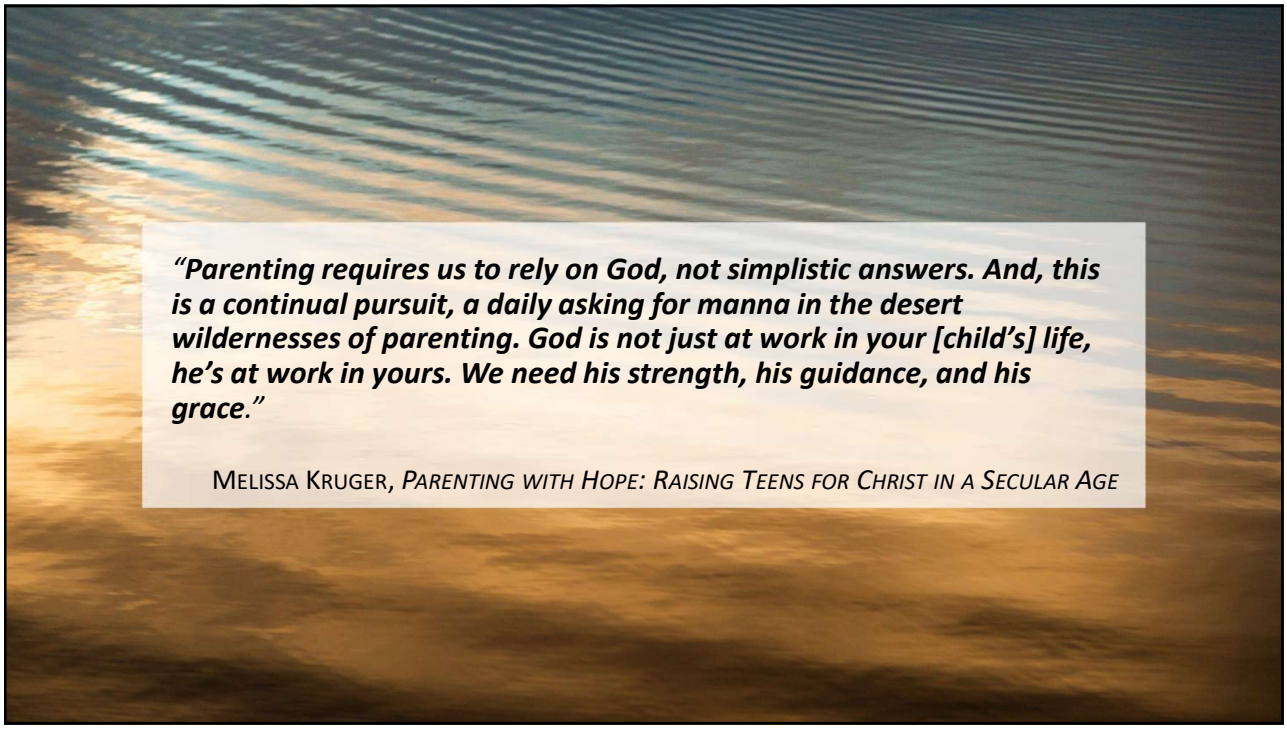

"Parenting requires us to rely on God, not simplistic answers. And, this is a continual pursuit, a daily asking for manna in the desert wildernesses of parenting. God is not just at work in your [child's] life, he's at work in yours. We need his strength, his guidance, and his grace."

MELISSA KRUGER, *PARENTING WITH HOPE: RAISING TEENS FOR CHRIST IN A SECULAR AGE*

Tech-Wise
Parenting
DISCIPLING CHILDREN FOR A LIFETIME OF TECH-WISE LIVING
Anne Chen
MPC MomsConnect
Nov. 6, 2024

Introduction: Concerning tech trends and statistics for our youth

- **Sextortion**
  - Between 2021-2022, sextortion increased by 7,200%, especially among 13-17yo boys[1]
  - In a six-month period (by March 2023), reports to the FBI of financially motivated sextortion involving minor victims increased by 20%, leading to at least 20 suicides[2]
- **Cyberbullying**
  - 1 in 5 tweens[3] and nearly 1 in 3 teens[4] have experienced some form of cyberbullying in the US
- **Mental health crisis among youth**
  - Depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation rates have increased significantly among youth[5]
  - Concern over social media's impact on mental health crisis → 40 states suing Meta (Instagram and Facebook), 13 states suing Tiktok[6]

