Missing Link

While current research suggests there are many parents concerned about these topics, the same research also shows this concern doesn’t translate to action. This book is all about action.

Exposure to pornography is probably unavoidable for most people, but pornography problems are preventable. Be encouraged. As a parent, there are many steps you can take to not just *protect* kids but *prepare* them for a world without filters.

According to Dr. Patricia M. Greenfield, a researcher in the area of sexual media at UCLA, “The most important factor in reducing porn usage among teens is a warm and communicative parent-child relationship.”¹⁴ The rest of this book is an exploration of what that means.

Take it from Martin Daubney, now the former editor of *Loaded* magazine. After seeing firsthand the impact of porn on youth, Daubney’s exodus from the world of lads' mags was solidified, and he now speaks as an advocate for culture change:

In his own words...

What I discovered left me truly shocked and saddened.

You might be surprised. After all, from 2003-2010, I edited lads' magazine *Loaded*.

With its frequent nudity and lewd photo spreads, I'd long been accused of being a soft pornographer, and after leaving *Loaded* I agonised that my magazine may have switched a generation onto more explicit online porn...

Like many parents, I fear that my boy's childhood could be taken away by pornography. So we have to fight back.

We need to get tech-savvy, and as toe-curling as it seems, we are the first generation that will have to talk to our children about porn.

We have to tell our kids that pornographic sex is fake and real sex is about love, not lust.

By talking to them, they stand a chance. If we stick our head in the sand, we are fooling only ourselves.¹⁵

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 1- Diving In:



1. What do you hope to learn from *Parenting the Internet Generation*? List three things here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. How will you stay accountable to completing each of the chapters and videos? Will it be difficult?

3. How easy was it to access pornography when you were a teen?

4. What sorts of challenges do kids face today because of technology? How is it different from your own childhood?

5. “It is not an overstatement to say that in today’s world, porn has become the norm.” What is your first reaction when you read that statement? What fears well up as you think about raising your children in a world where “porn has become the norm”?

6. “While current research suggests there are many parents concerned about these topics, the same research also shows this concern doesn’t translate into action.” On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “We never talk about appropriate use of technology” and 5 being “We consistently have family conversations about appropriate use of technology,” how would you rate your level of action on digital topics?

7. Ephesians 5:13 says, “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.” Why is it important to keep technology use in the light?

-
-
8. After visiting the school in England, former lads' magazine editor Martin Daubney came to this conclusion, "By talking to them, they stand a chance. If we stick our head in the sand, we are fooling only ourselves." How prepared do you feel for having conversations about appropriate use of technology, including pornography?
-
-
-
-

Verse to Claim and Remember: "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Ephesians 5:8 (ESV)

Application: Here's a question you could ask your kids: "The Bible tells us to live as children of light. What does it mean to be a child of light? How can we live in the light with how we use technology? With how you use your [XBOX, iPad, etc.]?" Be sure to share any application ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called "Parenting the Internet Generation".

Pray It Out: Our God, we are venturing into enemy territory and so we ask you to be our strength and our shield (Psalm 28:7). The enemy is fighting hard to claim the hearts and minds of our kids through their technology. The Internet can be such a huge blessing. We can spread the Good News of Jesus Christ like never before! But, like anything that is good, we know that evil wants to twist and turn it in a deadly direction. Lord, give us the wisdom and the perseverance to parent well in this digital age. We know that we can't do it without you. Bless us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER TWO

The Blueprint: This is the House the Lord Built



Chapter 2

The home is the hub where we nurture our children into thriving adults who love the Lord with all their hearts—including how they steward their sexuality. Parents are instructed by God to teach children diligently “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7). It is no accident three of these four places—where our children live, where they wake, and where they sleep—are in the *home*.

Using the image of the home, this book presents some of the essential building blocks to prepare children for a sexualized culture.

The Four Walls: Self-Image, Sexuality, Sin, and Shame

Children must be given foundational truths about who they are, what sex is for and why it is good, the power and danger of sexual sin, and the trap of sexual shame. Within these four walls of truth, children are nurtured to become sexually healthy adults.

Using these four themes straight out of the first few chapters of Genesis, the pages that follow give parents simple talking points to use with their children to teach them these foundational ideas.

Doors and Windows: Societal Messages


The doors and windows of a house show us the world outside—both the good and the bad. Wise parenting involves knowing when to open these doors, when to only allow our children to look through the glass, and when to bolt the doors and draw the curtains.

We should not parent our children by merely insulating them from the outside world. We must show them the outside world, using it to spark dialogue and critical thinking skills, allowing children to see the comparisons and contrasts with the truths we’ve taught them.

The Roof: Our Style of Parenting

Protecting the home is the roof. A leaky roof makes the home a miserable place, no matter how well the walls are constructed.

Our own Christlike character in the home covers our children with the kind of warmth and authority we need to shape their character and give them a place of refuge.



The gospel grounds our children in something far more satisfying than the sexual messages of our culture.

The Foundation: The Security of the Gospel

When built on the sand, even a well-constructed home will eventually collapse. Without a secure foundation, our walls of biblical teaching will look only like moralistic pillars, and the roof of our best parenting intentions will feel disconnected and powerless. Our homes, therefore, need to be grounded on the rock of the gospel.

The gospel is good news—it is a message of incredible optimism and joy—and when that message is the bedrock of our homes, it grounds our children in something far more satisfying than the sexual messages of our culture. It grounds them in the goodness of God himself.

Starting at the Beginning

Rewind the clock with me now—before the days of hardcore Internet porn, before the days of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, before the first generation of television and our image-based culture, before the Industrial Revolution, the Renaissance, the printing press, the Middle Ages, or the Roman Empire, before the coming of Christ, the birth of democracy, or the building of the pyramids. Rewind the clock as far back as you can go, and you come to the creation narrative recorded in Genesis.

The very name of the book, “Genesis,” emphasizes its importance for us: its title means “origin.” The opening chapters show us the origin of the world before things went wrong—the world as God meant it to be, human life as it was designed to be. These chapters provide us with the blueprint, the foundational truths that inform us and our children about our purpose in this world.

In God’s wisdom, He didn’t merely supply us with a list of systematic principles about the meaning of life. He gave us a story—a narrative. In fact, most of the Bible is a series of narratives showing God’s plan for human history and human destiny.

And this models for us the importance of stories in teaching our children. In order for our children to be grounded in an understanding of *who they are*, they need to see and understand the purposeful unfolding of the bigger story—God’s story. They need to see an X on the timeline of this story that says, “You are here.” Only when they know *where they come from* and *where they are going* can they understand *who they are*.

Yes, that sounds like a grandiose undertaking—and it is—but this is why it takes a lifetime to teach it. This is why, as adults, we are still learning it.


But for now, let’s not overwhelm ourselves. Let’s start where the Bible does: at the beginning...

Next Steps:

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Chapter 2- Diving In:

- 
1. Take an honest look at your home. Not just the condition of the roof, or the age of the furnace, but think about the attitudes that are prevalent, day after day, in your home. Write down 1-2 words that describe the current emotional, spiritual, and relational state of your home.

► Emotional: _____

► Spiritual: _____

► Relational: _____

2. When looking at the four walls of our “home,” namely, self-image, sexuality, sin and shame, what kinds of conversations did your parents have with you on these topics?

3. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

This passage is foundational to Judaism. Verse 4 is referred to as the Shema, the central truth of the Jewish faith, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” This is the first prayer taught to Jewish children and it is repeated at the start and end of every day. What can Christian families learn from this level of “impress them on your children” that is instructed in Deuteronomy 6:7?

4. How do you strike a balance between showing your children how to live “in” the world, and yet try to insulate them from the world’s ways?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)

Application: In Deuteronomy 6:5, God says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Later it says to “tie” these words as symbols on your hands and on your foreheads. How could you have fun with this “tie” concept with your kids? Be sure to share any application ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called “Parenting the Internet Generation”.

Pray It Out: Father God, we deeply desire to raise our children in a way that honors you. Yet, right now, we ask for your forgiveness for not embracing this call to action. We confess that we have missed moments to “impress” your commandments on the hearts of our children. Through this study, we are deciding to take action. We are asking for your help. Bless us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER THREE

The First Wall: A Godly Self-Identity



Chapter 3

When we use words like “porn” or “sex,” many parents—especially Christian parents—get uncomfortable.

But preparing our children for the sexualized world in which we live doesn’t need to begin with conversations about intercourse, orgasms, baby-making, or the latest tabloid story about the latest sex scandal. Sexuality, first and foremost, is about *who we are* as creatures, not what we *do*.

The first “wall” of our structure is instilling in our children a sense of their God-given identity and worth.

In the Image of God

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. – Genesis 1:27

These are among God’s first words ever spoken about human beings, and no statement in the Bible is more foundational to our dignity and our destiny. The only way to immunize our children from an over-sexualized culture that gives them a false standard of worth is by giving them a far more compelling vision of their *true worth*.

God did not create us in the image of any other creature but in the image of Himself. After creating human beings, the crown of all His works, He saw us and pronounced creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Entire volumes have been written about what it means to be created *imago Dei* (Latin for “in the image of God”), so we’ll boil it down to some essentials.

In some sense, to be in the image of God means we *resemble* God. More than any other creature, we are “God-like,” and yet the Bible says very little directly about what that resemblance is. Instead, the focus of the author of Genesis is our unique *calling* as human beings.

In the ancient Near East (the world in which most of the Bible was written), when a ruler wanted to show his dominion over a region, he would often place a statue there representing his power, authority, and watchful presence. For the original readers of Genesis, this is what it meant for Adam and Eve to be God's image-bearers: by design, they were living *representatives* of God's lordship over the Earth, statues of God walking about in the Garden.

In what sense are we meant to be God's representatives?

First and foremost, we are designed to *relate to God Himself* in a unique and personal way. We are not merely creatures with animal instincts; we are self-conscious creatures able to relate to others as persons and to God as a Person.

Second, we are designed to be representatives of God's *goodness* to others. Like the members of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), we live and operate in the fellowship of family and community (Genesis 1:28; 2:18).

Third, we are designed to be *lords over creation*, to use our God-given intellect and creativity to fill the Earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28), speaking order and beauty into the world God has made (2:19).

This is our design and purpose. But, as we read more of the story, we learn that because of our disobedience, we have not lived up to this high calling.

This does not mean the image of God was *lost* or compromised when sin came into the world. We should clarify that we in ourselves are not God's image; we are *created in* God's image. The only human person in the Bible who is said to *be* the image of God is Jesus Christ Himself. "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4). In Christ, God in all His fullness lives in bodily form (1:19; 2:9).

It was not *God's image* that was lost or compromised in our sin. Rather, what was compromised was our *reflection* of that image. Because of our sin, God's original design and standard for humanity has been undermined, and since our first fall into sin, we have failed to live up to our dignity and destiny as human beings.

Only through Christ are we restored to our true purpose. Connected to Him, we are being inwardly renewed in the image of our Creator—in knowledge, justice, and holiness (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24), and some day we will even be physically glorified even as Jesus is (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49).

Jesus Christ is the image of what humanity was meant to be.

Pornography and an Over-Sexualized Culture

One of the great superpowers of pornography is its ability to set up a false standard of beauty and worth—a false self-image. Indeed, porn is just the tip of a very large sexual media iceberg, constantly fueling us with a false message of beauty and worth.

One need not ever see pornography to be influenced by pornographic values. More and more, the champions of pornography are in the public spotlight, and popular media emulates the pornographic attitudes and behaviors. Brian McNair of the Queensland University of Technology calls this “the pornographication of the mainstream.”¹⁶

Dr. Linda Papadopoulos’ official report on the sexualization of young people offers example after example of how adult sexuality is imposed on youth before they have the physical, emotional, or mental capacity to deal with it. Young girls live in a world surrounded with sexual images of women that shape their expectations, ideals, and values—images that tell girls they ought to look sexy and sexually available. Magazine covers, advertising, television shows, music videos, fashion styles, and even children’s toys communicate these unspoken messages. In mass media, women are celebrated for their sex appeal, with very little emphasis on any other attributes. With this comes a host of behaviors born from these venomous ideals: eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, depression, and sharing sexually explicit images of oneself with peers.

On the flip side, young boys are surrounded with the same messages, teaching them, in no uncertain terms, what a “real man” sees in a real woman. Men are taught to be sexually dominant and hyper-masculine—taught to objectify the female body. As a result, boys turn to pornography more and more to slake their lust for an ideal created by the industry itself, and they are conditioned to see sexual aggression as the norm.¹⁷

What is a man and what is a woman according to pornography? Real men are johns and pimps who use women for their bodies and then discard them. As for women—to put it in the words of feminist author Naomi Wolf—“real naked women are just bad porn.”¹⁸


Giving Children a Godly Self-Image in a Sexual Culture

Over the last several decades, at the same time our sexual media environment was growing worse and worse, a competing message arose in our culture of self-esteem.

Since the late 1960s, the so called “self-esteem movement” has been a pervasive force in western culture and education. Psychology gurus taught the key to success in life was a positive self-image, so they saturated schools, sports teams, and social clubs with incentivizing messages like “You’re okay just the way you are,” and “There are no losers; everybody is a winner,” and “We’re all equal here.”

These noble efforts at nurturing young minds were attempts to correct “low self-esteem.” The belief was if you surround yourself with others who always cut you down or point out your failures, you will act like a failure. If you surround yourself with people whom you cannot disappoint—people who call you a winner no matter how well you perform—the positive emotions will feed your success. Your beliefs and feelings about your personal worth were viewed as one of the keys to a healthy life.

While these messages had good intentions, they produced very little fruit in society. Despite all the new messaging and programs in public schools, grades didn’t go up and anti-social behavior didn’t decline. In fact, after more than 15,000 scholarly articles on the subject of self-esteem, researchers found that telling children they are smart, successful, and good actually incentivizes *less* effort.¹⁹ If I get an A for just showing up, what’s the point of doing more than show up?



Despite all the new messaging and programs in public schools, grades didn’t go up and anti-social behavior didn’t decline.

The Bible takes a radically different perspective. In the Bible, over-concern about what others think of you is called “the fear of man” (Proverbs 29:25). The self-esteem movement’s answer to this problem is: “Surround yourself with others who appreciate you for who you are.” The problem with this approach is this doesn’t *remove* the fear of man; it *rehabilitates* this fear into something semi-functional. You’ve merely changed the crowd you listen to, but you essentially remain a slave to what others think of you.

Furthermore, positive self-esteem messages of this variety cannot combat our pornified culture. Our kids are growing up in a schizophrenic world, on one hand, being told to value themselves for who they are, but on the other hand, constantly seeing images that suggest they don’t measure up to what is truly talented, sexy, or beautiful.

This is why children need to be taught about what it means to be created in *God’s* image. The answer to the fear of man is not finding nicer men to please, but embracing the fear of God—or, putting it another way, recognizing God is the one we should please and the one who gives us true purpose.

Understanding what it means to be created in God's image has a threefold effect in the lives of our children.

1. They have an inherent *dignity* that cannot be taken from them.
2. They have a wonderful *destiny* that involves hard work and virtue.
3. Having failed at that high calling, they have a *Deliverer* who alone can make them whole.

It is up to us, as parents, to instill in our children a sense of great dignity in who they are.



Dignity. Destiny. Deliverer. Let's talk about each of these in greater detail.

Conversations About Dignity

In C.S. Lewis' children's book *Prince Caspian*, learning the sins of his forefathers, the young prince is upset that he does not come from a "more honorable lineage." The great lion Aslan replies to him:

You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve...And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content.

It is normal for our children to develop insecurities about all sorts of things, and it is up to us, as parents, to instill in our children a sense of great dignity in who they are:

- » When you hear messages that promote only skin-deep beauty, remind your son or daughter, "The definition of what's beautiful changes so much. It's like trying to hit a moving target. I'm so glad I don't need to try to become like one of these ever-changing images, but I can rest knowing I'm made in the image of God."
- » Model for your children a positive body image. While caring for our bodies is good, obsessing over weight or our physique is not.
- » When something seductive appears on the screen, turn your eyes away and teach your children to do the same. Tell them, "A lot of people out there want to make you believe you're worth less than others because you don't

look a certain way or you aren't with someone who looks a certain way. This is a lie. Your body is God's creation. It is very good."

Conversations About Destiny

Being created in God's image is not just a state of being—it's a high calling to represent God to the created world and to relate to God as His humble servant. It is a call to be compassionate and gentle to the needy, forgiving the undeserving, slow to anger, thoroughly just, and ruthlessly loyal.

- » Continue to teach your children the meaning of life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Ultimate satisfaction is found by being in awe of God and keeping His commandments out of a spirit of love for Him. The call to sexual purity is not running *from* pleasure, but running *toward* ultimate pleasure of obeying a good God who gave us His commandments *for our good* (Deuteronomy 6:25).
- » Resist the urge to praise your children in a way that labels them. Statements like "You're so smart," "You're so kind," "You're my little Picasso" do our children very little good. Research shows when we praise children like this, *labeling* them as "smart" or "good," this does not give them confidence. Instead they become highly sensitive to failure.²⁰ Rather focus on praising the *effort* they put forth. If they show kindness to their sibling, tell them you're glad they are working on paying attention to the needs of others. If they get an A on an exam, instead of telling they must be the smartest kid in class, ask them how they studied for the test and commend them for their work. Instead of giving our children an identity as "good" or "smart," commend them for using their God-given talents and energy wisely.

Conversations About Our Deliverer

When our children fail and disobey—not *if* but *when*—it means they are falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), falling short of their high calling to bear God's image to the world. This is the bad news.

The good news is that God has not abandoned us in our guilt, our shame, or our failure. He has sent us a Rescuer.

- » Develop planned, gospel-centered responses to your children's disobedience—even their sexual sin. Rather than merely pointing out your

disappointment in them, point them to Christ. “I know what it's like to want to go your own way, to want to disobey. But the good news is that there's hope for people like you and me. When we are united to Christ, God not only forgives us of all our sins, He inspires our faith and gives us a new perspective so we really want to obey Him like never before.”

- » Develop planned, gospel-centered responses to sexual sin in the world. Rather than merely ignoring or shutting out the messages of our sexualized culture, use them as an opportunity to draw a contrast to the message of Christ. “Do you see that? The world treats people like products. This is not how Jesus loves us. When Jesus died on the cross, his message was, ‘This is my body given for you.’ The messages of all these sexual images we see is, ‘This is your body taken by me.’”
- » Develop a gospel-centered excitement about Christ's return. The apostle John tells Christians that when Jesus returns, we will see Him as He really is, and we will be completely transformed into His image (1 John 3:2). Having this hope is what motivates us to purify ourselves (v.3). In other words, when we know it is our destiny to be free from lust, to not be enslaved by our passions, we see purity not as a burden but as a blessing—a taste of the life to come. Knowing this, we should strive to make our homes a place where we are joyfully looking forward to the return of Christ. Speak often about the return of Christ and the world He will create when He returns. Pray about it. Show excitement over living in a world without sin and misery.

. . . .

Dignity. Destiny. Deliverer. This is what it means to be created and be recreated in the image of God. This is the first wall of truth that guards the hearts of our kids as they grow. But it is not the only wall. As we read more in Genesis, we see more critical truths about how we were created...

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 3 - Diving In:



1. Think back to when you were in junior high (horrible, we know!). Fill in the blanks:

- When I was in junior high, I looked in the mirror and wished _____

- When I was in junior high, my self-image was _____

2. Do you have any attitudes or behaviors that started when you were a tween or teen that still linger today? Can you share those?

