



Life Lines



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In This Issue

- 1 Protecting Our Kids In the Digital Age
- 4 New School Prayer
- 4 Contact Us

Important Facts

- One in three teens say they feel more accepted online than they do in real life.
- 89% of teens use social media.
- 56% of youth, 8-12, have a cell phone.
- 69% of families with youth under 8 years have a smartphone.
- 91% of teens go online from a mobile device.
- A typical teen sends and receives 30-50 texts per day.
- 22% of youth admit to using mobile devices to hide their online behavior from parents.
- 27% of youth witness cruel behavior online and only 9% of parents are aware of the cyber-bullying.
- 38% of kids under 2 use a mobile device.

Source: growingwireless.com

Protecting Our Kids in the Digital Age

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" 2 Timothy 3:1-2.

We are certainly living in the "last days" spoken of by the Scriptures. These days are called perilous or dangerous. We live in the land of the enemy and he (Satan) knows that he has but a short time before the end of all things. He is wreaking havoc upon our world and doing all he can to destroy souls so they cannot be saved.

Jesus is about to come and more rapidly than ever before our world is deteriorating. Parents must be careful of what they allow the minds of their children to absorb. There is very little time left to teach them the ways of God.

Take for example a young teenager from Virginia named Vincent Parker. What would cause a smart 16-year-old honor student, basically a good kid, to kill his parents without remorse. Police say that Vincent Parker brutally murdered both parents using "five knives, a baseball bat and a crowbar."¹

What did these parents do to deserve this? Did they abuse him? Did they abandon him? No; for disciplinary purposes they had taken his iPod away, and that ticked him off.

What we are talking about is a powerful addiction and a very powerful obsession that's turning kids into mindless junkies. It's not cocaine. It's not alcohol. It's not heroin. It's a mobile device. When a person spends hours and hours with media, **the frontal lobe of the brain becomes disconnected so that reason, conscience and judgment are no longer engaged.**

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord [regretted] that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart...And the Lord said, My [Holy] Spirit shall not always strive with man" Genesis 6: 5, 6, 3.

Addiction

Kids use mobile devices for browsing the internet, gaming, talking, texting, for chat, movies and social media. In some cases they are also using them for por-



ANCHORS



We become like that which we behold.

Garbage in, garbage out.

nography, sexting, dating and bullying. It has become the new norm.

Satan knows how the brain works so he encourages addictions to media; he makes them appealing, attractive and necessary. **The devil lies** and says that games "increase intelligence, perception, integrity." But all that is merely a sales pitch. He doesn't tell you how many scenes of violence is included or about the hypnotic effect that media has and how it suppresses thinking and overstimulates the system so it essentially shuts down.

Common Sense Media, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization, conducted a recent poll of 1,230 households. According to this poll "half of teenagers in the United States feel addicted to their mobile phones, with most checking their devices at least every hour and feel pressured to respond immediately to messages."²

The study also showed that this "addiction" is causing "daily conflicts in the home" and is responsible for dangerous driving, problems with homework, destroying family together-time and communication.

The poll also revealed that U.S. children between ages 8 and 12 reported spending nearly six hours a day using media, while those that are ages 13 to 18 spend almost nine hours per day.

A different study conducted by Baylor University revealed that college women spend an average of ten hours a day on their mobile devices.³

There is no question that digital devices have become an addiction. The question is how should we as Christians respond to media addiction? Digital addiction causes people to become physiologically dependent upon their mobile devices in the same way that people become addicted to alcohol, gambling, drugs, gluttony, tobacco, pornography, shopping, work and sports. All of these habitual, unnatural and compulsive obsessions are dangerous and destructive to both children and adults.

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls" Proverbs 25:28.

Those who are given to addictions will in the end fall into ruin. We are commanded: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" Matthew 22:37.

According to Jesus this is the first and greatest of all the commandments. Any addictions would go contrary to this commandment because we demonstrate that they have the greater control over our lives. Some Christians believe that they can serve their addictions first and God second. However, God alone is worthy of our complete attention and

devotion. **To give so much of our time and lives to these addictions is idolatry.**



Family Time

One of the biggest complaints against technology is that kids spend too much time looking at their screens instead of spending time with their families and loved ones. With the infinite amount of interactive games to choose from, countless YouTube videos (some of them obscene), and innumerable social media platforms, one soon discovers that **there is a dark side to all of these mobile devices.** Without restraints, kids will barely even look up at you when you talk to them. Without control, kids will form mental checklists for their daily games, movies and social activity tasks. Left unchecked, kids will become so glued to their screens that parents have to physically remove the mobile device from their hands and run them out of the house just to get them to change activities. And if you are lucky enough to spend a little time with your kids without any digital devices then you have to deal with the "everything's boring" syndrome.