[1]"Prevalence of sextortion," WeProtect Global Alliance, accessed Oct. 20, 2024, https://www.weprotect.org/issue/sextortion/
[2]"Sextortion: A Growing Threat Targeting Minors," FBI.gov, Jan. 23, 2024, https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/nashville/news/sextortion-a-growing-threat-targeting-minors
[3]Patchin, J. W. & Hinduja, S., *Tween Cyberbullying in 2020*, available at https://i.cartoonnetwork.com/stop-bullying/pdfs/CN_Stop_Bullying_Cyber_Bullying_Report_9.30.20.pdf.
[4]Patchin, J. W. & Hinduja, S., "Cyberbullying Facts," Cyberbullying Research Center, 2024, https://cyberbullying.org/facts.
[5]Youth Mental Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed Oct. 24, 2024, https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2013–2023*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2024, available at https://www.cdc.gov/yrbs/dstr/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf
[6]Bobby Allyn, "More than a dozen states sue TikTok, alleging it harms kids and is designed to addict them," Oct. 8, 2024, NPR, https://www.npr.org/2024/10/08/g-s1-26823/states-sue-tiktok-child-safety-mental-health.

Introduction: Concerning tech trends and statistics for our youth

- **Drug overdoses**
  - The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) calls social media sites the "superhighway of drugs"[7]
- **AI**
  - 63% of parents do not know their children are using AI
  - 53% of teens use AI for homework help
  - 46% of teens use AI for homework help without teacher permission[8]
- **News and media literacy online**
  - 96% of high school students believed a fake video claiming ballot stuffing; only 3 of 3,000 students tracked down the source, even though a quick search invalidated the video[9]
  - Two-thirds couldn't differentiate between news and ads[9]
- **Pornography**
  - Average exposure to online pornography occurs at age 12, and sometimes even earlier[10]

[7]Devlin Barrett, "Poison pill: How fentanyl killed a 17-year-old," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 30, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/11/30/fentanyl-fake-pills-social-media/.
[8]"New Report Shows Students Are Embracing Artificial Intelligence Despite Lack of Parent Awareness and School Guidance," Common Sense Media, Sept. 18, 2024, https://www.commonsensemedia.org/press-releases/new-report-shows-students-are-embracing-artificial-intelligence-despite-lack-of-parent-awareness-and.
[9]Breakstone, Joel et al. *Students' civic online reasoning: A national portrait*. Stanford History Education Group & Gibson Consulting, 2019. https://purl.stanford.edu/gf151tb4868.
[10]Robb, M.B. & Supreet Mann. *Teens and pornography.* San Francisco, CA: Common Sense, 2023. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2022-teens-and-pornography-final-web.pdf.

Introduction: And yet…

- **God is a God of encouragement** (Romans 15:5).
- God **knew our children would be born into this Digital Age—and intentionally appointed us** as their parents (Acts 17:26).
- God is **both completely sovereign and more than able** to equip us for the good work of discipling our children for a lifetime of tech-wise living.
- He **loves our kids** more than we do, and **He loves us**, too.

Today's Road Map

1. A Biblical Posture of Parenting
2. A Biblical Posture towards Technology
3. Parenting *in* Technology

Technology: The interconnected digital devices and platforms our families use today.

Caveats (Because I'm a lawyer)

1. This is *still* not an anti-tech talk!
2. There are lots of good resources on this topic!
3. I'm on the journey with you.

Today's Road Map

1. **A Biblical Posture of Parenting**
   a) **What is it?**
   b) **How do we do it?**
2. A Biblical Posture towards Technology
3. Parenting *in* Technology

Our Posture of Parenting: Wells & Fences

What is the biblical approach to parenting?

"Fathers [and mothers], do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up *in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*."
EPHESIANS 6:4 ESV (KJV: "*nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord")

***1. Wells** ("nurture"):*
Draw them to what is truly life-giving in Christ!
Attractional; gospel-centric

***2. Fences** ("admonition"):*
Set boundaries and limits with consequences.
Also gospel-centric!

3. "Of the Lord":
God's way, not ours or others',
i.e., loving God wholly and loving neighbor as ourselves—by His grace, for His glory (Deut. 6:1-9).