3. At the beginning of the chapter, we read that Adam and Eve were created as living representatives of God, “statues of God walking about in the Garden.” What does it mean to you to be a “living representative” of God?

4. Ephesians 4:20-24 says, “But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Since it is impossible to be equal to God, what do you think the writer means when he says, “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”?

5. During the past week, in what ways have you witnessed the “pornification” of culture?

6. In what ways do you portray a positive body image to your children?

7. Every parent is probably guilty of overusing words-based praise with their children from time to time with phrases like, “You’re so smart” or “I’m so proud of what you did.” In what ways have you used phrases like this with your children? What will you change, if anything, going forward?

8. 1 John 3:2-3 says, “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

► Write down three ways your home could be more pure:

1.

2.

3.

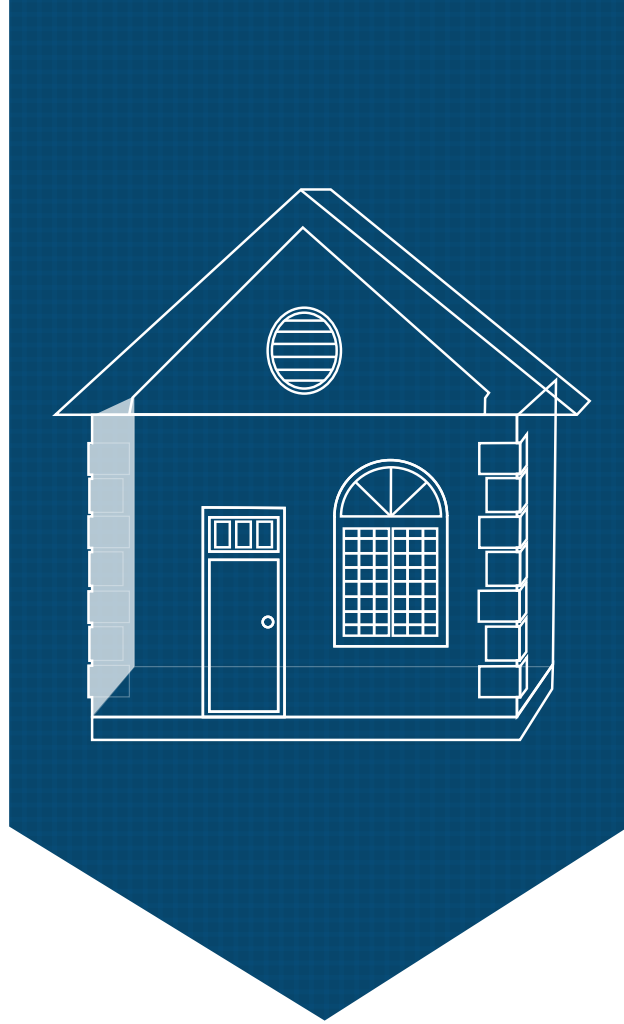
► In what ways could you, individually, purify yourself?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “...but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

Application: Maybe it's time for a family movie night! Disney's *Inside Out* provides an amazing opportunity to discuss how Riley's self-image directed her behavior. For an opportunity to talk about “real beauty,” consider watching one of Dove's “Campaign for Real Beauty” videos on YouTube to spur discussion with your tween or teen daughter. For either gender, considering listening to Big Daddy Weave's “Audience of One” and

ask, “What does it mean to seek God’s face?” “How can we seek God’s face with how we use our technology?” Be sure to share any application ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called “Parenting the Internet Generation”.

Pray It Out: Heavenly Father, there is nothing more essential to my understanding of faith than grasping the fact that I am made in your image. What if I parented with confidence, knowing this were true? Lord, give me a deeper knowledge of your image and what it means to be your image-bearer as I guide my children into relationship with you. Bless us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER FOUR

The Second Wall: Understanding Sexual Integrity



Chapter 4

Often, the very first thing that is said about us as individuals after we are born relates to our gender. After our birth (or when doctors can first make out enough detail of us on an ultrasound image), the first thing said of us is “It’s a boy,” or “It’s a girl.”

It is ironic, given this basic and fundamental sense of our identity, that Christian parents spend an awful lot of time protecting children from the subject of sexuality. God has stamped that subject on our very bodies, but some parents remain woefully silent about it.

But it is not knowledge about true and God-honoring sexual information that scandalizes or robs our children of their innocence. It is the *abuse* of sex that does this.

Becoming One Flesh

And God said to them,

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it... – Genesis 1:28

Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. – Genesis 2:23-24

Right away in the first two chapters of Genesis we are told the three primary purposes for sex.

First, sex is about the creation of new *life*—part of our mandate to be fruitful and multiply.

Second, sex is for *pleasure*—evidenced by the first recorded words from Adam's mouth, a poetic celebration as he first lays his eyes on naked Eve.

Third, sex is for *oneness*, as God declares sex is a celebration of becoming one flesh in marriage.

These are three things our children need to understand about sexuality—and it is a parent's responsibility to teach these things.

A special note about being “one flesh” is needed here, because it's a radical and rich concept. The term “flesh” is often used in the Old Testament, not as a way of talking about our physical bodies alone, but is a reference to our personal lives as they are lived in the natural, physical world. Flesh means an “embodied person.” To become “one flesh” does not therefore mean merely the union of two physical bodies in sexual intercourse, but the intertwining of two natural lives, creating *whole-life oneness*.

Consider Jesus' own commentary on Genesis in Matthew 19. When being asked about his position on divorce, Jesus says:

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.
– Matthew 19:4-6

Jesus' radically conservative position on divorce—no matter how it is interpreted and applied—shows us “one flesh” is not merely something that happens during intercourse. One flesh was God's way of talking about the lifelong bond that is cemented, celebrated, and consummated in sex.

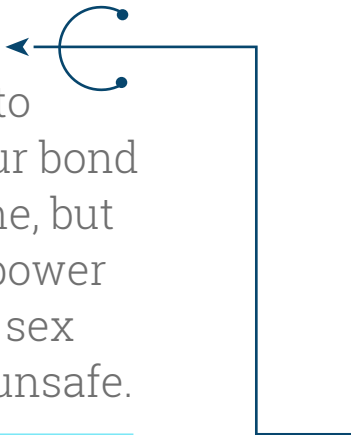
Or consider Paul's use of this idea in his first letter to the Corinthians:

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”...Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. – 1 Corinthians 6:16-18

Paul does not come across as a religious prude, devaluing sex or deathly afraid of it. Nor does he write as a liberal, treating sex a necessary and all-important bodily function. Rather, Paul was far ahead of his time, seeing sex an act of intimacy, an act of radical self-disclosure and self-commitment—not merely the taking of another’s body for pleasure, but the *giving* of oneself to another.

This is critical for parents to teach to their children—especially in a generation where casual sex is the norm and where porn sets the standard. Sex is designed to cement our bond to someone, but when its power is abused, sex becomes unsafe. Unless you are willing to give yourself wholeheartedly to another—*personally, socially, emotionally, financially* (i.e., in marriage)—you should not give yourself *physically* to another. Giving your body to another needs to happen within the context of whole-life commitment.

Sex is designed to cement our bond to someone, but when its power is abused, sex becomes unsafe.



To do otherwise, Paul says, a person “sins against his own body.” We experience in our bodies—and our brains—the consequences of abusing our sexuality. Sex is no longer a safe celebration of real commitment.

This goes for pornography as well. By viewing pornography and pleasuring ourselves, we unite our brains to a fantasy experience, not a person. Sex is designed to take us out of ourselves and be a self-gift, first to our spouse and eventually in the creation of children. But sexual fantasy, said C.S. Lewis, sends us back into the prison of ourselves “to keep a harem of imaginary brides.”

And this harem, once admitted, works against his ever getting out and really uniting with a real woman.

For the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can be endowed with erotic and psychological attractions which no woman can rival.

Among those shadowy brides he is always adored, always the perfect lover; no demand is made on his unselfishness, no mortification ever imposed on his vanity.

In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself....After all, almost the main work of life is to come out of our selves, out of

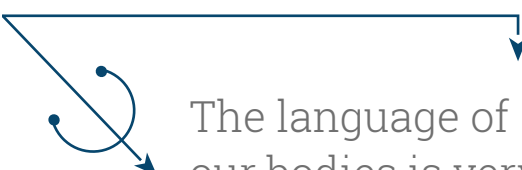
the little dark prison we are all born in. Masturbation is to be avoided as all things are to be avoided which retard this process. The danger is that of coming to love the prison.

How We Are Sexually Wired

These three purposes of sex—life, pleasure, and oneness—are not just written on the pages of Scripture. They are written into the design of our bodies.

We are all born as *sexual* beings—not in the sense that we are born ready for intercourse, but in the sense that we are all born with a sexual identity. Given time and a normal course of biological development, our bodies will become capable of sexual pleasure and sexual reproduction, and from the moment of conception, this trajectory is written into the fiber of our DNA.

First, it should go without saying that one of the primary functions of sex is the formation of new life. Barring any abnormal development, our bodies carry the marvelous ability to create new people. When sperm and egg unite, a new human being comes to life. The language of our bodies is very clear: sex is meant for creating life.



The language of our bodies is very clear: sex is meant for pleasure.

Second, for both men and women, our amazing, God-given brains are the control centers of sexual pleasure. When a man or woman is sexually aroused in some fashion, there's a release of dopamine in the brain, producing a sense of sharp focus and craving. Norepinephrine—which acts like adrenaline—is also released, creating an alertness and focus. The body also releases various endorphins, natural opiates that create a “high,” a wave of pleasure over the whole body. After orgasm, our bodies release serotonin, bringing a sense of calm and relaxation. The language of our bodies is very clear: sex is meant for pleasure.

Third, sex is designed by God not just as something pleasurable but something that bonds us to another. During loving-making, the neurochemicals oxytocin and vasopressin are also released, laying down longterm memories in our cells, “binding” us to the memory of the source of the pleasure. No other creature on Earth uses sexual connection this way. Because our brains have an expanded cerebral cortex, we have the power to consciously *choose* to enhance our feelings of connectedness to a lover

through simple acts of devotion: talking, listening, touching, hugging, kissing, cuddling, and sexual intercourse. The language of our bodies is very clear: sex is meant for oneness.²¹

Pornography and Our Hijacked Sexuality

Just as the brain is the control center of our sexuality, it is in the brain that pornography strikes its deadliest blows.

When boys and girls view pornography, a region of the brain called the amygdala is activated, creating a sense of excitement, curiosity, and often anxiety. For boys, this anxiety is experienced as sexual tension, a desire to *have* the woman on the screen. For girls, this arousal is more “contextual,” she desires to *be* the woman on the screen. Even young children experience these sensations—albeit in an underdeveloped way—and if gone unchecked, these experiences can rewire the brain in startling ways.

Porn robs us of life, pleasure, and oneness.

Life: Instead of being open to new life, pornography trains us to love solo-sexuality. Studies have shown, the more people view porn, the less they say they are attracted to the idea of marriage and having children. Over time, we come to prefer the cheap thrill of fantasy over the goodness of family.²²

Pleasure: Rather than merely taking us to the heights of pleasure, pornography causes our brains to fatigue, deadening us to real satisfaction. Continued exposure to porn releases surge after surge of dopamine, giving the brain an unnatural high. The brain eventually fatigues, “downregulating” its pleasure receptors, leaving the viewer wanting more but unable to reach a level of satisfaction—unless they get more porn or more novel porn. This is called *desensitization*. Everyday pleasures begin to lose their luster—including sex—and the viewer expands his or her pornographic tastes to get the same arousal.²³

Oneness: Instead of developing oneness with another person, the pleasure derived from pornography bonds the viewer to an *image*. Studies have shown that when men and women are shown female centerfold models from pornographic magazines, it significantly lowers their judgments about the attractiveness of “average” people.²⁴ Porn viewers can quickly become addicted to the whole experience: the search for novel images and videos, multiple tabs open, the endless variety. Behavioral therapist Andrea Kuszewski says the neurochemicals that fire when watching pornography “make you want to keep coming back to have that feeling,” she says, and instead of wedding ourselves to a person, we wed ourselves to porn.²⁵

. . . .

Life. Pleasure. Oneness. This is what godly sexuality is all about, and this is the very thing pornography seeks to rob from the next generation. This is the second wall of truth that guards the hearts of our kids as they grow. But understanding God's view of our self-image and our sexuality is not enough. As we read more in Genesis, we see more critical truths to arm the hearts of our kids...

SPECIAL CALLOUT:

In order to teach our children about godly sexuality, both parents must examine their own attitudes towards pornography and determine whether either has an addiction that must be dealt with.

John Maxwell, the well-known speaker, author and pastor who has written many books about leadership often says, "you replicate what you are." In Biblical terms, this mirrors the concept of generational sin. In Ezekiel 18:30, God makes it clear that He doesn't punish children for their parents' sins. But, the sins of fathers and mothers can adversely impact the lives of their children, creating a sinful "deposit" into the family line that is easily acquired by other family members, including children.

But, thanks be to God that we don't have to accept this future for our children! According to speaker and author Beth Moore, "Thankfully, Christians aren't doomed to live with our families' sins. The Cross of Calvary is enough to set us free from every yoke; God's Word is enough to make liberty a practical reality, no matter what those before us left as an "inheritance."²⁶

If you are a parent with a pornography addiction, Covenant Eyes has resources that might help. Please visit the Resources in Appendix C on page 142 as a first step. Maybe signing up your entire family for Internet Accountability and Filtering with Covenant Eyes is a good second step.

Next Steps:

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Chapter 4 - Diving In:



1. In Genesis 1:28, immediately after God creates mankind, He says to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it.” How do you feel knowing that God’s first command to the human race was to have sex and procreate?

2. With this in mind, really think deeply. Why do many Christians treat discussions about sex and sexuality with such disdain and secrecy? What might this attitude communicate to our children about sex?

3. Where did you obtain most of your understanding of sex and sexuality? How did this understanding impact your relationships, including your marriage?

4. The Bible tells us that man will hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become “one flesh.” How would you describe a couple that is operating in a “one flesh” relationship?

5. Of the three purposes of sex: life, pleasure, and oneness, which one is most difficult for you to process or discuss openly? How might this impact how you teach your children about God’s plan for sex?

6. More than a few parents feel squeamish about using the real names for body parts with young children. Have a good laugh with your group and talk about your family’s own practice here.

7. The Sex Ed Conversation Guides recommend using the word pornography with children at a fairly young age. How do you feel about this? What is the appropriate age to begin these conversations? Why do you feel this way?



Verse to Claim and Remember: “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Matthew 19:6 (ESV)

Application: Please check out the “Sex Ed: Stage by Stage” in Appendix A and pray for a window to have these conversations. Maybe share your experience in having these conversations in our closed Facebook group called “Parenting the Internet Generation.”

Pray It Out: Heavenly Father, now we are traveling into uncomfortable territory for some of us. God, we know that you invented sex to be a life-giving, pleasurable, spouse-cementing activity. Forgive us now for the times that we have mistreated this gift. Show us natural, intentional ways that we can build healthy conversations about sex and sexuality into the hearts and minds of our children. Bless us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER FIVE

The Third Wall: Understanding the Sinful Impulse



Chapter 5

The first two chapters of Genesis shows us a world without sin. The last two chapters of Revelation show a new world, also without sin. Every chapter in between is the story of rebellious humanity and holy God rescuing us from that rebellion.

Pornography is not only harmful to us as people, it is offensive to God Himself—an affront to His moral law. As a moral issue, pornography is a great concern on multiple levels. It is designed to provoke lust in its viewers (Matthew 5:28). Its performers routinely engage in extramarital sex (Hebrews 13:4), group sex (Galatians 5:21), and even rape (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). Industry performers routinely work in abusive and oppressive environments (Deuteronomy 24:14) where they are paid to experience routine verbal and physical aggression. Even the most “moral” of pornography, at its core, is built on a business model of payment for sex—i.e., prostitution (Leviticus 19:29).

Pornography is not only harmful to us as people, it is offensive to God Himself.

That pornography is sinful—a violation of God’s moral law—is fairly plain to see when the Bible is our primary guide. But what may not be plain is exactly what “sin” is and why pornography, in particular, is so offensive to God.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

In their book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, Christian Smith and Melinda Denton said, after interviewing thousands of teens, the prevailing spiritual belief among American youth today can be described as “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.” That’s a mouthful, so let’s break it down.

- By in large, many youth in western culture have a *moralistic* view of God. They believe there is a limited and pragmatic moral order—you should be the kind of person others like, not be socially obnoxious or troublesome, and fulfill your personal potential. Any good they see in organized religions are the codes of conduct and values they espouse—values that remind us to be loving to one’s neighbor.

- Youth also tend to believe in a *deistic* God: yes, God exists and He created the world, but He isn't overly involved in our daily affairs—especially the affairs we prefer He stay out of. This God did not move in history through grand acts of deliverance, did not inspire any books, did not speak through prophets, did not raise Jesus from the dead, and isn't particularly demanding of us.
- However, unlike the deists of previous centuries, the otherwise distant God does want to make us happy—His primary benefit is *therapeutic*. He wants people to feel good about themselves. He wants people to maintain a sense of well-being and helps them resolve their personal problems. He is “there” for us when we pray. He is our Cosmic Therapist: the professional who's always on call, always giving affirmation, but not getting too personally involved in the process.

This belief system is not confined to merely the irreligious, but to teens across the religious spectrum.

Very few teens in American naturally absorb the traditional beliefs of their parents, and instead Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is colonizing many different faiths. As for Christian teens, they might continue using some of the terms of their parent's faith, but their bedrock beliefs, 20 feet down, are something altogether different from biblical Christianity.

The Moralistic Therapeutic god of modern culture could care less about what you watch on your computer screen. In order for our children to be able to withstand the sin of pornography, they need to know the God of Christianity calls it sinful—and know *why*.

Forbidden Fruit

She and her mate are walking through the familiar glade, enjoying the life-giving fruit growing in abundance all around them. There is a sort of supernatural, childlike happiness in them as they think about the Creator who made them and their perfect world.

And yet something is different this day: something or someone else is watching them from the shadows.

When the serpent first appears they are uncertain about it, and to their astonishment

the creature begins to speak. “Did God actually say,” began the serpent, “‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” What a strange question.

The woman is certain that the creature has been misinformed. “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,” she replies, “but God says, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

She remembers when her mate, Adam, first informed her of the Maker’s decree. The land is lush with fruit, but there is one tree—a special tree—that God has marked as off-limits. Knowing this, she has resolved to never even touch the fruit of that tree lest she die.

But the serpent continues, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

With the words of the tempter slowly churning in their minds, Adam and Eve step closer and closer to the forbidden tree. Three thoughts consume the woman’s mind.

First, the tree looks to be *good for food*. As Eve gazes at the fruit she notices that it looks just as hunger-satisfying and sweet as any of the other fruit in the garden. After all, isn’t this what the fruit is for...to be eaten? Her appetite for the fruit stirs in her belly as she and Adam take a step closer to the tree.

Second, the tree is a *delight to her eyes*. For some reason this tree now stands out more than any other tree in the Garden. She doesn’t just notice the fruit—she wants to have it for herself. Though she can have any fruit in the garden, this tree now grabs all of her attention. And as the craving grows, they take another step closer.

Last, she believes the tree could *make her wise*. This thought pulls on her heart more than anything else. The woman buys into the serpent’s promise: “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” As she gazes at the fruit she wonders what it would be like to be “like God,” to be able to determine good and evil for herself. Pride begins to swell in her. She and her husband take another step toward the tree.

