

ZION'S CHRISTIAN YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

theParentLinkSM

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Raising Kids in a Wired World

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

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

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

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



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

Statistics Show Digital Divide

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

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

Did you know???

Zion offers media information each month on our website www.zionkent.org. Songs, video games and movies are reviewed by Group Publishing and is designed to inform and educate parents and so that you can make informed decisions on what your kids listen to and watch.



Parenting Insights

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

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

What is Coming This Fall?

Rally Day!

September 13th

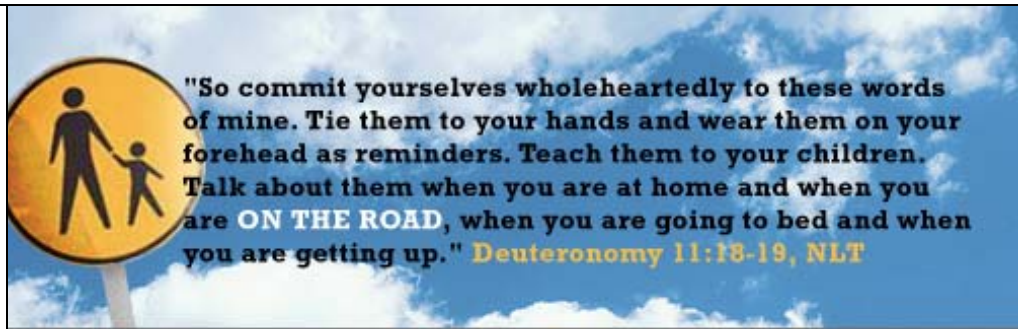
Join us for food, fun
and Service as we give
our time to Habitat for
Humanity!



Sunday School Teachers Needed

Godly Play is in need of a few
loving adults or teens to help
shepherd kids during the
Sunday school hour or to lead
the children in learning a Bible
story through skits, puppets,
and fun in "Holywood."

Please contact Danielle Acay at
dacay.zionkent@comcast.net or
253-631-0100 if you can help.



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

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

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

Family Experience: Thou Shall Surf Safely

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

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



- **Set rules**—Agree on Internet-use rules for your entire family. Sample code-of-conduct contracts are available online. Specify where, when, and how long kids can go online. Children shouldn't give out personal information, send photos, or buy or download

anything without permission. And they shouldn't meet online acquaintances in person. For a fun visual representation of these rules, write them on tablet shapes. Then display the tablets near your family's computer.

Help Kids Evaluate the Latest High-Tech Trends



Technology changes so quickly these days that it's challenging to keep pace with all the hottest sites, devices, and fads. But the Internet, cell phones, and iPods have become such an integral part of youth culture that parents need to stay in touch with them in order to stay in touch with their kids.

Two-thirds of America's teenagers say, "Digital technology is an essential part of how I live." Consider these developments: Social-networking sites have led to an explosion of interconnectedness. Blogs allow kids to reveal their innermost thoughts throughout

cyberspace. Camera and video phones permit everything to be documented and posted for the whole world to see. Text-messaging is now the primary communication method for almost half (44%) of all teenagers.

All this technology has significant impacts on impressionable, developing young people. Kids are expressing themselves more than ever, friends can almost always reach one another, and teenagers can access lots of inappropriate material. Despite some potential dangers, the Internet and high-tech tools are here to stay.

So it's up to parents to provide oversight and guidance. But you can take that one step further by helping your teenagers think critically about high-tech influences. When kids learn to evaluate technology and media from a Christian perspective, they can make wise decisions about what they "consume."



Middle School

Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Graders have a new ministry program this year! Please check out page 2 in the Horizon to learn more about *Living Word*. Do you have questions or would you like to volunteer? Please call Kelly Mullin at church.

High School

Senior High Small Groups will be offered! Watch for information about the kick-off of new small groups. Adults who want to know more about the opportunity to walk closely with senior high youth on their faith journey (all the while growing and learning yourself), please contact Debbie Boyce. You will be enriched and gifted by these youth!

Are you passionate about a certain topic, idea or sharing an experience from your own life? **Senior High Sunday School may be the place for you!** What can you share from your faith story ...how has God made a difference in your life...what prayer practices do you use...how do you see God working on your heart and in your life? Can your insights help Zion's youth with their faith? Let's find out – call Debbie Boyce to discuss your ideas.



Here's an assortment of statistics about teenagers, who are often left to their own "devices":

- 23% of teenagers report that they have felt "addicted" to video games.
- More than one-fourth of teenagers say they don't drive as safely as they should because they're using cell phones.
- 32% of teenagers say strangers have contacted them online.
- Every iPod or digital music player contains an average of 842 illegally copied songs.
- At YouTube, Internet users post 10 hours of video every minute—the equivalent of 57,000 full-length movies every week.



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

How often—and well—do you communicate with your kids about their communication methods? Get started by discussing these questions together:

1. What's your favorite communication method, and why? How long could you go without using it?
2. Does technology simplify or complicate your life? Explain. Which device would you "uninvent," and why?
3. What's your favorite thing to do online? Is it easier to make friends in cyberspace? Why or why not?
4. Do you like being always reachable? Why or not? How open are your communication lines with God?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will make wise decisions about what they do online and with other technology.
2. God will strengthen your teenagers to resist harmful influences.
3. Your teenagers will evaluate cultural messages and seek to honor God in everything do.
4. Your teenagers will be as eager to communicate with God as they are to communicate with their friends.

Verse of the month

**"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."
(Romans 12:2)**

You can't shelter kids from all of today's high-tech influences. Even if you could, that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. God reminds his followers not to be "of" the world but acknowledges that we still remain "in" it. Christians can enjoy the benefits of new technology and be entertained by secular music and movies. But we must view everything through the eyes of faith. Who knows? Your kids might be able to share Christ with others using a high-tech communication method.

What's Up With Kids

In his book *Jesus-Centered Youth Ministry*, Rick Lawrence discusses ways to teach your kids to "engage their culture, not adopt it or deny it." Here's an excerpt:

1. **Wake up.** Engage in kids' media influences firsthand. Find out what kids are into, and then Google their favorite shows, video games, and bands to find fan sites and reviews.
2. **Teach kids to think critically.** Encourage them to "push back" against cultural influences. For example, have your teenagers list five positive and five negative things about a particular video game. Ask: "If you had your own kid, which of these things would you want (and not want) to teach them?" Then explore Philippians 4:8 together.
3. **Regularly force kids to solve problems that require critical thinking.** These can be issues from the Bible, cultural debates, and relational problems. The key to making this work is asking many, many follow-up questions after kids give their first answers.
4. **Help kids slow down and think about "kingdom-of-God" truths.** Teach your teenagers how to summarize and evaluate the overall message of each media influence. What truths or promises does it deliver, and are they something that Jesus honors? Soon, when kids are listening to their iPods or watching a movie with their friends, they'll hear or see something that will flex their critical-thinking muscle—"Is this a Jesus truth or not?" When that happens, you'll have helped plant a Jesus-centered way of living life in them.

