

kids' social media use, we can help them develop resilience, self-confidence, and a strong sense of purpose in Christ. Let's remind them their value doesn't come from likes, follows, or approval from others but from their Creator, who loves them deeply and wants the best for them.

GOING FURTHER: RESOURCES

The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place by Andy Crouch

Parenting in a Social Media World: Raising Kids With Character, Confidence, and Courage by Angela C. Lamb

Raising Grateful Kids in an Entitled World: How One Family Learned That Saying No Can Lead to Life's Biggest Yes by Kristen Welch

Screens and Teens: Connecting With Our Kids in a Wireless World by Dr. Kathy Koch

Parenting Generation Screen: Guiding Your Kids to Be Wise in a Digital World by Jonathan McKee

The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness by Jonathan Haidt

Screen Kids: 5 Skills Every Child Needs in a Tech-Driven World by Gary Chapman and Arlene Pellicane

RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

Bark (bark.us) — While not explicitly Christian, Bark is a tool that monitors children's online activities and alerts parents to potential risks. Many Christian families find it useful in keeping children safe.

Plugged In (pluggedin.com) — Run by Focus on the Family, Plugged In reviews apps, movies, TV shows, and video games from a Christian worldview to help parents make informed decisions.

Covenant Eyes (covenanteyes.com) — A resource for internet accountability and filtering that can be a helpful safeguard against harmful online content.

Axis Culture Translator (axis.org) — A free weekly email that helps parents understand current trends in youth culture, including social media, from a biblical perspective.

Mobile Phone Agreement in this folder.

Bible Verses for Reflection, Teaching, Writing on Hearts and Walls:
Philippians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Proverbs 4:23



HELPING YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE THE WEB: SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TOOL, NOT A RIGHT

For many kids, social media has become a regular part of life. However, it's essential to remember that social media is a tool—it's not a necessity or a right. Like any tool, its purpose and effects depend on how it is used. As Christian parents, we must approach social media with wisdom, discernment, and a commitment to safeguarding our children's hearts and minds. (By the way, even the social media networks know there should be an age limit! Parents should never, ever violate these limits for the sake of pressure or allowance.)

THE DANGERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

DISTORTED REALITY: Social media presents a "highlight reel" of others' lives, showcasing only the best moments and often exaggerating happiness and success. This can lead your kids (and adults) to feel inadequate, envious, or dissatisfied with their own (by comparison, mundane) lives.

Likes, follows, secrets, and instant approvals foster a sense of fake relationships where interactions lack genuine connection, intimacy, and trust. If a child does not like the way they look, they can simply add a filter. The whole system rewards image management over authentic living.

A PATHWAY TO DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR: Social media can encourage risky behaviors, especially around self-expression. Studies show that 20% of adolescents aged 13–19 have sent or posted explicit photos. This behavior can lead to greater risks, including high-risk sexual behavior and unhealthy relationship patterns or expectations.

Social media's anonymity can lead kids to share personal details they would never reveal in person, which can open them up to unwanted attention, cyberbullying,



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and even potential predators. In one documented case, an anonymous man was paying a young girl money for her “photos.” After a while, he suggested he could buy items from her Amazon wishlist instead. By sharing her wishlist, she unintentionally gave him her shipping address, putting her and her siblings at even greater risk. She did not even know any better. He did.

CONSTANT COMPARISONS: Social media subtly encourages kids to compare themselves to others, often without them even realizing it. Viewing others’ “perfect” lives online can lead teens to feel inadequate, affecting their self-worth and making them feel like they don’t measure up. This constant comparison has contributed to an unprecedented rise in issues related to security, self-image, and mental health among our children. These struggles are only increasing, highlighting the urgent need for healthy guidance and support in navigating the pressures of social media.

Teens today are lonelier than previous generations, with studies showing that social isolation has increased significantly due to social media (COVID-19) intensified it, but it is not diminishing. This isolation can result in higher stress levels and an increased likelihood of depression. These habits, formed in adolescence, are carried into adulthood.