She reaches up and plucks the fruit. Her mate stands next to her, says nothing, as she pulls it to her lips.

As Eve gazes at the fruit, she wonders what it would be like to be "like God," to be able to determine good and evil for herself.



The Sinfulness of Sin

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate – Genesis 3:6

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
– 1 John 2:16-17

Genesis offers us a picture into the hearts of Adam and Eve as they pluck the fruit from the forbidden tree. Three desires pull at Eve's heart—the same three desires the apostle John gives us in his summary of human sin:

- The desire of the flesh (“the tree was good for food”)
- The desire of the eyes (“it was a delight to the eyes”)
- The pride of life (“the tree was to be desired to make one wise”)

Pleasure: the desires of the flesh – The word translated “desire” does not merely mean appetite or wish. It means over-drive, over-desire, or craving. In this instance it is referring to desires rooted in the body—our natural appetites for food, water, sex, warmth, comfort, etc. Desires for these things are inborn and good, but when they become “over-desires,” trumping our love for God, they become sinful.

Possessions: the desires of the eyes – Again, the word used here is for a strong craving, but this time it is a drive to possess what one sees. The desire to possess good or pleasant things is as natural as the day is long. But when this craving becomes an “over-desire,” we start to covet that which isn't ours, and we are consumed with getting something beautiful for ourselves, no matter the cost.

Power: the pride of life – Here, John is speaking of arrogance and prideful ambition: a lust for power, honor, and glory. Again, the desire for honor is good—even Christ promises us glory and tells us seek after it (John 5:44). But what Adam and Eve



craved that day was to be “like God,” to be able to know and determine good and evil for themselves, to rule their own lives.

These three show us the true face of sin: making an idol of *pleasure, possessions, and power*.

By “idol” we aren’t merely speaking of bowing down to statues of wood and stone. The Bible has a much deeper concept of idolatry. It is something that takes place in the heart (Ezekiel 14:3). An idol is the thing in your life you give the greatest significance and put in the position of glory. An idol is your greatest treasure—your God-replacement.

The things we turn into idols are often not, in themselves, bad things. Most of the time they are *good* things that have become *ultimate* things to us—anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

An idol is most often a good desire that has become a very bad master.

On that first fateful day when sin entered the human race, Adam and Eve became absorbed in three idolatrous desires. Instead of trusting in the goodness and love of God who had showered them with so many blessings, they believed the serpent’s lie. They allowed the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life to consume them.

This biblical understanding of sin is critical for parents to pass on to their children. Sin is not merely a mistake in judgement. God is not so trite as to be offended at mistakes. Sin, rather, is disobedience—a willful revolt against God and His clearly revealed will, a choice to replace God with a new master.

The Sinfulness of Porn

Pornography plays on all three of these core idols. While exposure to pornography may start accidentally or out of mere curiosity, continued pursuit of pornography is a manifestation of at least one of these sinful desires—and many times all three.

An idol is the thing in your life you give the greatest significance and put in the position of glory.

Pleasure: the desires of the flesh – Pornography awakens sexual desire in us, even in very young children with underdeveloped minds and bodies. That sexual craving is, in itself, a God-created impulse, but when it becomes an “over-desire,” pornography easily becomes an idol. Instead of trusting in God and using our sex drive in the way He designed it, the sexual impulse becomes an all-important compulsion that trumps other concerns.

Possessions: the desires of the eyes – Pornography treats women and men as trophies, as collectibles that show the world who a “real man” or a “real woman” is. Pornography enables people to “possess” these fantasies, and then our brains can relish in the belief that by possessing these trophies of beauty, we feel validated in our own sexual prowess and worth.

Power: the pride of life – Pornography is a powerful vehicle allowing people to create their own definition of right and wrong, a way to become “like God.” Pornography erodes the barriers that might typically keep sin at bay. No longer do we need to have money, power, or prestige to get the sexual fantasy experience of our dreams—they are all available at the click of a button.

Conversations for Getting to the Root of Sin

The story of the forbidden fruit helps us to see where the true enemies of our souls are. The enemy is not the God who created us—He neither is tempted nor tempts us with evil (James 1:13). Nor are the forbidden trees in our life the true enemies. Yes, porn is bad, and it would be wonderful to see the world rid of it, but it is not the source of the problem.

The true enemies of our souls are the devil and our own sinful overdrives. “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14).

Wise parents know how to spot these core sinful desires in their children—even long before porn ever enters the picture—and then faithfully train them to turn to the One who came to save us from our sins.

Pleasure: the desires of the flesh – We live in an instant-gratification culture. If our children are raised in homes where they never hear the word “no,” we train them to see their natural appetites as all-important drives. When a child complains that they don’t get to eat at the exact moment they want, or they don’t get the exact food they desire, or they had to wake up too early, these are opportunities to remind our children not to be ruled by our natural appetites.

Of course, this doesn't mean exasperating our children by never giving them the things they like, but it does mean helping them see when their natural cravings are impacting their attitudes. When the crowds were hungry, Jesus provided food to satisfy their hunger (John 6:1-14), but when they came back for more, Jesus pointed them to Himself, the true Bread of Life (v.25-35).

As parents we should remind our children,

Your appetites are good, but if we aren't careful, they can take over and they become central in our lives. God created your appetites, but because of our tendency to sin, we often act as if those appetites are all-important. I do this as well. You don't want your physical appetites to master you. Not only do they make terrible masters, but God is the one who is meant to be our greatest desire. The good news is there's hope for people like you and me, because Jesus gives His people power to put God first, before our appetites.

Possessions: the desires of the eyes – We live in a culture where beauty is everything, where we must really be *somebody* if we have the best or nicest or newest thing, where our worth is measured by the jobs we get, the homes we live in, the girls we sleep with, or the bodies we have. When a child complains because they don't wear the latest fashions, have the nicest toys, or have the prettiest bodies, these are opportunities to remind our children not to be ruled by things they see.

Of course, this doesn't mean exasperating our children by depriving them of good things, but it does mean helping them see where covetousness is taking over their attitudes.

As parents we should remind our children,

Your desires to have new or nice or beautiful things are good, but if we aren't careful, those desires can start to rule our hearts. We can start to covet things that are outwardly beautiful because they make us feel really special. I have the same tendency. In the end, you don't want your desire for nice or beautiful things to rule your heart, because it makes us miserable and it replaces our enjoyment of God. But the good news is there's hope for people like you and me: Jesus gives us power to be truly content and thankful for what we have—to be satisfied in a way that is beyond understanding.

Power: the pride of life – We live in a culture of relativistic morals. The idea of an objective moral law sounds rigid, condemning, and nothing more than a power play. In an effort to swing the pendulum away from the legalism of previous centuries, culture tells us to prize tolerance. “As long as you’re not hurting others, you’re free to do and believe what you want.”

When we suspiciously think that all absolute moral claims are just power plays, we might feel justified in dismissing the claims of religion, but this leads us nowhere. When we think all absolute moral claims are just grasps for control over others, then we need to be suspicious even of moral relativists. C.S. Lewis wisely noted:

...[Y]ou cannot go on ‘explaining away’ for ever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on ‘seeing through’ things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too?...If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To ‘see through’ all things is the same as not to see. – *The Abolition of Man*

Nonetheless, in this culture of relativism, we are encouraged to define our own truth, our own sense of morality. When children question why they should obey their parents, why they should be nice to their siblings, or why they should be respectful to their elders, this is a parent’s opportunity to impress on children that God is our rightful king, and His law is not merely a suggestion.

Impress on children that God is our rightful king, and His law is not merely a suggestion.

Of course, this does not mean exasperating our children with legalism, turning the Bible into an oppressive list of rules. Rather, it means allowing the laws of God to serve as a mirror for our kids so they clearly see their tendency to rebel (Romans 7:7-8; James 1:23-25) and their need for God to transform them from the inside out (Jeremiah 31:33).

As parents we should remind our children,

I know how it feels to want to be your own boss. When we just obey one of God's rules because we feel obligated, but our heart isn't in it, the problem isn't the rule. The problem is our own hearts. When we want to make our own rules, this is replacing God who is our true king. The good news is there's hope for people like you and me: Jesus gives us His Spirit to transform our desires on the inside so we really want to obey Him.

. . . .

Pleasure. Possessions. Power. We can use the everyday sinful tendencies of our children in these three areas to show them their sinfulness is not merely something that annoys us or hurts them—it is something that offends God because it is an attempt to replace the God who loves them.

Training our children to see their sin rightly is crucial if we want them to see their Savior rightly. If our sin is small, then our Savior must be small. But if our sin is outright rebellion, then our Savior must be a true rescuer, for He can even rescue us from ourselves.


But understanding God's view of our self-image, our sexuality, and our sin is not enough. As we read more in the early chapters of Genesis, we see one more critical truth to fortify the hearts of our kids...

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 5 - Diving In:

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1. Have you ever thought about the fact that there was no "sinful nature excuse" when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit? Ultimately, they sinned because they started to believe that God was holding out on them, not looking out for their best interest. How can technology prey on this way of thinking in our children? How can this way of thinking warp our kids' attitudes about sex and sexuality?

2. Genesis gives us a picture into the hearts of Adam and Eve and from Genesis 3, we see three desires pulling at Eve's heart: the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life. Which one of these areas causes you to trip up most often?

3. Have you started to see any tendencies in any of your children towards the desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes or the pride of life? What, if anything, have you tried in order to curb these desires and/or direct them towards a holy purpose? What can you do going forward?

4. Go back and reread each of the paragraphs with a sample conversation you could have with your son/daughter. When you do that, circle the words that stand out to you as most significant for your specific situation.

5. The e-book reminds us that we live in a relativistic culture, where everything is truth and to draw a line defines you as narrow-minded and ignorant. On the other hand, a heavy-handed parenting style can turn the Bible into an “oppressive list of rules.” How do you strike a balance between grace and truth with how you parent?

6. “If our sin is small, then our Savior must be small. But, if our sin is outright rebellion, then our Savior must be a true rescuer.” In what ways have you made Jesus small in how you’ve parented? How can you turn that around right now?

7. If you have a tween or teen, have you ever directly asked him/her, “Have you ever seen pornography?” What would you say if he/she said, “yes”? Are you ready for that conversation?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” John 6:27 (ESV)

Application: For preschool and elementary school aged children, the *Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones is an excellent, age-appropriate translation for sharing God’s story and explaining to your children how Adam and Eve’s choice invited sin into the world. Be sure to share any application ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called “Parenting the Internet Generation”.

Pray It Out: Heavenly Father, too many times we have acted as if we thought we were our own savior. That we know best. That we have all the answers. Our pride sometimes deceives us, and we do not want our children to acquire these same tendencies. May we use words that point their desires towards their Creator, so that they fall deeper and deeper in love with You. May we strike a balance in our parenting between grace and truth just like Jesus showed us. Bless us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER SIX

The Fourth Wall: Understanding Sexual Shame



Chapter 6

Only seconds after sin entered the human experience, shame quickly followed.

Shame is one of the central themes of Adam and Eve's story in Genesis. Right after Adam sees his wife for the first time, we are told the two were "both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25), but after Adam tasted the forbidden fruit, they sewed fig leaves together to cover their bodies and hid themselves in the thick of the trees.

No one taught Adam and Eve how to feel shame. It was simply a natural response to what happens when creatures made in God's image collide with sin.

If parents are going to guide sinful children, they need to understand the purpose and power of shame and how to respond to it.

Shame Gets a Bad Name

We can thank certain strands of psychology for being down on shame. Shame, in many people's minds, is equated with self-loathing—a toxic core condition that makes us feel incapable of ever receiving love, creating a perpetual cycle of pessimism and self-destructive behavior.

In reality, shame is not the enemy. The real enemy is our *response* to shame.

When it comes to shame, we are partially victims of our own language. English has only one word for every kind of shame, whereas other languages have more than one. As such, English speakers tend to paint the word "shame" with a broad brush, and it ends up becoming a junk-drawer term for many emotions.

For the purposes of our discussion here, we will say that shame is our soul's answer to the unavoidable fact that sin always disrupts intimacy. As far as the Bible uses the term, shame is an inherently *relational* term. Shame is the disgrace one feels as a result of a relational breach—either perceived or real.

Shame can, of course, become toxic when it is compounded by the belief that we are beyond the reach of grace, compassion, and forgiveness. Shame ought to drive us to

reach out for clarity, help, and connection. It ought to serve as a catalyst to help us appreciate the love of God and family more, but often the opposite happens. Shame has the potential to encompass our whole personality.

Shame is often related to guilt, but the two are not synonymous. Christian counselor David Powlison says guilt is my feeling of failure before a *standard*. Shame, however, is my feeling of uncleanness before *the eyes of persons*—again, shame is relational. Whereas guilt exposes a violation of my conscience, shame is a violation of society’s conscience. To feel ashamed means I believe I am stained in the eyes of my spouse, or my family, or my church, or my community, or my God—or even myself.

Reading the Bible, it should be amply clear that shame in itself is not the problem because “shamelessness” is always a sign of real hardheartedness. To “sin in broad daylight” is not a sign of psychological health, but a sign of profound narcissism and self-deception (Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:5; 11:6; Ephesians 5:12; Philippians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:16).

An awareness of how our sins impact others and our relationships is a *healthy* quality. It is what the apostle Paul calls “walking properly” (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 14:40; 1 Thessalonians 4:12)—living in a manner of decency and seemliness, with an awareness that my actions matter to others.

Simply put, we *should* feel ashamed when we act in a way that harms our relationships.

But this is not the Bible’s final word about shame—as if God were scolding us, “You should be ashamed of yourself.” Yes, shame is a good impulse when it comes to sin, but *what we do with our shame* matters greatly to God.

The Shame-Based Family

To feel ashamed because of shameful behavior is one thing, but for many people—especially people entrenched in pornography and other sexual compulsions—shame has become a toxic way of life even before porn and other sexual sin enters the picture.

Guilt is my feeling of failure before a standard. Shame, however, is my feeling of uncleanness before the eyes of a person.

Paul reminds fathers, “Do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21, NIV), and again in another letter, “Do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV). Training and instruction happens as parents create an environment of authority, structure, correction, and consequences, but Paul knows how easily parents can become frustrated and resentful in the process of parenting. This, in turn, leads us to embitter and exasperate our children by breaking their spirits.

One of the most common ways parents do this is by using shame-based strategies to get their kids to behave. What exactly is “shame-based” parenting? It is a family dynamic where shame—the looming threat or presence of disapproval and disfavor—is the primary motivator used for good behavior. This can show up in a thousand ways.

- Expecting perfection by overestimating what their sinful hearts can do
- Failing to really listen to them as we correct them
- Speaking bitter or harsh words (“What is wrong with you?” “When will you ever...?” “You always...” “You never...” “You idiot”)
- Showing little compassion
- Giving the cold shoulder or being dismissive
- Pushing kids to excel in peripheral tasks
- Showing favoritism to other siblings

It is a rigid environment that leaves children discouraged and exasperated. This kind of environment often trains children to be obsessive over “doing the right things” in order to be approved—or else totally rebellious.

This kind of environment has unwittingly made so many children ripe for sexually sinful habits.

Sexual Sin and the Shame-Based Home

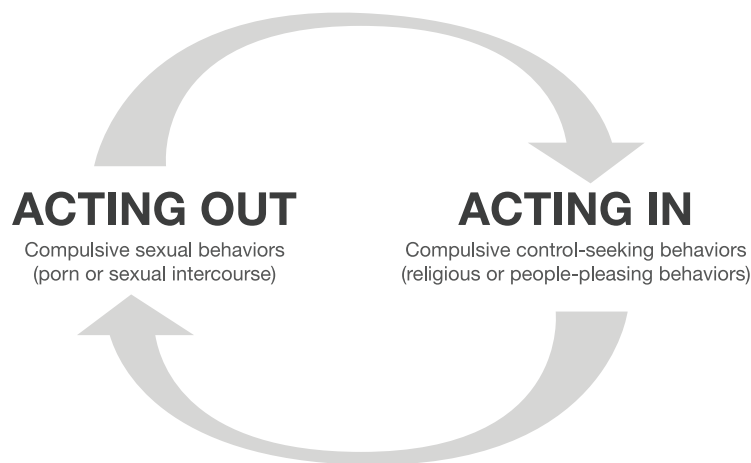
When sexual sin is introduced to the mix, not only is there the natural shame of the behavior itself, but the family dynamic has already created a desperation for parental approval and thus a high incentive to hide. This compounds them into the shame of hypocrisy—of living a double life.

When shame becomes a way of life, quitting shameful behavior doesn't become easier, but harder. Noted sex addiction therapist Patrick Carnes goes so far as to say that shame is one of the things at the core of addiction behavior.

Addicts, at one level, judge themselves by society's standards. Unable to measure up to these, they live with constant pain and alienation...The alienation becomes a quagmire within which addicts struggle, only to become more isolated.²⁷

Carnes describes what he calls a “shame cycle,” which includes a seemingly endless loop of feeling out of control and trying to get in control. This cycle consists of “acting out” with compulsive taboo sinful behaviors (like watching porn), and then “acting in” with compulsive control-seeking behaviors (like avoiding sex or a rabid commitment to religious duties or people-pleasing behaviors). No matter where you are in the loop —acting in or acting out—instead of being motivated by a love for God or a love for others, you are motivated by a desperate insecurity and a desire to escape.

This is shame gone wrong, and it is this environment of shame we should fight to avoid in our homes.



Sexual Shame in the Garden

I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. – Genesis 3:10

The reaction of Adam and Eve after biting into the forbidden fruit is profound. Their first instinct is to hide their bodies. For their entire existence, they had been naked, and this was hardly a fact they overlooked. When God brought naked Eve before naked Adam for the first time, he burst with a poem of excitement seeing her (Genesis 2:23). But the Bible tells us some kind of internal change took place in them: “the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7). They immediately became self-conscious for the first time, and they covered themselves in the large leaves from a fig tree.

Why the sudden self-consciousness? What could the author of Genesis be telling us?

There are a couple clues given by the author that are noteworthy. The first clue is the use of repetition. Four times in just 12 verses, we are told of their nudity—obviously, this fact is important to the writer.

The second clue is the Hebrew wordplay going on in the story. Remember, the book of Genesis was written to a primarily oral culture: most did not *read* it themselves; they *heard* it read aloud. Also, remember it was originally written in Hebrew, not English. As we go back to the original language, the wordplay becomes obvious. We are told the serpent who tempted the first couple was *arum* (“shrewd”) and that the man and woman were *arom* (“naked”). This use of homonyms would have stood as a signal to the listener: there’s some kind of interconnectedness between these facts—the nakedness of the couple and the shrewdness of the tempter.

When God speaks to Adam about his sin, the nature of his sin becomes clear: “You have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree” (Genesis 3:17). Adam did not merely eat from the forbidden tree. He did so having “listened” to his wife. To the Hebrew reader, the word translated “listen” referred to far more than just hearing sound waves. It meant to hear with attentiveness, to give heed to someone. To “listen” is a synonym for *loyalty*.

With these clues in place, the message becomes fairly clear: the shrewd serpent used the naked woman to tempt Adam to sin. Instead of remembering the voice of God, he listened to the voice of his naked wife. This is evidenced by the way both of them covered their nakedness: they knew deep down that their nakedness played a role in the enticement. The original innocence of nakedness was shattered.

