Raising Courageous Kids to Confront a Sexualized Culture

Family Conversation Guides and Further Resources

Talking to your kids about Internet dangers can be tricky, especially if your kids are older and you've never had these conversations before. The good news is, it doesn't have to be scary!

Here are a few general tips to help you, whether your kids are 5 or 15:

- If possible, start early. If you start while they're young, you'll both be comfortable talking about hard topics when they're teenagers.

- 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.

These talking points are used with permission from Protect Young Eyes (**www.protectyoungeyes.com**).

Preschool Conversations

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

It's not too early to start having age-appropriate conversations about what they're watching and what they might bump into. "Going online together" 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.

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?"

Elementary School Conversations

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

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?"

"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."

"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?"

"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."

Middle School Conversations

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

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!'"

"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."

"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?"

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

Things not to 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."

High School Conversations

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

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."

"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.

Further Resources

Confident:
Helping Parents Navigate Online Exposure (ebook)

When a parent discovers their 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 unchartered waters. This e-book provides a full step-by-step guide for Christian parents:

www.covenanteyes.com/when-your-child-is-looking-at-porn/

Connected:
How Strong Family Relationships Lead to Internet-Safe Kids (ebook)

Connected is a proactive resource that explores how a strong family connection can protect children and teens from the dangers of hidden pornography use. It contains real-life stories and practical tips for maintaining or re-establishing connection in your family. Connected will strengthen your relationship with God, your spouse, and your children, so your family can live free of pornography. Check out **Connected** here:

learn.covenanteyes.com/connected/

Equipped:
Raising Godly Digital Natives (ebook)

In this ebook, we will show parents how to have honest conversations about self-image, sexuality, sin, and shame, provide proven methods for training our children how to be media literate, and more.

http://info.covenanteyes.com/equipped-raising-godly-digital-natives-ebook

Helpful websites

Protect Young Eyes uses a constantly updated website and engaging, in-person presentations to educate concerned, but busy parents and hyper-connected kids about how to use technology in a God-honoring way. They specialize in social media apps and device-level parental controls.

www.protectyoungeyes.com

Common Sense Media is a secular organization that reviews popular movies, games, and apps that kids use today.

www.commonsensemedia.org