Because of all of the digital overstimulation, kids can't seem to cope with quiet times away from their devices. Because of all the video games and digital media available (literally tens of thousands to choose from), kids believe that they are entitled to being entertained **all** the time. **Many parents worry that their kids will never learn how to be content without electronic stimulation.** And when kids do unplug, everything seems boring to them - school, home, church and other social-building activities.

So, will parents take charge or will they continue to allow children to have their media twenty-four/seven? Who is in charge in the family?

"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things" 1 Corinthians 9:25.

"But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection (self-control): lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Watch what you watch.

Digital Media Violence

Violence has become one of the top choices of entertainment for kids today. There was a time when school yard fights were stopped by other students. Today, when a fight breaks out everyone pulls out their mobile devices and starts recording. Eventually the videos make their way online and get posted on YouTube for entertainment value. It's done to see how many likes and views can be generated. The more morbid and violent the more chance the video will go viral. Video games are becoming more and more violent and this is having a negative effect on today's culture.

God's Word tells us that there is an intimate relationship between our thoughts and our actions, which leads us to believe that violent video games and digital media causes people to become more angry and violent. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" Proverbs 23:7.

That is why the church is encouraged to behold the glory of Christ so that we can be transformed into that same image. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" 2 Cor. 3:18.

Violent games are unique because children are playing the part of the game's script. Through role-playing they are committing the acts of crimes in the games. All this has an effect both physically and emotionally on the sensory processes of the brain. Recently, an eight-year-old boy shot his 90-year-old caretaker in the head with a gun after playing violent video games that included shooting people in the head. The child acted out in real life what he was already doing in the game.⁴

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things" Philippians 4:8.

Other Negative Effects

Parents should be aware of the harmful effects of technology before giving their children mobile devices to play with: short attention spans, learning deficiencies, anxiety, stress, temper tantrums, lack of interactive communication skills, cyber-bullying, false sense of reality, privacy issues, decreased-productivity, epidemic obesity, aggression, insomnia, family neglect and boredom.

These effects have reached the epidemic stage as children are more and more exposed to all the different forms of digital technology.

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly" Proverbs 16:22.

So what's the solution? Should we ban mobile devices from children? Barring access of children from all forms of digital media may not be the most effective and practical solution. Kids could be rewarded with some privileges to digital media but that should only be with adult supervision. Any exposure to mobile devices should be done with the parents' involvement and engagement.

Kids should not have unlimited access and certainly not for six to nine hours a day. One hour a day may be okay. Kids have to go through real life experiences in order to develop mentally and physically. This does not happen in front of a screen. Kids should spend an hour in Bible study, a minimum of one hour outside in recreation getting exercise and another hour helping around the house with chores. All of these other activities are important.

Getting Your family Online

It may be time to unplug our devices and in place of them get our lives and families in line. As in all addictions you might be accused of being mean or insensitive by your children but that's part of the healing process.

The closer you get to your children the better will be their development and growth. Spend more time together. Have friendly conversation. Read and play games together. Sing and pray with your kids.



Lay down the rules for mobile devices and stick to them. Have mobile-free zones in the house such as the kitchen table, the bed, worship time, vacation time and other times and places. Most importantly, enjoy your kids, get connected with them and have fun. That is in itself the ultimate prize.

Sources:

¹ <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/virginia-teen-admits-killing-parents-ipod-article-1.1810180>

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-tech-teens-idUSKCN0XU1P5>

³ <http://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-cellphone-addiction-increasingly-realistic-possibility.html>

⁴ <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/8-year-old-boy-played-violent-video-game-killed-90-year-old-woman-not-charged-cops-article-1.1435828>

New School Prayer



A South Carolina sheriff's deputy flipped a disruptive student out of her desk and tossed her across her math class floor.

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule,
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights;
And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a Federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple, orange or green,
That's no offense; it's a freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise;
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.
In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the state.

We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks.
They've outlawed guns, but ~~FIRST~~ the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the 'unwed daddy,' our Senior King.
It's 'inappropriate' to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such 'judgments' do not belong.

We can get our condoms and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles.
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns, the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot; My soul please take! Amen.

Many have taken or given credit to this "New School Prayer" poem but the earliest find was a xeroxed version of it in a student's German language school book in 1985. A shorter version was found in a 1992 issue of *The Washington Times* and in 1993 an expanded version appeared in *The Detroit News*. Since then, different versions of it have been attributed to various school-aged children. While we do not place a lot of stock in Snopes.com I did find this information at their website: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/newprayer.asp>

New Life Mission Life Lines

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