In other words, as Adam and Eve covered their bodies, they were feeling a kind of sexual shame. Each one knowing the sin in his or her own heart, and knowing the presence of sin in the heart of the other, no longer saw their nakedness as merely

enticing and enjoyable, but as a liability—a vulnerability. They knew they were vulnerable to seduction and the desire to seduce.

Don't misunderstand the intention here. God is not endorsing the belief that women are temptresses and men are helpless victims of their libido. Not at all. Adam was not merely aware of Eve's nakedness but *his own* as well. Conscious of the evil in both of their hearts, the once happy couple covered their bodies in shame knowing how their God-given sexuality could now be used to exploit and be exploited.

This is the same kind of sexual shame inborn in all of us and often awakened as sexual desire is awakened. As we notice our own propensity to lust or we are shown how others lust, suddenly our sexuality is no longer just something alluring and pleasurable. It feels like a liability.

In the environment of the home, parents can help children to understand the shame they feel when it comes to sexual sin.

Reacting Well to a Child's Shame

Regardless of whether or not our children have ever seen pornography, parents need to help children face the inevitable shame of sin—especially sexual sin.

There are three primary ways children—all people, actually—deal with shame: *hide*, *blame*, and *cover*. We see these reflected in the Genesis story.

Hide: When our children do something they are ashamed of, they will seek to hide it from us, just as Adam and Eve hid among the trees.

Blame: When our children feel ashamed, they will seek to blame someone else for their sins, just as Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

Cover: When our children experience shame, they will cover themselves with shoddy attempts at looking presentable, much like Adam and Eve covered themselves with flimsy leaves of the fig tree.

Underneath all these reactions is fear—a fear that their sins made them unacceptable. As best as we can, we need to be prepared for these reactions.

Fight Their Urge to Hide by Creating an Environment of Loving Accountability.

God did not build Eden as a place to hide from Him but to *walk with Him*. Similarly, our homes and family habits should not be easy places for our kids to hide. This is why our homes must be places where accountability is assumed and expected.

➤ Seemingly no one knows what we do or see online, and this lowers our defenses and removes our inhibitions.

Don't confuse accountability with "helicopter parenting." A helicopter parent is a mom or dad who is over-focused on his or her children, obsessing over a child's successes and failures, and as a result being over-controlling and overprotective. An environment of *accountability* is different: it allows children to learn, explore, and even fail, but always with the expectation that mom or dad is present to guide, correct, and encourage.

The emphasis here is on *loving* accountability. Many parents call their kids to account for their bad attitudes and bad behavior. Correction is an important part of parenting.

But the *attitude* of that correction is just as, if not more, important than the actual correction itself. In all things, we should speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), refrain from over-correcting (i.e., pick your battles), and never make good behavior a condition of parental warmth and affection.

For many kids, the Internet can become a perfect place to hide. The late psychologist Alvin Cooper said one of the factors that often drives kids and adults alike to online sexual activity is *anonymity*—the ability to sin in secrecy. The Internet gives us the ability to experience, explore, and express ourselves in privacy. Seemingly no one knows what we do or see online, and this lowers our defenses and removes our inhibitions.

This is where accountability software can provide an enormous help. Accountability software is specifically designed for open communications about the Internet. Unlike "spying" software that is deliberately created to catch someone redhanded, accountability software is visible to all. Unlike an Internet filter, it doesn't block bad websites. It provides parents with regularly e-mailed lists of questionable Internet activity so parents can have productive discussions.

Instead, in many homes—even Christian homes—monitoring the Internet is a spying game. A recent survey shows 77% of teens say their parents do not monitor where they go online or don't know if they are monitored. Of these, 42% of parents actually monitor Internet use—and don't bother to tell their kids.

Be honest. Install accountability software on every device in the home and be upfront about it: “This is what families need to do to watch one another’s backs. It is so easy to venture into places online that will tempt us, even when we aren’t expecting it. Rather than let these things happen in secret, we want to help each other in tempting situations.”

In an age where it is so easy to develop a secretive life online, accountability and filtering software, like that provided by Covenant Eyes, is the perfect bridge between technology and relationships.

[Fight Their Urge to Blame by Fostering an Environment of Personal Responsibility.](#)

God didn’t let Adam or Eve get away with blaming one another (or even blaming the serpent) for their sin. He didn’t indulge their finger-pointing. Similarly, our homes should be places where children are held personally responsible for their choices.

Kids are good at shifting the blame. When they do something wrong, they are quick to point out everyone else who was also doing wrong, as if this somehow absolves them of responsibility. Good parents know how to see all the parties at fault and place blame where it is due.

As natural as a lot of kids are at blame-shifting, children also learn how to shift the blame from watching their parents and other adults they know. As adults, we often ask misguided questions when things go wrong in our lives. Who dropped the ball? Why don’t I ever get a break? When will someone tell me what’s going on around here? When will someone fix that? Why don’t my kids just obey? These are all questions that place the focus outside us, and they are often the kind of questions that just indite people—even inviting the unnamed “them”—and destroys morale in families, teams, and work environments.

But this is nothing more than victim-thinking. Do bad things happen to us? Yes. Do other people harm us, neglect their duties, and make poor choices? Yes, of course. But when we operate out of that identity all the time, we change nothing about the world around us.

Instead, as parents, we need to model what it looks like to take personal responsibility for the things we can change around us. We need to take ownership of whatever our share in the problem is—even if our share is only a small one.

Take time to instruct your children about the blame-shifting that happened in the Garden of Eden, and then reinforce that lesson in the day-by-day life in the home.

- » “Yes, someone said something mean to you online? But how did you react to that? What could you have done differently?”
- » “Yes, you wasted a long time online yesterday instead of studying for your test. So, how could you have handled that situation differently?”
- » “Yes, you clicked on that bad video the other day. How could you handle the situation differently next time?”

When it comes to sexual sin, kids and teens often come up with a host of victim-thinking ideas that they may never even vocalize.

- » “I’m so lonely, that’s why I started looking at porn.”
- » “No one is ever attracted to me, that’s why I was slept with him when he seemed so interested.”
- » “Did you see the way she looked? How could I resist that?”

Through a solid accountability relationship, parents can help kids unpack these kinds of blame-shifting lies. This starts by getting them talking about not just what they are thinking or what they’ve done, but *why*. This does not mean denying the struggles and realities our kids face, but it does mean helping them see the role they play in their sins.

- » “I know you’re lonely. When I was young, I was lonely too. There will be a lot of times in life when we will feel lonely, won’t there? When those times come, what is a good way to react to those feelings?”
- » “I know you don’t feel like you’re attractive. We live in a world where we hear a lot of messages about what’s sexy or attractive, don’t we? When you feel that way, what’s a good way to remind yourself to see things differently?”
- » “I know how hard it is when you feel attracted to someone. We live in a world where a lot of people flaunt themselves, don’t we? When you see that, what’s the best way for you to react to those situations?”

Fight Their Urge to Cover by Reminding Them Christ Covers Their Sin.


Adam and Eve cover themselves in the leaves of the fig tree—a terrible covering for their bodies and a futile covering for the sense of inward shame they felt. But God had a better covering in mind.

God had warned Adam and Eve that death would be the punishment if they disobeyed His orders. But in a startling act of mercy, when God confronts Adam and Eve about their sin, He doesn't kill them on the spot. While He does pronounce a curse upon them for their sinfulness, He shows them amazing grace in the process:

First, although God promises that their lives—and ours—will be difficult, He also promises that Eve's offspring would be victorious over the Serpent—a promise ultimately fulfilled in Jesus (Genesis 3:15).

Second, He doesn't put them to death but instead kills an animal in order to make clothes from the animal skins to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21).

These two clues point us toward the One who would come to enact the final solution for sin, the One who came to defeat the Devil and pay for our sins with His death—Jesus Christ.



In a startling act of mercy, when God confronts Adam and Eve about their sin, He doesn't kill them on the spot.

When our children sin, their common reaction will be to cover their sins in self-made, flimsy good deeds. As we see more of our own faults, it is typical for us to build our reputations on accolades, promotions, and accomplishments. We look for ways in which we are better than others, improving our spiritual pedigree. But time and time again, the Bible shows how futile this is.

The Apostle Paul was as spiritually pure-bred as one could hope to be. In his letter to the Philippians he said if anyone could have had confidence in their own works, he could.

Born of the chosen people Israel, of the faithful tribe of Benjamin, raised knowing the mother tongue of the Bible itself, raised in the strict, holy traditions of his forefathers, zealous for God's law, and blameless as far as anyone could tell—if anyone could hide his sins under a massive cloak of fig leaves, Paul could do it (Philippians 3:5-6).

But, Paul says, those things he once counted as points for righteousness had become “rubbish” to him (Philippians 3:8)—as garbage, as some worthless thing to be thrown to the street dogs. Why? Because he found a righteous covering that was far better

by comparison. He quit hiding under his self-made good deeds, “in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (v.8-9).

As our kids begin to experience how sexual sin can damage the world, they may not only desire to hide their own shame or blame others, they may also be tempted to develop a self-righteous cloak: more pleasing parents, more church activities, more building of a good reputation. The only way children can be cured of this is the same way Paul was: they must encounter the living Christ.

This does not mean they need their own dramatic Damascus road moment. It does mean we, as parents, should make every effort to contrast the gospel with self-invented righteousness. Whatever we do to make ourselves look good to others or to God is nothing but a cleverly constructed fig-leaf suit. Instead, what we need is a covering of God’s own making. We need to be clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

These should be seeds of truth we plant in our kids long before sexual sin and sexual shame ever enters the picture.

Jesus Is Not Ashamed

Jesus took upon Himself the shame of our sin on the cross.

It is hard for us who live in the 21st century to understand the shame of the cross. We see crosses decorating our necklaces and church building, but in the first century, crosses were not decorations. What if we were to replace all those cross symbols with large neon pictures of guillotines, syringes, or electric chairs? Perhaps then we might capture a glimpse of the shame Jesus endured on the cross.

Crucifixion is one of the worst forms of human torture ever devised. The first-century BC philosopher Cicero said crucifixion is altogether so disgusting and shameful that a good Roman or Greek should not even speak about it. It was called by other contemporary historians the “most wretched” of deaths, reserved for insurrectionists, rebels, and robbers.

At every turn Jesus faced a terrible shame He did not deserve. Taken to a midnight trial where false witnesses lined up to accuse Him, He endures the injustice of a rigged trial. Following the litigation, they blindfold and beat Him mercilessly. After a restless night He is taken to the Roman courts where He is stripped naked and scourged, as their

cat o'nines sink in deep enough to tear ligament and muscle. He is marred to the point of being unrecognizable. Dehydrated and exhausted, He is mocked as soldiers press a crown of long thorns into His skull.

Rejected by His own people and given over to unclean Gentiles, He is led out of the city to die a cursed death—as it says in the Law of Moses, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). A hundred-pound cross is laid on His back for Him to carry to Golgotha, but even Jesus, in the prime of life, is too weakened by His torture to walk the full distance. Jesus is laid on the splintery wood and long spikes are driven through the sensitive nerve centers on His hands and feet. He is lifted up naked for all to see. There He hangs for six hours, needing to flex His elbows and push up on His nail-pierced feet to breathe, experiencing searing pain in each bruised joint and along each nerve.

In a garden, surrounded by comforts, it was through a naked man that sin and shame entered the world. On a hill of death, surrounded by executioners, it was through a naked man that sin and shame were finally removed. The Son of God “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2)—and He did all of this for His enemies.

Jesus knows what shame feels like—to be treated with disdain by friends, family, society, and even the Father Himself. For this reason, He is our perfect high priest, one who sympathizes with our weaknesses. And even though we have sinned and continue to sin, He is not ashamed to call us brothers (Hebrews 2:11).

. . . .

Shame is inevitable—not just about sexual matters, but all matters of our child’s thoughts and behavior. The question is how we will prepare our children to understand their shame and deal with it. This understanding of shame’s impact is the fourth and final “wall” in our blueprint.

But the structure is not yet complete...

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 6 - Diving In:



1. Guilt is realizing that you've failed, while shame is seeing yourself as a failure. Explain the difference between these two ways of thinking.

2. In what ways did shame impact your formative years? (Think middle and high school in particular.)

3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-6. In verse 5, Paul says “I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers?” What an interesting thing to say! Why would Paul deliberately use shame in making his point?

4. “In reality, shame is not the enemy. The real enemy is our response to shame.” What does our response to shame communicate to the world around us about our faith? About Jesus?

5. Our culture greatly values and rewards performance—travel sports teams, advance placement classes, competitive scholarships. How do parents use shame in these situations with their children?

6. In Genesis 3:7, we read, “The eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” In other words, as soon as the door of sin was blown open, it seems shame came right with it. What does this tell you about shame and sexuality? How are the two connected?

7. Think for a moment about how you parent your children. Are there any tendencies in your parenting that lean towards a shame-based approach?

8. If you're a parent, in what ways have you seen the hide, blame, and cover characteristics in your own children? Any good stories?

9. Many articles have been written about the impact of "helicopter parenting" on our kids, and now, we've seen an even more protective breed of parent called the "lawn mower parent." This is the parent who not only hovers over every situation, but now mom and dad actually mow down every obstacle so that their child doesn't experience any hardship or difficulty. Compare and contrast this form of parenting with a parenting style that embraces loving accountability.

10. Psychologist Al Cooper says that inappropriate Internet behavior is fueled by a triple-A battery: accessibility, affordability, and anonymity. Which of these “A” words feels most significant to you? Which feels like the greatest contributor to the porn issue?

11. *Jesus is not ashamed.* Let that sink in. Nor does He cast any shame on you. What would change about you if you truly embraced and believed this? By truly knowing this, what kind of impact would it have on your parenting?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”
John 3:17 (ESV)

Pray It Out: God our Father, you are the God of new beginnings, of fresh starts, and of freedom. We claim this freedom now and ask that your mercy and grace fill every part of our lives, including how we parent. May we recognize all tendencies we might have to use shame in how we treat our children. We want more than anything to reflect who you are to them, and so please guide us now in the name of Jesus. Amen!



CHAPTER SEVEN

Windows to the World: Parental Controls and Media Literacy



Chapter 7

So far we have been constructing the following four walls of truth—pulled right from the first several chapters of Genesis.

Understanding Self-Identity – Children should be taught they are created in the image of God. This fortifies their hearts with an inherent *dignity* that combats all of society’s skin-deep messages of worth and beauty, a wonderful *destiny* to show God’s loving, holy character to the world, and a powerful *Deliverer* who alone can make them what God wants them to be.

Understanding Sexual Integrity – Throughout the stages of childhood, children should be taught the good purpose of sexuality and sexual desire. Sex is about the celebration of *life*, *pleasure*, and *oneness*—whereas porn is a selfish, shallow, solo experience.

Understanding the Sinful Impulse – Children should be taught that sin is not merely making mistakes; it is an idolatrous grasp for *pleasure*, *possessions*, and *power*. As they learn how to see their sin rightly, they will also learn how to lean on their Savior completely.

Understanding Sexual Shame – Before sexual sin even enters the picture, parents should be prepared for the inevitable *hiding*, *blaming*, and *covering* that children do when they sin. As parents create a home of loving accountability, personal responsibility, and gospel humility, we create an environment where it's okay to not be okay.

Within these four walls, our children’s minds are not only fortified to face the lies of our pornified culture, their hearts are strengthened by a solid, loving, gracious relationship with us—their parents.

But as we construct these walls of truth, our blueprint must also include windows and doors looking to the outside world. These represent all the ways in which outside culture impacts the lives of our children, from the friends they find to the schools they attend and the social experiences they have.

In this chapter we will focus on just one of those openings to the outside world. In many children's lives, it is one of the biggest windows in the house, and for many children it is also the primary access point to sexual messaging.

It is the window of media consumption.

The Mass Media Giant

We are living at the dawn of such a huge revolution of information, on par with the invention of written languages and the invention of the printing press. It's no wonder, only decades into the digital media revolution, that we find it hard to get our bearings on exactly how media is positively or negatively impacting our lives.

In 1945, there were less than 10,000 TVs in the United States. That number soared to 52 million just 15 years later. Today, the average home has more TVs than it does people, and that doesn't even count other screens.

The last 70 years have served as a massive time of transition. We have been shifting from a print-based culture to an image-based culture. It is a shift from the printed word to the digital image, from the printing press to the computer. This shift to a saturation of images affects everything: from how we do politics to how we advertise, from how we educate to how we worship.

In a print-based culture, readers process information in a text at their own pace. But in an image-based, electronic-media culture, readers must digest billions of bite-sized images—billions of pictures painting a thousand words at break-neck speeds, and it seems all we can do is react. Still living in the dawn of this new culture, it's no wonder we haven't yet come to terms with its full impact.

Americans watch an average of five hours of TV a day. Despite the prevalence of portable screens that have emerged in the last decade, TV viewing has hardly declined. A 2015 study from Common Sense Media indicates teens use an average of nine hours of entertainment media per day—not including screen time for school or homework—and tweens (8-12 years old) use an average of six hours per day.²⁸

Of course, not all screen-time is created equal. Watching a mind-numbing episode of *Spongebob Squarepants* versus video chatting with Grandma across the country are two very different screen experiences. Being creative with media through blogging, video editing, or music creation is one thing. Passively bingeing on YouTube videos of flying cats is another.

Still, the Common Sense Media study shows that among teens, only 3% of their computer, tablet, or smartphone use is spent doing content creation (like writing or creating digital art or music). Most of the time (39%) on these devices is spent in passive consumption, such as watching TV shows and movies or listening to music. The rest of the time on these devices is spent using social media or video chatting (26%), or interactive consumption like playing games or browsing the Internet (25%).

Media time in the home can become like a runaway train. “Just five more minutes” can turn into 30 more. “Just one more show” turns into three more. And it's easy for parents to feel like victims to the media giant—their kids feel so drawn to it, they wonder if they can really set standards in an effective way.

Bad Company

Whoever walks with the wise become wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. – Proverbs 13:20

Bad company corrupts good character. – 1 Corinthians 15:33

Who spends the most time with your kids? This is one of the most important questions a parent can ask. As the above verses show, those we spend time with will rub off on us.

What is often overlooked, however, is that media is a type of company we keep. We don't merely spend time in someone's presence when they are in the same room with us. Music, television, and the Internet also introduce our kids to various characters—good and bad.

Knowing this doesn't necessarily give us a plan of action for how to deal with various kinds of media, but it does give us some overarching categories for how we think about the media our kids consume.

Bolting the Doors: Blocking the Bad Stuff

There's a time to equip kids to understand the media they consume, and then there's a time to protect them from it altogether. In our media-saturated lives, what are the doors parents need to close and lock?

Basic Online Privacy Rules

In the world of digital communication, you may trust your child implicitly (which may or may not be warranted), but you should absolutely *not* trust everyone else online.

It is important to instill in our kids a sense of caution toward digital strangers, and we do this through simple guidelines. The goal isn't to be alarmist—acting as if the bad guys are around every digital corner. This only makes parents lose their credibility. Instead, make simple privacy rules:

- » Don't give out your phone number, personal schedule, e-mail address, or location to people online.
- » Talk to mom or dad if you want to meet someone in person you've met online.
- » Be skeptical of e-mails or communications from unknown sources.
- » Don't give out online account passwords to anyone you know.
- » Don't download software or programs without first checking with your parents.

These should be firm rules in the home. While online interactions with friends and strangers alike is to be expected, children should be told, in no uncertain terms, not to extend trust to people they communicate with online.