Our Posture of Parenting: Relationship

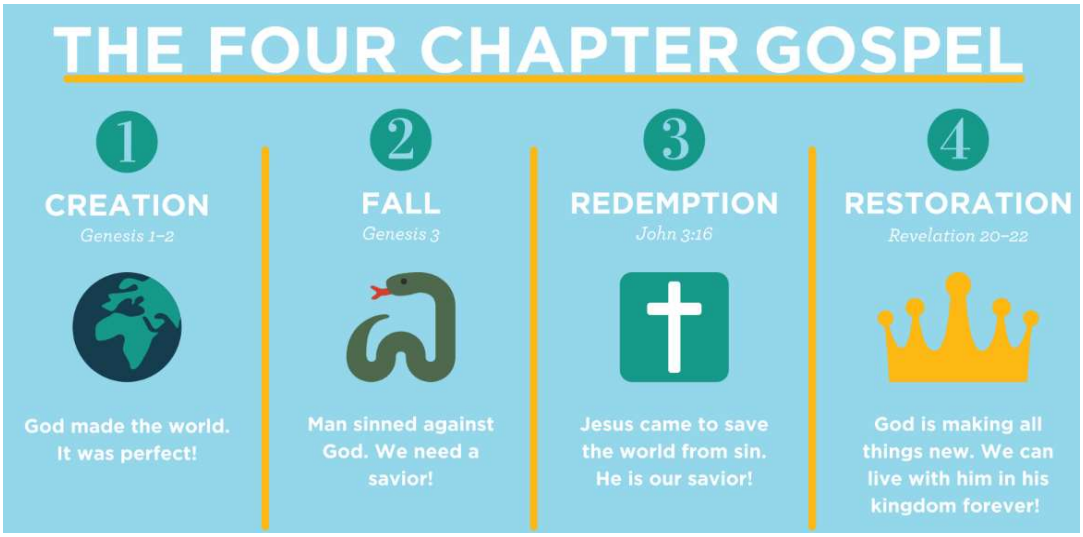
How do we implement biblical parenting?

1. **Through the means of grace: *prayer, God's Word, and the church.***
2. **God "parents" us through relationships.**
   - Children can out-maneuver you in technology!
   - Conversations in relationship is key.
3. **Success in parenting is foremost about being usable and faithful in God's hands**, because He alone is able to produce good things in our children.

Today's Road Map

1. A Biblical Posture of Parenting
2. **A Biblical Posture towards Technology**
3. Parenting *in* Technology

Our Posture Towards Technology: A Gospel Framework



Our Posture Towards Technology: Biblical Values of Technology

Four-Chapter Gospel	Biblical Values of Technology	Common Values in Technology
Creation	**God is in control**. We are just the created beings.	We are in control.
	God created us with physical bodies as well as souls and minds. Our bodies are not limitations to be transcended.	Digital selfhood is preeminent.
	Every human being has intrinsic worth and dignity from God, and should be treated as such.	People deserve my outrage and online abuse.
	Technology ultimately glorifies God, the only One who can create something from nothing.	Technology ultimately glorifies man.
Fall	**Technology is tainted with sin**, in both design and use.	Technology is neutral.
Redemption	**Technology is a God-given gift and can be redeemed**, in both design and use.	Technology is always bad.
Restoration	As citizens of heaven, not earth, **we should not always conform** to popular behavior and lifestyles online.	We should do what everyone else is doing online.
	Our tech struggles have an end point: God will complete His good work in us, to present us holy and blameless before Him. He will restore all that we look to technology to satisfy and fulfill.	Our tech struggles are futile.

Today's Road Map

1. A Biblical Posture of Parenting
2. A Biblical Posture towards Technology
3. **Parenting *in* Technology**
   1. **It starts with us.**
   2. **Establish "wells" with joy.**
   3. **Establish "fences" with consequences.**
   4. **Teach discretion and discernment.**
   5. **Talk: Monitor, but keep having conversations.**

"Until We Finish, Delight in Divine Training"

Parenting in Technology

1. It starts with us.

In parenting, "more is caught than taught."

