

BRINGING UP CHILDREN IN A WHOLE NEW MILLENNIUM

FIND YOUR CHILD IN CYBERSPACE!

One of the most dangerous things facing our youth today comes to us courtesy of the internet. While the internet has a lot of good to offer, it has a lot of bad, too. The ease with which young people can gain access to pornography is unprecedented. The manner in which information can be obtained with a feeling of security also takes the shame out of seeking pornography. Just a few years ago if one wanted to obtain such information, he had to interact with another person to purchase the material. This was a great deterrent for many young Christians because they knew it was wrong and were ashamed to be seen purchasing such. Today far worse information can be obtained without any human interaction. This has caused pornography to spread like wildfire. With the shame gone, many young Christians (particularly boys), are failing to see the danger and properly flee this type of website. This is probably the biggest issue we face in deciding to what extent we will allow our children to have access to the internet. The other? Social websites such as Facebook, Yahoo! Live, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, etc. there are literally hundreds of these types of sites. In this article we hope to demonstrate the importance for parents to know where in CyberSpace their kids are, and for children to understand how easy it is to be led astray by the worldly nature of these sites.

I have a especially strong personal interest in the issues of teens and the internet. As many of you know my brother-in-law is a law enforcement agent, and is heavily involved in the arrest of those who exploit young people by using the internet (social websites and chat rooms) to arrange person-to-person meetings for the purpose of violating them sexually. Fortunately his efforts have led to the arrest and incarceration of many of these sex offenders. Anyway, this is why it is of particular importance to me to inform parents and children of the dangers of chat rooms and social networking on the internet. Besides these real physical dangers there is the greater spiritual dangers that confront our youth on these social websites. That is, how easy it is to join a social group and be drawn into the worldliness, get caught up in it and wind up posting information and allowing information to be posted that a Christian has no business being involved in. Parents the danger is very, very real. There have been several Christian parents to whom I have mentioned their kid's Facebook page, and they had no idea their child even had a Facebook account. Sadly, I must also tell you that I have seen things on Christian children's Facebook and other social sites that are not in any way becoming to a Christian. I urge you as parents to find your children in CyberSpace and monitor their activity and information. Their lives (physical and spiritual) might depend on it.

So, how exactly do you find your children in CyberSpace? Well, you can start by doing a Google, Yahoo, Bing or other search. I suggest you combine their name with the name of a social site. For instance, you would search for me by entering "Facebook Alan Steele". If you

do that, you will find about 5 or 6 Alan Steele's with Facebook accounts, none of which is me. But, you get the idea. Do that with the other social websites as well. If you don't find anything with a general search like this, you can set up a Facebook account for yourself. Then, once enrolled you can search for anyone within the site. It is much easier to find people this way. Once you find someone, you can see if their site is public so anyone can see it, or it is private, meaning that only their "friends" can see it. If it is private, send a friend invite to them. If they accept it, you will be able to see their "wall" and the rest of their information. If they don't accept it right away, hmmm...that might be a clue. Not that I have all the answers, by any stretch, but here is how I have handled the situation. My kids were not allowed e-mail or access to any of the social networks unless they gave us their sign in and password BEFORE setting it up. My son, now 18, still living at home (when he's not in college) has had Facebook and Windows Live for some time now. He knows that we have his passwords! For the most part he had done well with them, but we constantly monitor his accounts and he knows it. On occasion, we have seen something on there that we don't like and told him to remove it at once. We discuss why we don't approve, he either agrees or disagrees, but in either case, the material comes off of his page! We even have the passwords for his portal at college with his school e-mail. They may not like it at first, but now my kids say..... They only have to worry if they are trying to hide something. I strongly urge all parents to get busy and find your kids in CyberSpace.

Parents and kids alike, I encourage you to step back and take a look at your Facebook (or other social networking site). What do you see when you look at your profile? You see, your Facebook is just that..... It is the "Face" that you show the world. Everything on your Facebook is a clue as to what is in your heart. If you are a Christian that Face should reflect God and Christ. Does it?

Now, one more thing for you to do. Imagine that you are God and go onto your own Facebook profile. Pretend that you are God looking at it, and imagine what God thinks when he looks at it. Does he see the profile of a child he can be happy with? Would it make him say to the Devil, "Have you considered my servant _____? How there is none like him/her on the earth, he/she feareth God and hates evil? Would God see a battle he is winning or one he is losing when he looks at your Facebook? I urge everyone who has one of these accounts to consider this. If you are going to have one of the social sites, make sure it shows your "Face" to the world as the face of a Christian! I am saddened by some of the things I have seen on these sights. It is surely not a reflection of the glory of God that I am seeing. On the other hand I have seen some of these profiles where the Christian uses their Facebook account to reach others with the Gospel and uses the site to try to shine their light before man that may see that light and glorify God. Just like everything else, these social sites can be good or evil. How are you using yours? How are your children using theirs?

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