Basic Online Sexual Rules

Another major concern parents need to be aware of is online sexual interactions. These come in several varieties.

First is the common problem of sexting—sending sexually explicit messages, images, or videos through text messaging, e-mail, or social media. Around 20% of 16-year-olds have received a sext, as have 30% of 17-year-olds.²⁹

Sexting is a concern for multiple reasons:

- Sexting is a predictor of sexual attitudes and behaviors. The most common reason why sexting is done is to be “fun” or “flirtatious.” Often sexts are sent to a boyfriend or girlfriend.³⁰ According to a study of high school students,

teens who have had sexual intercourse are five times more likely than virgins to be involved in sexting.³¹

- Sexting is a precursor to virtual slander. According to the MTV Digital Abuse survey, 18% of young people (age 14 to 24) said they have shared sexts sent to them with another person.³² No matter the original intentions of the sender, the recipients can do whatever they like with the images. Once an image is in someone else's hands, there may be no erasing it. This can lead to shattered reputations, bullying, and even "slut shaming."

Second, parents should be aware of the threat of online sexual predators. While there are many different kinds of predation scenarios, most of them boil down to adults (mostly men) preying upon common teenage vulnerabilities.

Most predation scenarios are not classic kidnapping stories—kids giving away too much information about their whereabouts online only to be snatched away while walking home from school. Rather, most predators "groom" their victims online in order to build a relationship of trust and dependency.

Dr. David Finkelhor from the Crimes Against Children Research Center, speaking before the Internet Caucus Advisory Committee, gives a typical predation case:

So for example, Jenna—this is a pretty typical case—a 13-year-old girl from a divorced family, frequented sex-oriented chat rooms, had the screen name, 'Evil Girl.' There she met a guy who, after a number of conversations, admitted he was 45. He flattered her, sent her gifts, jewelry. They talked about intimate things. And eventually, he drove across several states to meet her for sex on several occasions in motel rooms. When he was arrested in her company, she was reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement authorities.


Finkelhor's findings are based on a study of actual cases of predation from a random sample of more than 2,500 law enforcement agencies. In these cases, nearly two-thirds of victims communicated with their offender online for more than a month, forming feelings of genuine trust, friendship, or romance. Half of victims said they felt close with or were "in love" with their offender. Very few predators pretended not to be an adult online or were dishonest about their sexual intentions. In nearly three-quarters of the cases, victims met with their offender offline *more than once*, and in a quarter of the cases victims ran away to be with their offender.

These statistics tell us that the majority of predation cases are actually examples of statutory rape. Predators use psychological and emotional manipulation to prey on a teen's desire to be liked, affirmed, and told they are beautiful or special. These are criminal seductions that take advantage of teenage vulnerabilities.

The teens most at risk use the Internet to express an interest in sex or portray a sexy image. While it is normal for teens to be curious about sexuality and seek affirmation from others. This can become a secret obsession for some.

When it comes to both sexting and predation, the fact remains there will probably always be both adults and teen peers who seek to misuse others for sexual pleasure and power. What parents must do is engender wisdom into their children so they aren't easy targets. Teach children a healthy distrust of others online. This isn't pessimism—it is realism. If you are willing to be sexually or emotionally vulnerable online, there are people in the world who want to take advantage of that. They might spread your sexy photos for others to see, blackmail you with the photos later on, or use them as a means to try to bond with you. Anyone can be flattering online, but real love blossoms in face-to-face, honest relationships, not through manipulation.

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Computer And Mobile Parental Controls

When it comes to protecting our kids from the worst of the worst online, good parental controls can go a long way.

From the age children start to use Internet-connected devices until their mid-teens, parental controls can be very helpful. No matter what tools or technology are used, parents should be upfront about those controls with their children.

There are many ways to accomplish this:

1. Maintain all account passwords. No one should have a private e-mail or social media account. Parents should know all passwords.
2. Install Internet accountability and filtering on all your devices. Using good accountability and filtering software, like Covenant Eyes, when set up properly can block nearly all inadvertent exposure to inappropriate material online.

3. Use safe search on all web browsers. For every web browser installed on your devices (like Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Chrome, etc.) see if they have “safe search” features. While these are not fool-proof, they can provide another layer of protection.

Please visit the Resources page in the appendixes. There you will find partners who help inform and educate parents on the latest devices, parental controls, and apps.

[An Ounce of Prevention](#)

Parents, remember these safety features take time to set up properly, but your child’s innocence is worth the time and cost.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help. These device-level controls are critically important in creating an Internet safe home.

Opening the Drapes: Training Kids to Be Media Literate

When it comes to education, literacy is more than the ability to read and write. Literacy is about comprehension and critical thinking skills. The same is true for media literacy: applying critical thinking skills to the media we consume.

Media literacy can be taught starting at any age, but starting around the age of 7, children start to become ripe for more critical analysis of the media they see. Prior to this, the focus should be primarily on selecting good media *for* your kids. After this, the focus should start to be more on discussing media *with* your kids.

Media literacy is vital in our media-rich age for many reasons, but especially for parents who want to prepare kids well for our over-sexualized age. If our children aren’t used to thinking critically about *any* of the media they consume, then this will extend to sexually charged and objectifying media as well.

When kids lack media literacy skills, it is like death by a thousand paper cuts. Will one uncritical, passive viewing of a video or movie with poor values ruin your child’s life? No, of course not. But if our children develop a habit of merely passive media consumption, if they aren’t trained to think about media messages, they will eventually soak up the values they consume.

The Method of Media Literacy Training

The process of training your kids to be media literate is actually fairly simple, but it takes time and attention.

1. Co-Viewing – All media literacy training needs to start by viewing or listening to media *with* your children. This is, for most parents, the tallest hurdle to jump over because most of a child's media consumption typically happens alone or with siblings—not with parents. Parents often use TV or video games as electronic babysitters so they can do other things. But if our kids are going to learn to be media literate, they need a coach who will show them how.
2. Dialogue – Media literacy is learned through verbal conversation. Children need to listen to you articulate your thoughts about media, and they need to articulate their own thoughts. This trains them to be active, not passive media consumers. This not only exercises the pre-frontal cortex of their brains (where analysis, reflection, and synthesis take place), it trains them to ask the right questions about the media they see.

There's nothing wrong in and of itself with passive media consumption—getting lost in a good TV show, movie, or game. Rather, passive consumption needs to be balanced with active reflection. The goal of this time of co-viewing and dialogue about media is *deconstruction*: kids need to be able to break down what they are consuming and analyze it critically, reflecting on it.

Start small and simple. What is your child's favorite music group? Their favorite TV show? Web series? Movie? Video game? Start with what your child is already consuming and then carve out time when you will consume that media *with* them. Do a little homework first: look up the specific media in question online and see what you find: the lyrics to songs, the actors involved, the typical plot lines. Then just show an active interest in their media choices. Sit down with them to watch or listen. Do this several times—even if you aren't ready to start asking them critical questions.

Then, when you're ready, engage them in dialogue. Talk during commercial breaks or after the media has been consumed.

As you dialogue about the media your kids consume, three elements are helpful to remember: *creator*, *construction*, and *content*.

Content: What values are represented (and omitted) here?

All media promotes certain values—good and bad.

When it comes to media content, the goal is to help your children cultivate “critical appreciation” skills. It isn’t merely about blocking or pointing out what is bad, but also what is good about a media experience.

The problem is many Christian parents have only a surfacey understanding of discerning the content of media. Proactive parents might help their kids shun certain red letter offenders: blatant sex, drugs, gore, and foul language. But beyond this, analyzing the values promoted in media is a foreign concept to many.

Here is where an application of Christian ethics can be very helpful. There are many places in the Bible where certain virtues or certain vices are listed—short, handy lists that are meant to serve as a summary of the kind of lives Christians are meant to live and the kind of attitudes we are commanded to avoid (Exodus 20:1-21; Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; Galatians 5:16-26; Philippians 4:8; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

Using just one of these lists, we can create a list of critical questions for discussion. Printed below is Colossians 3:1-17. In this text, the apostle Paul is setting forth a vision of the Christian life. Already in his letter to the Colossians, he has tried to make clear that the Christian life is not first about insulating yourself, following rigid, moralistic regulations (Colossians 2:20-23); it is about centering your life on Christ (1:27; 2:12). With this new focus, Paul outlines what our new life is meant to look like (the virtues are in **bold**, the vices are *italicized*):

If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek the things that are above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things that are above**, *not on things that are on earth*. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry*. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: *anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk* from your mouth. Do not *lie* to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here *there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free*; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another** and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other**; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on **love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the *peace* of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be **thankful**. Let the **word of Christ** dwell in you richly, **teaching and admonishing one another** in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with **thankfulness** in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him.

General Questions (these help you to get to know the heart of your child):

- » How does this media make you feel?
- » Which characters do you enjoy the most?
- » Which characters do you envy the most?

Positive Questions:

- » Were there any characters that reminded you of Christ—either “savior” figures in the story or people who really showed the character of Christ to others (v.1)?
- » Was Jesus ever brought up? If so, what was said about Him? If not, why do you think He was left out (v.16)?
- » Which character showed the most sacrificial love to others (v.14)? How?
- » Which character seemed the most content and thankful even when things weren't going well (v.15-17)? How did he/she show it?
- » Which character showed the most compassion—desired to show pity and mercy to people who were hurting or in trouble (v.12)? How?
- » Which character showed real kindness (v.12)? How?
- » Which character was really humble—had a real modest opinion of himself/herself (v.12)? How can you tell?

- » Which character was really meek—very gentle with others when he/she could have been harsh (v.12)? In what way?
- » Which character showed real patience when things didn't go his/her way (v.12)?
- » Which character put up with the foolishness or sinfulness of others when he/she could have gotten frustrated (v.13)?
- » Which character showed real forgiveness when he/she was wronged (v.13)?
- » Which characters shared the most peaceful bond, despite their differences (v.15)?
- » Which character was an encouraging teacher and leader (v.16)? How?
- » Were there any parts that gave you a real sense of hope (v.1-2)? Why?
- » Were there any parts that reminded you of what our eternal home will be like (v.3-4)? Which ones?

Negative Questions:

- » According to this media, the most important thing in life is what (v.1-4)?
- » Were there any characters who were really greedy and obsessed with getting something they didn't have (v.5)? Why were they obsessed?
- » Were there any characters whose desires seemed out of control (v.5)? How can you tell?
- » Were there any characters that were easily given to lust or being lusted after (v.5)? Which ones?
- » Were there any situations that were meant to get the audience to lust (v.5)? How?
- » Did any of the characters sin sexually (v.5)? How?
- » Were there any words used that were inappropriate (v.8)? Which ones?

- » Were any of the characters angry for the wrong reasons (v.8)? Why?
- » Were any of the characters eager to hurt others physically (v.8)? What were they like?
- » Were any of the characters eager to hurt others emotionally (v.8)? What were they like?
- » Did you notice anyone using lies to get what they wanted (v.9)? How did they lie?
- » Did you notice any stereotypes of specific races or classes (v.11)? Where?

Obviously, you don't have time to ask all these questions after every TV show, video game, or movie. That isn't the point of the list. The point is to provide a handy, Bible-based reference list. As you co-view the media with your child, take note of any general questions, 2-3 positive questions, and 1-2 negative questions that might be good to ask.

The point of these questions is getting out of auto-pilot mode and assuming everything is of equal value and quality. The point is to transform passive consumers into active consumers.

Construction: What creative techniques are used?

One of the reasons why media is so hard to deconstruct is because music and images tap our emotions at a deeper level. When the soundtrack of a movie swells at just the right heartbreaking moment, you don't have to think about feeling sad or angry or delighted—you just do. When a well-timed joke is told, you don't have to tell yourself to laugh—you just do. These emotional responses are, in many ways, part of the purpose of good art. But if we want our kids to be media literate, we have to help them be aware of the techniques used by media to invoke our emotions.

There are a number of ways to do this by piggybacking on the media your kids already enjoy:

- **Relish in Good Storytelling** – All good stories contain similar elements: good character development, foreshadowing, conflict, resolution, plot twists, cliff-hangers, etc. After watching a good TV show or movie with your child, talk about just one or two of these elements that made the story good. How was the main conflict of the movie solved at the climax? How did the writers

foreshadow the climax of the whole story in small ways throughout the movie? What personal strengths and weaknesses did the characters have, and how did those character traits play a role in the climax of the story? Why did the writer have the actor say that? At first, just verbalize these things yourself, and as your child gets older, ask them to verbalize what they noticed.

- **Costumes and Makeup** – After watching a good movie or TV show, look up a picture of the actors or actresses with and without makeup on. Ask your child to notice the differences.
- **Music** – Music doesn't just help to set the mood. It helps us to interpret what's happening on the screen. See if you can find videos online of some of your child's favorite movies or TV shows with the soundtrack removed and show him or her how music completely changes the way the scene is meant to be understood. Play soundtracks at home and ask your kids how they think the music is meant to make them feel. Point out music in a movie or TV show as it plays: "Did you notice how the music came in just now? How did that change the mood?"
- **Digital Editing** – Show your child before and after digital enhancement photos of their favorite movies or TV shows—many films, video games, and shows have behind-the-scenes photos or videos you can find online. This allows your kids to see how special effects work and how they help to create the setting necessary for certain types of media.

Kids who understand there are creative techniques used that make media appealing are less likely to be taken in by our pornographic culture. When they see a racy advertisement, they will be more likely to remember that special lighting and editing was used to create the image. When they see romantic or sexual plot-lines, they will be able to pick them apart to see why they are so compelling—rather than just being compelled by them. As your child gets older, they will be able to understand how digital effects are used in photography to enhance a person's sex appeal and create a false standard of beauty.

Creator: Who authored this and why?

Every work of art has an author. The first step to helping kids think deeper about the media they consume is simply to help them think about the minds behind it.

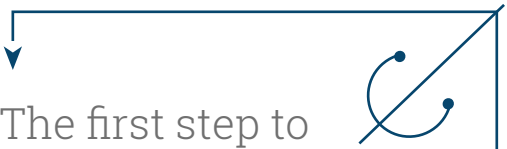
From the simplest of cartoons to the most thrilling live action movies to the most complex musical compositions, kids need to understand that all media messages are constructed: someone has to come up with these plot lines and characters. Our job as parents is to *help kids be curious* about the authors behind the media they consume.

There are a couple ways to do this:

- Use creator commentaries and behind-the-scenes videos. Many popular movies, TV shows, and even musical performances will release behind-the-scenes and the-making-of features. These can be very useful because kids usually already find them interesting in small doses. The youngest kids can learn what an animation studio is like or see the voice actors for their favorite puppets or cartoon characters. Older kids can learn from the screenwriters, producers, and directors who make their favorite movies or TV shows come to life. After they watch or listen to one of their favorite types of media, call them aside and show them a behind-the-scenes video you found on YouTube (previewing it first).
- Ask your kids what they know about the writers, actors, or voice actors who brings their favorite kinds of media to life. What do you know about the woman on the cover of that magazine? What do you know about that actress? Did you know the creators of _____ also created _____? Allow your kids time to look up information about the people behind the media creators they know and love—or find thought-provoking articles or videos about those people yourself and show them to your children to view.

As kids show more curiosity about the creators behind the media they consume, then it becomes easier to think about media having a purpose. Every piece of media has an intended purpose for an intended audience.

Kids who think more deeply about the people behind the media they consume are less likely to be taken in by sexual media when they see it. These sexual images don't just fall out of the sky into our TVs and computers. They are created by people trying to sell a story. The women and men behind sexy images that bombard our eyes are real people, not just objects to lust over.



The first step to helping kids think deeper about the media they consume is simply to help them think about the minds behind it.

Giving Kids the Keys: Helping Children Choose the Best

Media can be filled with great stories, great artistic expression, and great values. In the end, we want our children to not just consume the good media—we want them to *choose* the best media based on the values we teach them. They learn this by thinking critically about it.

Around the age of 7, as kids start to demonstrate more concrete, logical reasoning skills, allow them to make choices about the media they want to consume rather than simply dictate what media they consume—always with the goal of having them articulate why.

Ask your kids:

- » What kind of things do we watch that really help our mind and heart—the things that promote learning or remind us of positive things?
- » If you were the parent, what kind of media rules would you have? Why?

As your kids get a little older, if they want to spend time consuming media, get into the habit of rather than saying yes or no, instead say, “Convince me.” Ask them to articulate why a specific TV show, movie, or game benefits their life in some way. This is not to be glib, but to really hear what they have to say. It forces them to not treat media time as a default mode, but to see it as a privilege that impacts their hearts and minds.

Playing Catchup

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now. –
Chinese Proverb

Most parents never grew up in homes where parental controls were present or media literacy was taught. Many parents wish they could rewind the clock and start over with their kids.

But we don’t live in hypotheticals. We live in reality. And the reality is it's never too late to start teaching these things. Even if you feel like a rookie when it comes to these

things, talk to your kids about it. Lay your embarrassment on the table. Admit you haven't done everything you should have done, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't start now.

. . . .

Media are some of the major openings—the doors and windows—in our parental blueprint. We must know when to lock the doors (blocking and setting rules on inappropriate content and communications) and when to pull back the drapes (teaching our kids media literacy and discernment) in order to help them navigate life in a fallen world.

SPECIAL CALLOUT:

How to Handle Commercials

Commercials and product placement are everywhere, and children need to become media savvy when it comes to the advertisements.

When children are very young, it is best to keep them away from advertisements as much as possible. Many ads are written to appeal to children, and often young kids don't have the intellectual or emotional capacity to see advertisements for what they are. If TV or movies are consumed at all, use prerecorded shows or streaming services that don't include commercials. Be aware of commercials in online videos as well.

As kids get older, make children aware of the commercial agenda of most media. They need to know: someone makes this media because there's money to be made in it. The point of this isn't to decry "the evils" of capitalism or marketing, but to make children aware that the point of advertising it to get you to spend money.

Talk to them about how advertising works. Ads are created to sell a product or service. If they are convincing ads, people spend money. Then the companies that make the money turn around and make more ads to make more money. The cycle repeats itself over and over.

When advertisements pop up, get your kids to be active consumers of them. Ask your children...

» What made the commercial enjoyable?

- » Who was the intended audience for the ad?
- » Who do you think paid for that commercial to be made?
- » What are they trying to sell?
- » Did that ad make you want to know more about that product?
- » What about the ad made you want that product? What emotions did that advertisement evoke in you?
- » Does that ad make realistic claims?

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 7 - Diving In:



1. Take a look back over what we've covered so far. What has been the most significant realization for you? Is there something specific God has revealed to you during the past couple of weeks?

2. How do you manage screen time in your home? Does it feel like a runaway train at times? What kinds of rules have worked well for your family?

3. As you look at the list of privacy rules on page 77, which of these have been covered in conversations in your home and how did the conversation go?

4. When you were growing up, did your parents teach you about strangers? How does the conversation about strangers change with technology in the home and constantly in their hands?

5. How would you rate your knowledge of how parental controls work on each of these devices in your home?

► Computer/laptops: _____

► Tablets: _____

► Smartphones: _____

► Wireless router: _____

6. What accountability or filtering software do you currently use as a family? If you don't use anything, could Covenant Eyes be a possible solution?

7. "Parents, remember, while these safety features take time to set up properly, your child's innocence is worth the time and cost." What specific steps can you take this week to enhance the level of Internet safety in your home?