INSTANT GRATIFICATION AND MATERIALISM: Heavy social media users are more likely to value material things over meaningful connections or community involvement, leading to a focus on fame, wealth, and possessions.

Spending excessive time on social media can drive teens toward superficial values rather than fostering a deep sense of purpose, leaving them feeling empty inside.

SOCIAL MEDIA NEVER TURNS OFF: Social media creates FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), pressuring teens to stay connected 24/7. Unlike real-life interactions, social media is always “on,” making it hard for teens to take breaks and refresh.

Not to mention, when friends are experiencing things, they must be captured for others to see. These events weren’t documented a generation (or two) ago, and fewer felt left out (because they didn’t know). Today, everyone feels as if they are missing out all the time, creating paranoia and jealousy at alarming rates.

A HEART ISSUE: Social media might be the platform, but the real challenge lies within the heart. The Bible reminds us that “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). Without strong values and boundaries, social media can intensify insecurities, self-centeredness, and materialism. God’s Word should be our guiding voice, shaping our identity in Christ rather than seeking validation online.

Finding balance between God’s voice and society’s approval is not easy, especially in a world that constantly pulls us in different directions. Society often pushes for instant approval, popularity, and self-promotion, while God calls us to humility, selflessness, and a heart focused on His truth rather than others’ opinions.

Choosing to follow God’s voice requires courage to stand firm in our faith, even when it feels countercultural or unpopular. It means rooting our identity in Christ and His love for us, rather than in likes, followers, or others’ approval. This isn’t always easy, and at times, we may feel the tension of wanting to fit in while staying true to our faith. Yet, it’s in those moments that we grow stronger, learning

to trust that God’s approval is far more valuable and enduring than anything the world can offer.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS

Be a Model of Healthy Social Media Use: Show your children how to use social media responsibly. Put down your own devices and focus on real-life interactions, setting an example of a healthy relationship with technology.

Provide a Strong Sense of Identity: Social media often causes kids (and adults) to seek their worth from others’ approval. Give your child a strong foundation in who they are in Christ, reinforcing their identity and purpose beyond likes and follows.

Teach Discernment and Wisdom: Remind your children that not everything they see or hear on social media is true. Equip them to distinguish between godly values and the distorted perspectives they may encounter online.

Encourage Real Connections and Conversations: Help your child build meaningful friendships outside of social media. Encourage conversations that promote understanding, compassion, and connection without the filter of online personas (or filtered pictures).

Set Boundaries and Balance: Define time limits for social media use and create device-free zones or times, such as during meals or before bed, to allow your teen to unwind and focus on more meaningful pursuits.

Many families have chosen to withhold social media access until their children reach their late teens, finding that the delay spared them significant conflict and heartache.

Engage With Faith and Community: Emphasize the importance of real community and church involvement. A relationship with Christ and active participation in a church body fosters resilience, joy, and a sense of belonging that no online platform can replace.

Be Around: Ensure your children do not have any social media accounts you can’t access. Regularly check and monitor their activity to stay informed. They should not be using a device without your knowledge and approval. Set clear expectations, like this rule: “If we find out you deleted something to hide it, you lose the privilege. No deletion! If you feel the need to delete it, don’t write, post, or send it in the first place.”

Without hovering, maintain open communication about their accounts. Let your children know you’re there to support and guide them, helping them navigate social media responsibly.

Seek Wisdom From Godly Sources: Not everyone’s advice or plan is beneficial, even if they’ve “been through the same thing.” Don’t pattern your choices by the people you know, but by the One you know! Seek wisdom from Christian counselors, pastors, or mentors who can offer godly guidance rooted in biblical truth.

LET’S GUIDE OUR KIDS TOWARD WHAT TRULY MATTERS

As Christian parents, our role is to protect, guide, and nurture our children’s hearts, teaching them to value what God values. By taking a proactive role in our