8. Wearing a bulletproof vest doesn't eliminate the possibility of being killed with a bullet. In the same way, implementing parental controls can't eliminate all risk of your child seeing inappropriate content. At some point, it will happen—maybe not in your home, but maybe at school, on the bus, or at a friend's house. Does your child know what to do if he/she ever sees porn?

9. Training media literacy with “co-viewing” and “dialogue” seems simple, but we know that implementing these steps can seem daunting. What are just two things you could do this week to increase your knowledge of where your kids spend time?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

Application: Please check out the “Tech Conversations: Stage by Stage” in Appendix B and give them a try! Be sure to share any ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called “Parenting the Internet Generation”. ←

Pray It Out: God our Father, at times we feel completely inadequate to have these conversations with our kids. But, we know that they’re necessary. Lord, open up doors or opportunity so that we can talk to our kids. Lord, you walk alongside us, patiently and lovingly, and we want to do the same with our children. At the same time, Lord, we beg for your Divine protection over the eyes, hearts, and minds of our children. Turn their eyes away from worthless things and may their eyes be fixed squarely on Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith. It’s in his name we pray. Amen!



CHAPTER EIGHT

The Roof of Protection: Supportive and Structured Parenting



Chapter 8

When correcting a child, the goal is to apply light, not heat. – Woodrow Wilson

It has been said that when it comes to good communication, it's not about *what* you say but *how* you say it. This is an obvious overstatement, but it helps us get to the heart of good parenting. Often it is not what we teach our kids but *how* we teach them—the spirit of our instruction—that makes our teaching effective.

A wise parenting style serves as a roof of protection for our kids. No matter what walls of formative teaching we construct or what windows of media usage are in place, the leaky roof of poor parenting makes the home a miserable place to live.

To be wise fathers and mothers in the digital age, we need to grapple with God's timeless commands to parents.

Good Parenting: Structure and Support

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
– Ephesians 6:1-4

In a few short phrases, the Apostle Paul brings together much of what Scripture says about family life. From here we can develop a framework for what godly parenting is meant to look like.

First, Paul tells children their primary responsibility to parents is to honor them, echoing the fifth of the Ten Commandments.

Second, Paul tells parents (especially fathers) their primary responsibilities are *discipline* and *instruction*.

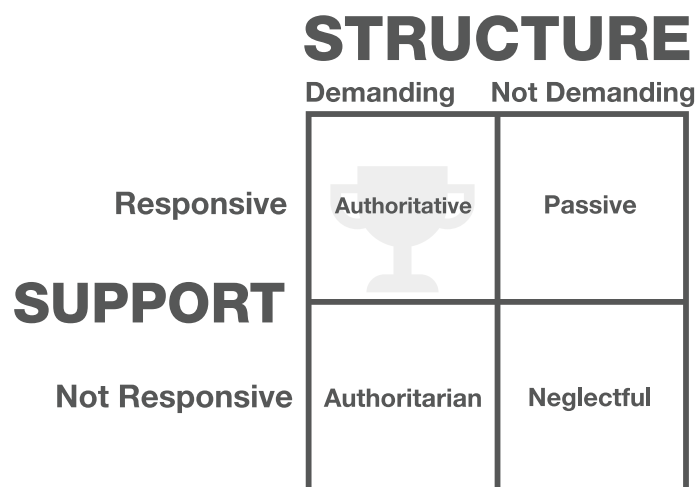
Discipline: In the original Greek language, “discipline” (paideia) was a loaded term—a term for the all-encompassing process of training someone to be a productive and principled member of society. It is a term that means more than education, more than tutoring in a useful skill, more than religious upbringing—it is about cultivating real *virtue* by establishing order and molding behavior.

Instruction: The term “instruction” (nouthesia) means to teach, reason with, exhort, or counsel. The root of the word means to *shape the mind*, improving not just *what* someone thinks but *how* someone thinks—his or her ability to reason.

These two activities encompass much of what the Bible says to parents about good parenting, providing an environment of *structure* and *support*.

- Discipline is all about *structure*. It involves managing one’s household well (1 Timothy 3:4,12) and training children not to be unruly (Titus 1:6) by warning (1 Corinthians 4:14), imploring (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12), correcting, and chastising (Hebrews 12:5-7).
- Instruction is all about *support*. It involves opening your heart wide to your children in love (2 Corinthians 6:13), providing for them (Luke 11:11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:14), engaging them in encouraging and comforting dialogue (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12), and modeling what real virtue looks like (1 Peter 5:1-4).

These two qualities of structure and support are also recognized by developmental psychologists as vital for raising healthy children. In the 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind labeled these qualities “parental demandingness” (structure) and “parental responsiveness” (support). Using these two qualities she and her disciples developed a grid for understanding parenting styles:



- Authoritarian parents demand a lot from their children but are not very warm. While some authoritarian parents are abusive, many are not—they are simply rigid and harsh.
- Permissive parents are very warm and responsive to their children but give very few demands. These parents are generally pushovers, affirming and accepting their children's impulses and desires and avoiding exercising control.
- Neglectful parents give their children neither structure nor support.
- Authoritative parents place high demands on their children but are also very responsive. They are firm not rigid, explaining the rationale behind household rules. They are loving not indulgent, affirming their children with warmth and tenderness.

This last style of parenting is where we should strive to be.

Avoiding the Extremes in the Minefield of Sin

Gracious fathers lead their sons through the minefield of sin. Indulgent fathers watch their sons wander off into the minefield. Legal fathers chase them there.
 – Douglas Wilson, *Father Hunger*

What does our parenting style have to do with training children to stand firm in a pornographic culture?

Permissive parents (all support, little structure) unwittingly train children to believe their every whim and desire is good. These parents baby their children, even into their teen years. These parents falsely believe the best way to nurture a child's character is through fewer rules and more familial love. While on the surface their approach appears loving and nurturing—especially compared to stricter parents—their children end up believing the most important thing in life is to be made comfortable, happy, and appreciated. These children learn the best way to get someone's attention is to be needy.

Then when sexual temptations come knocking, there's little in the child's character that would impel him or her to say no. If life is about my pleasure, if the world is meant

to revolve around me and cater to my whims, then pornography is the ultimate sexual fantasy world to fulfill that purpose.

In other words, indulgent parents raise foolish children who, without the training of discipline, are prone to *wander* into the minefield of sexual sin.

On the other end of the spectrum, authoritarian parents (all structure, little support) train children to seek refuge anywhere but at home. In an effort to get children to obey, they forget the basic humanity of their children—they forget that they are little people deserving of love, respect, and care like anyone created in the image of God. Obsessed with peak performance, these parents create an overly critical home devoid of affirmation and encouragement. Kids in these homes start to believe their parents don't care about them, that when they are hurt they need to keep to themselves or find some retreat away from the home.

Then when sexual temptations come along, these children find a new refuge to escape from the harsh realities of their lives. Porn is the perfect fantasy world to feel a parody of love, affirmation, and power—a risk-free place where he or she isn't criticized, judged, or a disappointment to others.

In other words, legalistic parents unwittingly *chase* their children into the minefield of sexual sin.

As far as we are able, parents ought to avoid these problems and instead give our children the structure and support God commands us to give them.

It isn't about "balance"—a little structure, a little support—but about being strong in both. In his book *Father Hunger*, Douglas Wilson talks about this both/and dynamic through the lens of parental authority. He says there are two kinds of authority parents need to exercise:

- The first is *institutional* authority. This is the authority parents have simply by virtue of being parents. It is why God commands children to honor their parents—even if their parents are jerks.
- The second is *personal* authority. This is the kind of authority parents have by taking responsibility, by showing love, attention, and affection. It is the kind of authority that is earned through personal devotion.

Institutional authority is like having your name on the checkbook. You are the one able to make withdrawals and deposits. You are the signatory on the account.

Personal authority is like having money in the bank. You can only get out of the account what you put in.

Some parents make the mistake of believing that they can't possibly be out of money because they still have checks. They demand obedience from their children by virtue of their authority as parents—and they are right, in so far as their institutional authority goes—but they give so little love and devotion, their children are exasperated.

Some parents make the opposite mistake: they think that if they just deposit tons of money into the account, they'll never have to write a check. They have a “just love on 'em” attitude that means they end up being pushovers.


In order to parent wisely, we need to exercise both kinds of authority in our kids' lives.

Ask Yourself the Hard Questions

Because sin is as much a reality in our own hearts as it is our children's hearts, every single one of us fails in these areas as parents. For some of us, our besetting sin is making an idol of what our kids think of us—wanting to present a loving image to them—and we fail to give our children the boundaries and structure they need. For some of us, our besetting sin is making an idol of our own agendas and authority, and in our strictness, we fail to take the time to pour ourselves out for our children in loving devotion. For some of us, our parenting style waffles between too strict and too indulgent. We are like a drunk man who falls off his horse on one side only to get back up and fall off the other.

What is the overall atmosphere of your home?

Is it a place where your kids have a clear sense of what you expect of them and what God expects of them? Or do you base your parenting decisions on the ever-changing emotions of your kids? Are you having regular conversations with your kids about wise and godly living as they mature? Or do you neglect being a spiritual mentor in your home? Do you stick to the boundaries and rules you set? Or do you regularly bribe your kids to behave better and give into your child just to avoid conflict? Do you coach your children through their problems, teaching them to solve conflicts? Or do you always come to the rescue by distracting them with treats? Do you



In order to parent wisely, we need to exercise both kinds of authority [institutional and personal] in the lives of our kids.

take time to correct your children, helping them see sin in their hearts? Or do you make excuses for your child's poor behavior?

Is your home a place where your kids feel affirmed, encouraged, and loved? Or is it a place of anger, distraction, busyness, and impatience? Are you the driving engine of joy in your home? Or are you often harsh or severe with your kids, calling it "exercising your authority"? Do you listen when your children have complaints or concerns? Or do you simply demand instant obedience, regardless of how they feel, ignoring their hearts? When you are around them, are your children predominantly aware of your love for them? Or are your children more aware of what they do wrong?

Leading the Way in Repentance

It's important to let our kids know we are aware of our inadequacies. Tell them. You have nothing to lose in honestly admitting to them that you didn't do everything correctly as a parent. – Stephen Arterburn and Jim Burns, *When Love is Not Enough*

The blended dynamic of strong structure with strong support might sound like an impossible tightrope to walk. This is why it is vital for us as parents to learn the habit of reconciling with our children when we wrong them.

Make this your goal every day: **In each phase of the day when I interact with my children, I will either be an example to them in my obedience to and love for God, or I will be an example in my repentance.**

If you feel you have been too permissive with your children, that you have been lacking in discipline, as you begin to correct their behavior more, apologize to them for not giving them the structure they needed earlier. If you catch yourself doting over your child just to get them to comply, stop what you're doing, and in a kind but firm way, say to them, "I've been learning a lot about how important it is for me to teach you what it means to please God and what it means to become mature. I've not done a very good job of that in the past, and I thank you for being patient with me as I learn to do it better in the future. Here are my expectations for you..."

If you feel you have been too authoritarian with your children, that you have been lacking in loving instruction and support, apologize when you see your authoritarian side come out. Do you blurt out non-empathetic comments ("It's not that bad; don't

be a baby”)? Are you obsessed with your authority as a parent (“How dare you say to your mother”)? Do you show verbal aggression through threats (“Don’t make me come up there”)? Grumbling? Bitter sarcasm? Scowling? The minute you see these tendencies rise in you, take a minute to calm yourself, and then ask your child for forgiveness: “I’m so sorry that I said/did that to you. I’m trying to learn not to be so demanding and angry, but I let my emotions get the best of me. I am sorry. Please forgive me.”

If at first we screw up more than we succeed, take delight in knowing you have ample opportunity to model repentance to your children.

Gracious Parenting Under the New Covenant

How do we work towards this dynamic of structure and support? To do this, we need to have homes grounded in a deep connection to God.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied the day when God would establish a new covenant of grace with God’s people:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jeremiah 31:31-34

Hundreds of years later, Jesus came to ratify this new covenant through His death on the cross (Matthew 26:28). This new covenant is the basis of our relationship with God, and as such, our homes need to breathe with the principles of this covenant.

Law: Teach your children we are under the law of Christ

God promises that, in the new covenant, He will put his law within us (Jeremiah 31:33).

In the New Testament, Christ is our lawgiver—we are called to live under “the law of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2), the commandments Christ taught while on Earth and through His inspired apostles. As such, it is critical for parents to live by what the New Testament teaches and to teach our children to do the same.

Develop a routine of Bible discussion with your kids the way Deuteronomy 6:7 commands. Develop a routine of opening the Bible with your kids to talk and pray. This doesn't need to be elaborate, complicated, or long. Start small and start simple. Read aloud. Discuss how it applies to you personally. Discuss how it applies to your kids. Share your heart and experiences with your kids. Pray together and for each other.

Then let this spill over into your moment-by-moment conversations and corrections.

One of the single greatest causes of permissive, overly-indulgent parenting is the belief that *the law is unloving*. Let the image of Christ the law-giver shatter that false belief. Christ, who was willing to endure the pain of cross because of His love for us, is the same Christ who gave us His commandments. If our children's greatest purpose in life is to glorify and enjoy God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and if His commandments are given for our good (Deuteronomy 6:24), then teaching our kids God's law is one of the most loving things we can do for them.

On the other hand, one of the single greatest causes of a harsh, legalistic, authoritarian parenting is taking our children's behavior too personally. When we see our children's sinful or irresponsible behavior as a personal affront to *our* own comfort, *our* own authority, or *our* own perfect-Christian-parent identity, then our discipline will reflect it. Instead, when we make the law of *Christ* our highest authority, we will see our children's behavior in light of that. We will then stop seeing our children as rebels in our own private kingdom and start empathizing with them as sinners who struggle to obey God—just as we do.

Of course, the New Testament covers a lot of ground, ethically speaking, so make Christ's law very simple for your kids. Christ summarized His law in what he called the two greatest commandments:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. – Mark 12:28-31

Love God. Love people. Every other command hangs on these two. Let these be the foundation of how you correct your children. When you see behaviors or attitudes that

indicate a lack of love for God or a lack of love for people, draw your children back to these two greatest commandments.

As your children get older, you will be able to show them more easily the thousands of ways these two laws apply to their lives.

Grace: Show your children the amazing grace of God

Under the new covenant of Christ, God promises, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). This over-abundance of grace for sin needs to be the pervasive environment of our homes.

Regardless of our children’s ages, their personal interest in God, or their receptiveness to the gospel, we should strive to model what God’s grace looks like. In our homes, when sin increases, grace should overflow all the more (Romans 5:20). Knowing God in Christ forgave us, we should be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving to our children (Ephesians 4:32).

What does God’s style of grace look like exactly? By His grace, when someone is united to Christ, they are adopted into His family (Ephesians 1:5-6). This means as Christians, we are not to relate to God as *orphans* looking to win His favor, nor are we to relate to God primarily as *servants* fearing His anger, but we are to relate to God as a *Father* who has already given us His favor in Christ (Romans 8:15). While on Earth, when Christ prayed to God, He addressed Him with the close term of endearment: “Abba”—papa, dear father (Mark 14:36). By His grace, Christ brings us *that* close to God, close enough we can call the Almighty God of the universe our Father: “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith...And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God” (Galatians 3:26, 4:6-7). Right now, in Christ, the Father views you with the same kind of love and tenderness He feels for His only begotten Son.

Does your heart breathe with this kind of tenderness for your children? Based on how you regularly talk to your kids, are they aware you are *for* them, not *against* them? Ask your kids: are they more aware of your affection for them, or are they more aware of your castigation and displeasure? Are you a joy to be around or are you taxing? When you open your mouth, do your kids expect encouragement or discouragement from you? When you correct your children, are you quick to forgive, or do you withhold your affection to induce more shame? Do your children know you love them because they are yours, or do they think you love them because of their performance?



When our love for our children serves as the basis for our conversations with them, it will overflow into our words and actions.

One of the reasons we become authoritarian as parents is because we forget—or we are never told—how amazingly beautiful God’s grace really is and what an honor it is to display that grace to our own children. We forget the extravagant love shown by the father in Jesus’ story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). When the son returns home after squandering the family’s wealth on hookers and riotous parties, covered in the stench of the pig sty, his father does not greet his son with a cold look or a stern gaze. Rather, seeing his son from a distance, this old man throws off social conventions and shamelessly runs to embrace his son, showering him with kisses and adorning his finger with the family ring. The son doesn’t even have time to blurt out his rehearsed apology before he knows without a doubt that his father loves him *as he is*, not as he should be.

On the other hand, one of the reasons why we fall into the trap of permissive parenting is because we forget that God’s discipline is a sign of his *love*. “Discipline” is an unpopular word because it is often associated with heavy-handed judgement, but in the Bible, discipline is a term of *love*. Jesus tells His church, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline” (Revelation 3:19). The author of Hebrews reminds us “the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:6). Even though discipline often seems unpleasant (v.11), God disciplines us for our good (v.10) because He loves us *as sons* (v.7). Wise parents know how to use their tone, their body language, their facial expressions, and their words to show their children that setting standards and doling out limits is a sign of their affection and care, not a sign of condemnation.

As parents, only when we sit by the hearth of God’s grace can we emanate that same warmth and affection to our kids.

When we make grace and affection the foundation of our relationship with our kids—just as it is the foundation of our relationship with our heavenly Father—then the goal of our discipline begins to change from coarse retribution to loving guidance. When our love for our children serves as the basis for our conversations with them, it will overflow in our words and actions. We will then make it a point to *connect* before we *correct*—because, above all, we want our kids to know that our correction flows from grace.

And in the end, this is the kind of parenting that bears the most fruit in the hearts of our kids. Even in our own relationship with God, it is not merely the knowledge

of God's wrath that leads to repentance, but knowledge of God's *kindness* (Romans 2:4). For every word you say to them about their sins, say ten times more about your affection for them.

Transformation: Teach your children to trust in God for change

Speaking of His law, God says in His new covenant, "I will write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33).

This was the great hope of the prophets of old: *internal transformation*. Moses looked forward to a day, after Israel had endured all of God's discipline for their disobedience, when God would remove their hard hearts so they might be able to love Him completely (Deuteronomy 30:6). Speaking through Ezekiel, God promised a day would come when He would give us a new heart and a new spirit: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezekiel 36:27).

This is the great hope we should have for our children: that the Spirit of the living God would renew their hearts so they would desire to obey God out of love.

As for our part, we ought to call our children to do the same thing God calls us to do: *trust*. We must have faith in God for His transforming power.

Before Christ was born, He was given the name Jesus,—a name that means "the Lord saves," because "he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And the salvation Jesus brings is not merely forgiveness. Jesus not only saves us from the *guilt* of sin by dying for us on the cross, but He saves us from the *grip* of sin by filling us with His life-changing Spirit.

As our children continually disobey God, we have thousands of opportunities to point them to the promise of the gospel:

I know how hard it is to obey, but there's hope for people like you and me. Every time we see sin in our hearts, this should be a reminder that we need to trust in Jesus to change us.

In addition, as we point our kids to God's transforming power, we should not simultaneously set up a rival system of motivation. Obviously, only God can write His law on the human heart, but as parents we should avoid competing with the Holy Spirit by using ungodly means like harsh anger, control, manipulation, bribes, or intimidation

to get our kids to behave. When our children only obey us to avoid punishment, they are less likely to develop the internal controls to fight temptation, less likely take responsibility for their actions, more likely to lie, less likely to have a generous spirit or develop empathy for others, and more likely to follow our poor lead—by using force to solve problems.

Instead we need to inspire and empower them.

We inspire our kids by reminding them that Christ makes it possible for us to become the people we should desire to be. When God promises to write His law on our hearts, it means we will be compelled by internal desires (not external compulsion) to be people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:16-24).

We empower our kids by giving them choices. A grace-centered home does not major on the word “no,” but the word “yes.” This is because God’s transforming grace doesn’t merely hem us in and cut off our options. It frees us to fulfill all the positive commands of Scripture: to love, serve, and be creative with our energies to do good in the world.

When the first human beings walked in the Eden, they were told not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This command came incased within breathtakingly huge blessings and responsibilities: “Have dominion!” “Fill the earth!” “You may surely eat from every other tree!” Eden was not a place of confinement for human beings, with walls blocking their access to the wide world. One tree was off limits, but the rest of the world was their playground to enjoy, their canvas to paint, and their garden to grow.

—> We empower our kids by giving them choices.

As much as we can, our attitudes should replicate this gracious atmosphere. Say yes more than you say no. This does not mean withholding limits or expectations. Rules need to be clear and firm. But even as we set expectations or correct misbehavior, we should do so by giving our kids options. Don’t just tell kids to stop playing with their food. Give kids the choice: either eat your food without playing in it or dismiss yourself from the table

and come back when you’re ready to eat. Empower them with the dignity of making a choice. Don’t just say no to more TV. Say yes to playing with toys, or playing outside, or playing with friends. Invest in your kids’ passions and encourage them to use those passions to the glory of God.

As we inspire and empower our kids, we give them a taste of what it's like when they are motivated by an internal drive to do good.

. . . .

Law. Grace. Transformation. This is what the new covenant promises to us. By carrying these principles into our parenting, we provide a home of true structure and support. This is the kind of parenting that provides our kids with the “internal software” they need to face the temptations of this world.

Next Steps:

If you are viewing the electronic version of this book, please click on one of the icons below in order to watch the chapter recap video. Or, if you're reading a printed version, please go to Facebook, search for the group, "Parenting the Internet Generation", and ask to join so that you can watch the videos there.



Chapter 8 - Diving in:



1. “When correcting a child, the goal is to apply light, not heat” (Woodrow Wilson). What is the difference between parenting with “light” vs. “heat”?

2. When you consider the differences between discipline and instruction, how would you describe the balance of these two activities in your parenting style? If you have multiple children, consider for a moment the balance in these activities for each of your children. Do you treat them differently? If so, for what reasons?

3. Go back and reread the definitions of each of the parenting styles on page 98. Then go to the “Support” and “Structure” grid on page 97 and plot where your parenting style would land. If you’re in a group, talk a bit about these.

4. Think back for a moment on how you were parented, and then go back to the “Support” and “Structure” grid and plot where your parents’ parenting style would land. How did this parenting style shape who you are today?

5. There are a lot of hard questions on pages 100-101. As you consider them, there might be one that really hits “home”. Which one is that? Can you pray specifically about that question right now, seeking God’s guidance on what needs to happen next?

6. Have you been able to use any of the conversation starters from the appendices during the past couple of weeks?

Verse to Claim and Remember: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

Pray It Out: God our Father, I am so thankful for Your abundant grace. I am an imperfect parent seeking to point my children into relationship with a perfect Savior. I claim this statement: “In each phase of the day, when I interact with my children, I will either be an example to them in my obedience and love for You, or I will be an example in my repentance.” Father, there will be days when I don’t feel like living this prayer out, and so I’m coming to you for help. Thank you for strength in my weakness. In Jesus I pray, amen!





CHAPTER NINE

The Foundation: The Security of the Gospel of Grace



Chapter 9

Despite all the best parenting in the world, we will not protect our children from sin. Sin is part of who they are as children of Adam.

Their greatest need in life is not good parents, a good understanding of sex, or a good sexual track record—their greatest need in life is Jesus.

This is why our primary parenting task should *not* be to keep them from sexual sin or push them toward sexual wholeness. At best, these goals are merely secondary. Our primary goal should be to help them understand and embrace the gospel of Christ, which is their only hope in a world full of sin.

What is “the Gospel”?

In many Bible texts, the meaning of “the gospel” is largely assumed, but certain texts help us define what the term actually meant to Jesus and His apostles.

Joyful News

The word itself in the Greek language means joyful or good news. The term was used for an official announcement reporting a great victory—often declared aloud by a crier. A gospel message was one of celebration and joy because something extraordinary and wonderful had happened.

The King Has Arrived

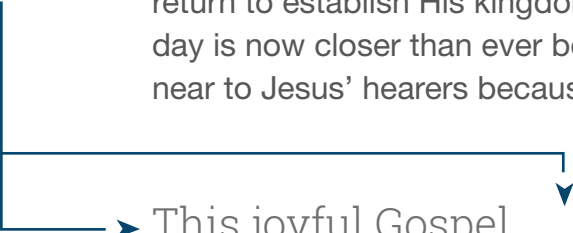
At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus’ initial message is described this way: “Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

Here, Jesus clearly links the coming of “the kingdom of God” to the gospel: the arrival of the kingdom *is* the good news. When the Bible talks about God’s “kingdom,” broadly speaking it means God’s “kingship,” His right to rule over the world. The prophets

foresaw a day when God's kingly rule of the world would break in, demolishing sin and bringing blessing to God's people. This is what Jesus' gospel declared: the kingdom of God was near.

But in what way is the kingdom near? After all, nearly 2000 years has passed since Jesus came, and the world is still full of sin.

There are at least two ways in which the kingdom is near. First, the fully inaugurated kingdom of God is closer than it was before: a future day is coming when Jesus will return to establish His kingdom on the Earth in a visible way (Luke 19:11-12), and that day is now closer than ever before (Romans 13:11). Second, the kingdom of God was near to Jesus' hearers because the great King had arrived!



➤ This joyful Gospel news is not just that the great King has come but that this great King has accomplished something in His coming.

This is what the angels announced at Jesus' birth: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news [i.e. gospel] of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The long-awaited Messiah, the heir to David's throne, the Lord of the world, had arrived.

Paul echoes this definition in his great theological treatise to the church at Rome: "The gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David" (Romans 1:1-3). The prophetic

promises to David had finally come true: the rightful King had come, and this King was none other than the Son of God.

This King Has Died for Our Sins

This joyful Gospel news is not just that the great King has come but that this great King has accomplished something in His coming. Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians another summary of the gospel message: "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1,3). The Christ—the messianic Son of David—fulfilled what the Scriptures said of Him by dying on a cross for our sins.

By His death, Jesus said He ratified what the prophet Jeremiah called "the new covenant" (Luke 22:20): "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no

more” (Jeremiah 31:34). His death was the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

This King Has Risen from the Dead

In his summary of the gospel message, Paul doesn’t stop at the story of Jesus’ death:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. – 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Also in accordance with prophecies about Him, the great King has risen from the grave and was seen by hundreds of witnesses.

The Resurrection Declares Him to Be the Son of God.

Paul says part of “the gospel of God” is that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:1,4). We can trust He is who He said He is because of His resurrection.

The Resurrection Confirms His Death Was Not in Vain.

Paul says Christians are those “who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:24-25). Because of Christ's death, those who believe in Him are “justified,” or declared holy, in God’s sight. He was raised from the death to demonstrate this to us: His death was not in vain. In His death, Christ paid the necessary sacrifice for total forgiveness.

The Resurrection Promises Eternal Life and the Rejuvenation of the World.

When the kingdom of God fully arrives, the prophets looked forward to a day when God’s people would rise from their graves and death and decay would be vanquished from the world. When Jesus rose from the dead, He was “the firstfruits” of every resurrection to come (1 Corinthians 15:20). When he returns, he will destroy death forever (v.26).

This is why Jesus' ministry was full of great miracles of deliverance: they were signs and foretastes of the presence of God's kingdom—a world without blindness, disease, oppression, or death (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:18-19).

This King Promises Salvation to All Who Believe.

On the basis of who Christ is and what He has done, all who believe in Him are promised salvation from the guilt and grip of sin. Paul calls the gospel “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13). While the *experience* of salvation is the *result* of believing the gospel, the gospel message itself includes the promise of salvation to all who believe.

Salvation means deliverance from the *guilt* of sin, thus bringing about forgiveness, peace with our Creator. This is why Peter and Paul call the gospel “the gospel of peace” (Acts 10:36; Ephesians 6:15). Salvation also means deliverance from the *grip* of sin and all its effects—some day the very presence of sin will be removed. This is why Paul says “life and immortality” have been brought to light “through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10)—the gospel promises eternal, incorruptible life.

In Summary...

In summary, the gospel of God is this: Rejoice and be glad! God has sent to us His Son, the promised King of the world, the heir to David's throne, Jesus the Messiah. This King has died for our sins, just as the Scriptures foretold. This King God has also raised from the dead, just as the Scriptures foretold. Because of what this King has done, we can be saved from the guilt of sin and finally have peace with God forever. We can be saved from the grip of sin, growing our love for God, and eventually freedom from all traces of sin forever.

Grace to Children

A performance-oriented home is centered on what kids do, but a gospel-grounded home is all about what Christ has done. When the gospel becomes central to our parenting, each act of disobedience from our kids can become an opportunity for us to point our children to Jesus.

Too often, when parenting becomes performance-oriented, we act as if the greatest purpose in a child's life is to modify their feelings or behavior. But when our parenting

is grace-oriented, we understand that even our children's best behavior is nothing compared to what God has accomplished for us in Christ. Of course we want to raise "good kids," but our primary goal should be to raise kids who understand only Christ is truly good.

See the difference the gospel makes when it becomes the foundation for our four "walls" of truth...

Understanding Self-Identity – As our children grow in their understanding of what it means to be created in God's image, there will be many times when they fall short of this high calling. They will be tempted to define their worth by society's skin-deep standards or they will fall woefully short of the character and holiness of God. But when this wall of truth is built on the foundation of the gospel, our children will know Christ alone is the true image of God. United to Him, they have peace with God despite all our shortcomings. United to Him, they are put on a trajectory towards fulfilling their destiny as God's image-bearers.

Understanding Sexual Integrity – As our children grow to understand what sexual desire is for, they will come up against failure time and time again. Times will come when they will choose the cheap thrill of lust over the wholesomeness of a life-giving act, or they will choose the unnatural high of fantasy to the rich pleasure of marital sex, or they will choose oneness with a pornographic image over oneness with a person. But when this wall of truth is built on the gospel, they will see their sex drive not as a curse but as a good drive that has been warped by sin. They will look to Christ to transform it back to what it needs to be.

Understanding the Sinful Impulse – As children grow in their understanding of sin, they will know both biblical and experientially that sin is far more than a judgment mistake. It is a frenzied and idolatrous grasp for pleasure, possessions, and power. There will be times they become easily ruled by their appetites or a covetous desire or a desire to be their own god, making their own rules. But when this wall is erected on the foundation of the gospel, they will not be in despair over their sin but have hope knowing God's grace is bigger than their guilt. They will look to Christ who alone has the power to resurrect holy desires in their dead hearts.

Understanding Sexual Shame – As children grow in their understanding of shame—especially sexual shame—instead of merely hiding from you and from God, blaming others for their wrongdoings, or covering their sin with more performance, founded on the Gospel, they can relish in the fact that Jesus covers their shame.

Grace to Parents

In the face of a sinful world and our children's sinful hearts, parents might feel like the deck is stacked against them. But when we also consider the sin in our own hearts, it is easy to feel like parenting is a losing game.

This is why our parenting needs to be founded on the good news. You will fail a thousand times as a parent, but God's grace is bigger than all of our failures.

You will fail a thousand times as a parent, but God's grace is bigger than all of our failures.



There will be days when you look back and see nothing but authoritarian grasps to control your kids—yelling, shaming, guilt, and taking every disobedient act as a personal attack. There will be other days when you look back and see nothing but giving into your child's sinful whims to keep the peace.

No matter how you fall short as a parent, if our identity as a parent is grounded on a flawless parenting track record, we will quickly be driven to hyper-perfectionism, despair, or apathy. But if our parenting is grounded on the gospel of grace, then we know God's primary expectation of us is not our performance as a parent but our dependence on Him.

As parents, nothing is more important than our belief in the gospel of grace. Nothing. For in the Gospel, we find the joy needed to parent well.

When asked to summarize the Gospel, the late minister Jack Miller used to say, "Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, and you're more loved than you ever dared hope."

Next Steps:

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Chapter 9 - Diving In:



1. “Their greatest need in life is not good parents, a good understanding of sex, or a good sexual track record. Their greatest need in life is Jesus.” What things other than Jesus does our culture try to elevate as the “greatest” needs for kids today?

2. Many Christians are not able to explain “the Gospel.” What about you? Have you ever practiced a simple explanation? If not, maybe do an Internet search for “The Roman Road” or “The Color Gospel.”

3. When did you first truly understand the beauty of the Gospel? What changed in your life when this happened?

4. Here's a statement to think about: "Parents are the primary disciplers of their children." Is this true in your home? In what ways have you delegated discipleship of your children to others? In what ways can you begin to live out that statement starting today?

5. *Parenting the Internet Generation* isn't a formula or prescription that applies to every family the same way. Have you tried anything over the past few weeks that has worked well? What about things that haven't worked? What conversations do you hope to have with your children soon?

Application: Many parents just don't know where to begin when it comes to sharing the Gospel with their kids. Try this simple phrase with your preschool or elementary school aged children, "God made you. God loves you. God is very pleased with you." Say it every night and make them repeat it back. There are varying opinions about how the "accept Jesus into your heart" moment is supposed to look like, but don't let that stop you from talking about Jesus and asking them "Do you love Jesus?" often. At some point, whether as a young person, teen, or adult, confessing faith in Jesus Christ is important, but it's not something to force so you can check it off the list. The Bible does tell us, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). During meal times, food times, and bedtimes, look for a chance to ask "Have you ever told

Jesus that you believe in Him? That you need Him? That you are thankful for forgiveness?” The Holy Spirit will open a door, and when it does, don’t hesitate. Some churches have specific classes for tweens and teens, maybe a “profession of faith” or “confirmation” class. These can be important turning points in the lives of young people as they discover faith with their peers. In the midst of a busy family calendar, make time for this. Be sure to share any other ideas that you might have through the closed Facebook group called "Parenting the Internet Generation."

Verse to Claim and Remember: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1:15 (ESV)

Pray It Out: God our Father, in a sin-soaked world, it’s easy to feel like we just don’t stand a chance in raising our kids in a Gospel-centered way. Would you pour out your unending, always and forever love and grace on our family right now? We cannot take our kids to a place that we aren’t already familiar with. In this way, God would you increase our faith? Would you increase our resolve to live obediently? Would you increase our desire to disciple our kids? Lord, may we recognize the open windows when our kids are most receptive to hearing this Good News. And, may we have the courage to share. In Jesus name, Amen!



Introduction to Appendices

Sometimes, saying the right things is hard, especially related to awkward topics like sexuality, Snapchat and sexting. We want to help! Appendices A and B are intended to be helpful conversation guides for hard topics. They can be printed individually for whatever stage of life you are in, so that you can practice and be prepared when your kids are ready. Be sure to capitalize on three key “captive” moments during the day —table time, car time, and bedtime. We think these are three incredible times to have awesome conversations. Appendix C is a list of helpful resources for specific topics we know parents wonder about. You can do it!



APPENDIX A

Sex Ed: Stage by Stage



» Sex Ed Conversations for 0-5

Pornography is a sad parody of sexuality. In order to raise up children to combat its temptations, we need to equip our children with an understanding of the divine purposes of sex.

We don't do this by keeping our children in the dark about sex, but by instructing them about it—using words they can understand and in doses they can digest. While longer, more formative discussions about sex can be very helpful, the best sex education they can receive will be in the context of real life situations—30 seconds here, a minute there, responding to the normal rhythms of life.

In all of these stages, the themes of *life*, *pleasure*, and *oneness* need to be recurring themes in our sex education.

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From birth to age 5, our children's primary social environment is the home. As they grow, their ability to communicate and imagine also grows, which means they can begin to learn some of the basic building blocks of human sexuality.

But remember, children this age are also not completely logical, so communication about various concepts is best kept brief, literal, and simple.

- » Teach children they have a Creator. Children need to learn they have a Creator, that this Creator is good and powerful. As such, their bodies are good—they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).
- » Teach children the proper names for body parts. When children grow up knowing the words “penis” and “vagina” as simply normal words, this makes later conversations about these body parts less awkward. Don't say a baby grows in a mommy's belly without explaining the baby is in the uterus, not her stomach—mommy doesn't swallow the baby. Remember, kids this age are very literal.
- » Celebrate life. When you see a pregnant woman, celebrate the new life in her womb. Remind children that each person is created in the image of God.

- » Model for children the pleasure and oneness of a committed marriage. From a young age, children of married parents should be witness to the love and tenderness mom and dad share through many languages of love. Ideally, children should see the love their parents share. Don't hide physical forms of affection from them, e.g., a hug or a kiss.
- » Stress the importance of privacy and modesty. Their bodies are special, designed by God as a good thing, but their private parts are meant to be kept private. Many children engage in genital show-and-tell at this age (“I’ll show you mine if you show me yours”). Don’t freak out about this. Simply be firm and kind, reminding your child that private parts are special and shouldn’t be exposed for any reason to just anyone.
- » For more curious kids, if asked about how babies are made, avoid mythologies (like storks) and misleading euphemisms (“the mommy and the daddy sleep together” or “the mommy and the daddy have a special kind of hug”). These are either lies, unclear, or suggest pregnancy is just a random event. Just be straightforward: mommies have a very tiny egg in their bodies and daddies have sperm; if these come together at the right time, they can form a baby inside the mommy’s body. Often, this is enough information to satisfy curiosity.
- » Develop a habit of formative teaching. This doesn’t need to be elaborate or long—just something where you get into a routine of opening the Scriptures, talking about it, and praying aloud with and for your child. This might sound like a small thing and perhaps unrelated to the subject of sex, but it will go a long way to establish yourself, the parent, as the spiritual authority in the home, laying the groundwork for spiritual conversations about sex later on.



➤ Sex Ed Conversations for 6-9

Pornography is a sad parody of sexuality. In order to raise up children to combat its temptations, we need to equip our children with an understanding of the divine purposes of sex.

We don't do this by keeping our children in the dark about sex, but by instructing them about it—using words they can understand and in doses they can digest. While longer, more formative discussions about sex can be very helpful, the best sex education they can receive will be in the context of real life situations—30 seconds here, a minute there, responding to the normal rhythms of life.

In all of these stages, the themes of *life*, *pleasure*, and *oneness* need to be recurring themes in our sex education.

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During this time, a child's intellectual capabilities begin to change. Kids in this age range tend to think more logically and can more easily see things from multiple perspectives (rather than just their own). Also, this is the age when most children will begin more frequent and regular interactions with their peers through school and other social activities. Behavioral scientists have noted it is during this time that peer relationships become more valuable to children than before, and children also tend to develop more same-sex friendships and show a strong interest in gender roles.

In addition to continuing previous norms set during 0-5, this age range can also include other discussions:

- » Talk about God's design for marriage and the family. This is a great time to introduce children to the concept of married couples being "one flesh"—a whole-life oneness between husband and wife. Emphasize to children the beauty of marriage, the love it is meant to communicate, and how this love is meant to overflow in physical affection and tenderness.
- » Talk about sexual intercourse. Each child is different, but if a parent believes his or her child is intellectually mature enough, there is nothing wrong with offering a simple, straightforward explanation to what sexual intercourse is. *The Complete Guide to Baby & Child Care*, published by Focus on the Family, states:

When you get more specific about the process that brings the man's sperm and the woman's egg together, remember to stress context: A man and woman who are married and love each other very much have a special time, just for the two of them, when they get very close to each other—in fact, so close that the man inserts his penis into the woman's vagina. After a while he releases his sperm inside her. Younger children will usually find this idea rather strange, and you can stress that when the man and woman love each other very much, they feel very good while this is going on.

You will need to supply a name for this activity: *Having sex* is probably the most direct without being vulgar; *making love* is a little vague; and *sexual intercourse* is rather clinical, although children should know that this is the term they'll be hearing later in life. Throughout, stress how good sex is—provided it occurs at the right time, with the right person and in the context of marriage.

- » Talk about sexual media. While children are out and about, interacting with the world at-large, sexual media will likely show up—on television, the Internet, billboards, advertisements, etc. Use these moments as opportunities to talk about the importance of guarding our eyes. Tell your child, “The people we see here are showing off parts of their body that are meant to attract their husband or wife, not meant for all of us to see.” Using these more publicly visible examples of sexual media, be sure to warn your child about the existence of pornography—and yes, using the word “pornography” is just fine. “Sometimes the images you see on the TV or the computer are even worse than these, when the people are totally naked and touching each other, this is called pornography. When you see this, just look away, turn off the device if you can, and then tell me about it so we can help protect you from it in the future.”
- » Talk about sexual abuse and good-touch vs. bad-touch. As a child's social environment expands, the possibilities of sexual abuse also increase. This is the age range when sexual abuse is most likely to begin so it is important for parents to tell children that no one should touch their private parts except for approved caregivers, guardians, and doctors.

- » Talk about sexual development. Depending on the changes your child's body is going through, and the changes their peers are seeing, it is important to give kids adequate information about the changes they will see: changes in body composition, growth of genitals, breasts, pubic hair, voice changes, muscular growth, etc. Take time to educate your children as you see them and their peers undergoing these transitions. Be straightforward and positive about these changes because they are signs their bodies are becoming more mature.





➤ Sex Ed Conversations for 10-12

Pornography is a sad parody of sexuality. In order to raise up children to combat its temptations, we need to equip our children with an understanding of the divine purposes of sex.

We don't do this by keeping our children in the dark about sex, but by instructing them about it—using words they can understand and in doses they can digest. While longer, more formative discussions about sex can be very helpful, the best sex education they can receive will be in the context of real life situations—30 seconds here, a minute there, responding to the normal rhythms of life.

In all of these stages, the themes of *life*, *pleasure*, and *oneness* need to be recurring themes in our sex education.

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Age 10 is the average age for a child's first sense of sexual attraction. Generally, sexual fantasies don't start registering until a year or two later. For many boys, this is the age when testicular growth will begin and pubic hair will start to show. For most girls, breast development may be well underway. For both boys and girls, the age of 10 is when the adrenal glands undergo significant maturation, triggering greater sexual development.

Also, around the age of 11, children begin to think more abstractly and "scientifically" about the world around them, making it easier to communicate ideas like "love" or "goodness."

In addition to continued conversations from the previous stages, the age of 10 to 12 is a ripe time to bring up other sexual concepts:

- » Talk about the temptation to lust. "Lust" can be simply defined as a strong sexual craving for someone God has forbidden. The term "lust," in the Bible, is connected to the idea of "coveting." The force of this term is not so much focused on what or who is desired (a desire to have sex or a sexual attraction to someone specifically), as much as it is focused on the *strength* of the desire. Lust is sexual *overdrive* that trumps other desires and concerns. This is an important distinction to make for pre-teens: sexual attraction or falling in love are not lust. Lust is, instead, a

desire nurtured through fantasy into an overdrive—an obsessive craving. In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus connects both the fifth commandment (about adultery) and the tenth commandment (about coveting), giving His disciples a glimpse at the heart of God’s law: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

- » Talk about the temptation to obsess over body image. The temptation to obsess over one’s physique and physical attractiveness is not a new phenomenon, but never before has obsession over physical beauty been so commercialized. Parents need to strike a balance: teaching girls and boys that their bodies are good, created by a good God, but emphasizing the beauty of godly character.





➤ Sex Ed Conversations for 13+

Pornography is a sad parody of sexuality. In order to raise up children to combat its temptations, we need to equip our children with an understanding of the divine purposes of sex.

We don't do this by keeping our children in the dark about sex, but by instructing them about it—using words they can understand and in doses they can digest. While longer, more formative discussions about sex can be very helpful, the best sex education they can receive will be in the context of real life situations—30 seconds here, a minute there, responding to the normal rhythms of life.

In all of these stages, the themes of *life*, *pleasure*, and *oneness* need to be recurring themes in our sex education.

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At this point, with sexual development underway, we must begin treating teens as the budding adults they are. This means honest and open conversations about the themes of life, pleasure, and oneness of human sexuality. This is the perfect time to begin drawing more explicit contrasts between the messages found in sexual media vs. the how the Bible speaks about sex.

- » Biblical sex is life-giving; porn portrays sex as a selfish act. It trains us to love the cheap thrill of fantasy over sex as a life-giving act.
- » Biblical sex delivers rich pleasure; porn offers only shallow pleasure. Not only does porn exhaust our sexual drive, but it conditions us to prefer novelty and pixels over a deep and committed sexual relationship.
- » Biblical sex is an expression of oneness between two, committed, married adults; porn portrays sex as casual and only bonds viewers to a solo experience.

In making these contrasts, the goal is not lecture but dialogue. This can easily be done by simply using other forms of sexual media as a catalyst for conversation. “Notice how that ad/movie/show portrays relationships/sex. Why is the Bible’s view of sex so much better?”

Additionally, in making these contrasts, another goal is transparency. Parents and guardians should be honest and open about their own past (and present) when it comes to sexual temptations. Please know that parents who are addicted to pornography often have children who struggle. If you find yourself in this situation, please see our resources page for help.





APPENDIX B

Tech Conversations: Stage by Stage



Tech Conversations: Preschool

Key Phrase: Everything that we do online, we do together.

This is the theme of Internet training during the pre-school stage. It plants this seed early so that it's no surprise when mom goes through text messages at age 12. Don't force it—look for natural, 30-second windows. “Sprinkle” these conversations often, instead of looking for that 2-hour block where you can expound on the horrors of technology. (We don't want you to do that anyway!) Capitalize on three key “captive” moments during the day: table time, car time, and bedtime. It's not too early to start having age-appropriate conversations about what they're watching, and what they might bump into. We want to help you get the conversation started with some ideas below. You can do it!

Things to say:

“There are some weird things on the Internet, and I want to protect you because I love you. That's why you never use the [tablet, etc.] without permission from mom or dad.”

“We've talked about strangers, and that we never talk to strangers. The same thing is true on the Internet. If someone ever talks to you that seems like a stranger, you come tell mom or dad about it right away, ok?”

“What are you watching? Let's watch it together!” (Start early with the idea that mom and dad are involved in their Internet usage.)

“If you ever see anything on the tablet that seems weird or scary, just come let me know, ok?”

A special note about screen time. How much is too much? This is a common question from parents with young kids. The American Academy of Pediatrics periodically publishes thoughts on this topic, but it is very subjective. Too much of anything can create an unhealthy dependence. Parents simply need to decide what the limit is, and stick to it. Certain devices come with tools that can help, including Kindle's FreeTime App, or the timer feature on iOS (iPad, iPod, iPhone). See the Resources page for links to websites that can help with device functionality.

At Covenant Eyes, we believe parents who are observant, engaged and informed often have kids who learn how to use technology well. Not sure how to explain accountability to your family? Don't worry, we've thought of that. Check out Accountable Kids: Explaining Covenant Eyes to your Family here:

<http://www.covenanteyes.com/accountable-kids/>



Tech Conversations: Elementary School

Key Phrase: The Internet is an awesome thing, if you use it awesomely.

That might not be a word you use often, but kids get it. Don't force it—look for natural, 30-second windows. “Sprinkle” these conversations often, instead of looking for that 2-hour block where you can expound on the horrors of technology. (We don't want you to do that anyway!) Capitalize on three key “captive” moments during the day; table time, car time, and bedtime. We want them to use the web, but with a healthy amount of respect. This probably means diving into awkward conversations—conversations that your parents probably never touched. But, the Internet has changed the game. Passive parenting is no longer an option! Yes, talk about porn. Yes, talk about predators. Yes, talk about bullies. This is possible with age-appropriate language. Set clear boundaries and expectations. We want to help you get the conversation started with some ideas below. You can do it!

Things to say:

“I love the Internet, and I want you to love it too. Let's venture through the Internet together, ok?”

“There are so many ways we can glorify God with how we use technology. Can you think of a few?”

“Have you ever seen anything on Google that you weren't sure about? You know, you can always talk to me about that.”

“You know we have fun together taking selfies and family pictures with mom's phone. But, I want you to know that sometimes people share bad pictures or videos that show people without much clothing on. Have you ever seen anything like that? If you ever saw a bad picture, just put it down, walk away, and tell me about it as soon as you can, ok? I'll never be mad you told me.”

“There are over 1 billion websites. That's a HUGE number! Because it's so big, I want to help you use the Internet well. Pretty much everything you do online, let's do it together, ok?”

“What devices do most of your friends have?”

“Do any of your friends have social media? What do you think about that? The people

who created social media say age 13 is the right time to have an account. What do you think?”

“There are no secrets with technology, so for now, we share the passwords for our devices. As you get older, and earn more trust, you’ll have more freedom, but for now we share openly.”

“If anyone ever asks you to keep a secret online, that person might not be your friend. If that ever happens, please come tell me or [another designated person] right away, ok?”

“Your mom and I think that it’s a good idea to show each other the websites we visit, just to make sure we’re making good decisions. This is a great idea for all of us. Our entire family uses Covenant Eyes to help us avoid online issues.”

Things not to say:

“Technology is scary. I’m going to do everything I can to keep you away from it.”

“I just don’t have time to figure this stuff out, so don’t bother me with it.”

“I didn’t need this stuff growing up, so you don’t either.”

A special note about screen time. How much is too much? This is a common question from parents. The American Academy of Pediatrics periodically publishes thoughts on this topic, but it is very subjective. Too much of anything can create an unhealthy dependence. Parents simply need to decide what the limit is, and stick to it. Certain devices come with tools that can help, including Kindle's FreeTime App, or the timer feature on iOS (iPad, iPod, iPhone). See the Resources page for links to websites that can help with device functionality.

At Covenant Eyes, we believe parents who are observant, engaged and informed often have kids who learn how to use technology well. Not sure how to explain accountability to your family? Don’t worry, we’ve thought of that. Check out Accountable Kids: Explaining Covenant Eyes to your Family here:

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Tech Conversations: Middle School (Junior High)

Key Phrase: How I use the Internet can have a massive impact on my life.

Don't force it—look for natural, 30-second windows. “Sprinkle” these conversations often, instead of looking for that 2-hour block where you can expound on the horrors of technology. (We don't want you to do that anyway!) Capitalize on three key “captive” moments during the day: table time, car time, and bedtime. Porn, bullies and predators have been around for years. None of that is new. But the Internet has made these things accessible in a way that didn't exist when you were young. Does your junior high son or daughter know that the “www” in front of everything they do online stands for “world-wide web”? Yes, the entire world! The Internet never forgets. Everything we post or type leaves a digital footprint that can be discovered. Remind them that our goal is leave footprints that we're proud of. Footprints that we could show anyone ten years from now and say, “Yes, that's my picture!” or “That's my post!” Keep the door to open and honest conversation about technology wide open. We want to help you get the conversation started with some ideas below. You can do it!

Things to say:

“You know that phrase, “Practice makes perfect!” Let's practice something. What would you say to a friend who wanted to show you pornography? Maybe you could turn away and say, “I don't want to see that!” Or, maybe you could remind your friends that pornography is usually tied to slavery and sex trafficking of little kids. Who would ever want to be tied to something so horrible?”

“Your mom and I think it's a good idea to show each other the websites we visit, just to make sure we're making good decisions. This is a great idea for all of us. Our entire family uses Covenant Eyes to help us avoid online issues.”

“Did you know that everything we post, tweet, or comment is public in some way? There really is no such thing as privacy online. The Internet never forgets.”

“We're going to talk about technology a lot over the next couple of years. It's so important! I love the Internet, and I want you to love it too. But, please understand that how you use the Internet can have a massive impact on your life.”

“Have any of your friends ever done something they weren't proud of with their technology?”

“Let’s agree on a couple of things related to Instagram—having a private account, with just the people you trust, is a good idea. I’m going to follow you. Can you show me how to do that? Don’t worry, I won’t post any embarrassing comments on your pictures, but I am going to be looking at what your friends post.”

“Has anyone ever said anything to you online that hurt your feelings?”

“What apps do all of your friends use? I’d like to follow them also, just to see how they use technology.” (Tip: this is a good idea for moms, but dads should not follow other teenage girls.)

“We don’t use technology after _____ at night. At that time, you will charge your device here _____ and you can pick it up at _____”.

“Have you ever seen pornography? How did it make you feel? Let’s agree on something—If you see it, will you come tell me that same day? Let’s keep these hurtful things out in the light. It’s so much better there.”

Things not so say:

“Sure, download whatever you want. Just stop bothering me.”

“I don’t care what you do, just don’t break it.”

“I’m so clueless on technology. You’ll figure it out.”

At Covenant Eyes, we believe parents who are observant, engaged and informed often have kids who learn how to use technology well. Please visit the tech websites listed on our Resources page in Appendix C to stay updated on app risks and parental controls on devices. Not sure how to explain accountability to your family? Don’t worry, we’ve thought of that. Check out Accountable Kids: Explaining Covenant Eyes to your Family here:

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Tech Conversations: High School

Key Phrase: Technology is a doorway to an amazing future.

In a few short years, your son or daughter will likely venture off to college. Now is the time to give them space to prove they are ready to handle the over one billion websites available to them. If they prove trustworthy, then give them more freedom. If not, discuss what they can do to earn that freedom. Just because your son or daughter is old enough to drive, it doesn't mean he/she is old enough to handle the junk the Internet throws at us. Accountability is a good idea whether you're 16 or 60. We want to help you get the conversation started with some ideas below.

Things to say:

"How we use technology says a lot about our true character. If we pulled together every text, tweet, post, and picture from the past year, what would a college think about who you are?"

"I want you to use technology to have an amazing life. Please know that just one inappropriate picture can change the entire direction of your future. Respect that."

"Nothing we do online is private. What are some things you could post so that colleges see the real you?"

"We don't use technology while driving. I've started putting the phone in my glovebox just to avoid the temptation. Can you do the same?"

"Your mom and I think that it's a good idea to show each other the websites we visit, just to make sure we're making good decisions. This is a great idea for all of us. Our entire family uses Covenant Eyes to help us avoid online issues."

[Dad to son] "It's so easy to be tempted by what we see online. Son, I want you to know that the door is wide open—we can talk about anything. Let's keep any shame or guilt out in the light. It's so much better that way."

[Mom to daughter] "Have you ever been asked by a boy to send a picture that made you uncomfortable? No matter what he might say, it's not worth it. Every picture has the potential to be sent to thousands of people. You're too special for that."

"Did you know that in most states, sending or even having partially naked pictures of you or your friends is considered child pornography?"

Things not to say:

Avoid minding your own business. Too many parents disengage during the high school years. They might be busier, but fight the urge to disconnect. They still need parents who are observant, engaged and informed. In fact, the stakes at this age are even higher.

At Covenant Eyes, we believe parents who are observant, engaged and informed often have kids who learn how to use technology well. Please visit the tech websites listed on our Resources page in Appendix C to stay updated on app risks and parental controls on devices. Not sure how to explain accountability to your family? Don't worry, we've thought of that. Check out Accountable Kids: Explaining Covenant Eyes to your Family here:

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APPENDIX C

Resources

Your Brain on Porn

Our culture is highly sexualized, and in many cases pornography use is actually glorified. But research shows that pornography use actually changes the way you think. Download this e-book to learn the five proven ways pornography warps your brain, and three biblical ways to renew your mind:

<http://www.covenanteyes.com/brain-ebook/>

Porn and Your Husband

A wife who has just discovered her husband's porn use may wonder if she did something wrong, or why she didn't notice the signs earlier, or whether she will ever be able to trust him again. *Porn and Your Husband* answers some of the common questions wives have about pornography use and offers practice strategies for healing the marriage:

<http://www.covenanteyes.com/marriage-advice-my-husband-watches-porn/>

When Your Child is Looking at Porn

When a parent discovers her child or teenager has been looking at pornography, it can be alarming, hurtful, even frightening. In the confusion of the moment, it is important for parents to understand that these are not uncharted waters. This e-book provides a full step-by-step guide for Christian parents:

<http://www.covenanteyes.com/when-your-child-is-looking-at-porn/>

The Porn Circuit

Science shows us that acting out with pornography taps into our powerful neurochemistry, and this can quickly lead a person to use porn habitually. Much like a drug, the chemicals that fire when watching porn cause the brain to increasingly crave it until eventually it can feel almost impossible to break free. Read about what chemicals fire during porn use, how triggers turn pornography into a habit, why porn

is addictive, why one image is never enough, how porn ruins sex and intimacy, and how to break free.

<http://www.covenanteyes.com/science-of-porn-addiction-ebook/>

How to stay as tech savvy as kids?

The apps kids use and the gadgets they prefer are constantly changing. Here are a few organizations that make it their goal to stay current and do the research for you. Each has a newsletter you can subscribe to in order to receive the latest technology updates and learn about specific devices, the latest apps, and how to set parental controls that work for your family:

» Commonsensemedia.org

» Protectyoungeyes.com



APPENDIX D

Endnotes

Endnotes

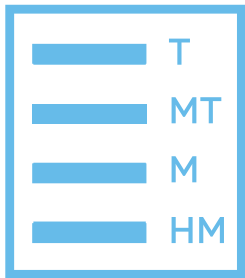
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KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFE ON THE INTERNET

Gain insight into your kids' online world. With Internet Accountability, you get a report of the websites your kids visit so you can have informed conversations about good online habits.

HOW COVENANT EYES WORKS



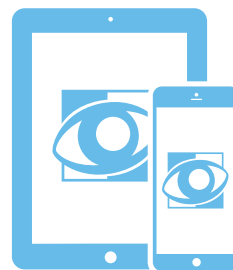
ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS

The sites your kids visit, the search terms they use, the YouTube videos they watch... all are listed in an easy-to-understand report that is designed for the conversation.



AGE-BASED CONTENT RATINGS

Every website visited is assigned an age-based rating, like T for Teen or M for Mature. This makes it easy to spot or block when somebody visits an inappropriate website.



IPHONE® WEB BROWSER APP

Replace Safari on your child's iPhone, iPod touch®, and iPad® to keep their browsing accountable. Filtering is also available for this web browser.



ANDROID™ WEB AND APP MONITORING

Our app for Android phones and tablets monitors sites visited through select browsers and what other apps were accessed. This lets you talk to your kids about how they use their smartphones.

GET STARTED WITH COVENANT EYES



Start protecting your family online! For a flat rate of \$14.99/mo., you can safeguard them with Internet Accountability. Filtering may be added with no extra cost. Learn more and sign up at www.covenanteyes.com

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