- Avail yourself to the means of grace for your own growth in wisdom and holiness: **prayer, God's Word, Christian community in the church**
- Model **healthy, bounded use** of technology.
- Ask yourself:
  - **How is technology shaping me?**
  - **Does my use of tech glorify God?**
  - **Does it love God and love neighbor as myself?**

Parenting in Technology

2. Establish "wells" with joy.

- **Make Christ the center** of the home: in your time, family priorities, relationships, etc.
- **Living out biblical values in technology:**
  - **Prioritize in-person interactions** in and outside the home—including with our church body.
  - **Promote "heart-mind-soul-strength"** activities.
  - **Enjoy positive media consumption** together.
  - **Make space for white space** (i.e. boredom, margin, down time).

Parenting in Technology

3. Establish "fences" with consequences.

- **Set the expectations up front**. Explicitly share **biblical values of technology and healthy tech use with your kids**.
  - E.g. AAP's Family Media Plan (healthychildren.org), phone contracts
- **Kinds of tech "fences:"**
  - **Screen time limits** (varies by age)
    - Many parental controls are available!
  - **Screen-free spaces**
    - E.g. bedrooms, dinner table, car, bathrooms
  - **Screen-free time/rhythms**
    - E.g. after 8:30pm, 1 day a week, etc.

Introduce Tech Slowly – AAP & www.screensense.org

American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines

- **0-18 months:** Only video chat with relatives
- **18-24 months:** Only high-quality videos, parents co-watch with kids
- **2-5 years:** 1 hour maximum a day, parents co-watch and discuss how it relates with the world around them
- **6+:** parental discretion with consistent limits. Should not compromise adequate sleep, physical activity, and other behaviors essential to health.

Your Approach to Tech Use Varies By Age — ScreenSense

Age 0-5	Elementary Years	Middle School Years	High School Years
(MOSTLY) UNPLUGGED	HANDS-ON TEACHING	ENGAGED MENTORING	SHIFT TO INDEPENDENT USE
- **Unplugged activities** best support early child development.	- Introduce screens in **moderation** and enjoy them **mostly as a family.**	- Continue guiding them to **content and tech uses you value**.	- **Be an advisor,** making adjustments to optimize their use of time.
- Keep the tried-and-true **basic needs** of this age group as your north star.	- **Be a hands-on teacher,** guiding them to content and tech use you value.	- Teach them how to **navigate social interactions** digitally.	- Remind your child that **how, when, and why** they use tech matters; discuss **tradeoffs** and how to manage disruptions and temptations.
- **Ignore the noise** of ed tech marketing efforts.	- Establish **family rules and norms** for tech use and explain why.	- Help them learn and internalize **processes for adding and removing tech,** discussing what is serving them well vs. not.	- **Embrace tech used well** for creative and collaborative purposes.
- Be mindful of what tech use habits you're **modeling.**			

Individual Family Drivers — To entertain, babysit, build skills

Later joined by...

Peer/Social Drivers — To connect with friends and the world

Parenting in Technology

4. Teach discretion and discernment.

1. **Digital privacy**
   - **Nothing online is truly private**
   - **Online actions are permanent**
   - **Discuss personal, private information** that is okay to share online
   - **Set accounts to private**
2. **Digital safety**
   - **Discuss online "friends" and "tricky people"** – Put it down, tell someone!
     (ProtectYoungEyes.com – "Stranger Danger in the Digital Age")
   - **Create a safe space/culture of accountability** and confession in the home

Parenting in Technology

4. Teach discretion and discernment.

3. **Curated content**
   - **Not all screen time is the same!** Consider content that promotes ***connection, critical thinking, creativity,*** and ***context*** (Common Sense Media)
4. **Media literacy and news literacy: Ask the "why?" question**
   - **Discerning design:** identify persuasive design techniques that keep eyes on screens and skew users towards negative or fake news
   - **Discerning content:** identify targeted ads, deepfakes, misinformation, fake news or web sites
     - **SIFT: Stop, Investigate, Find, Trace** (Michael Caulfield, WSU)

Parenting in Technology

4. Teach discretion and discernment.

5. **Self-reflection**

Five-question guide for reflecting on media: (Axis)

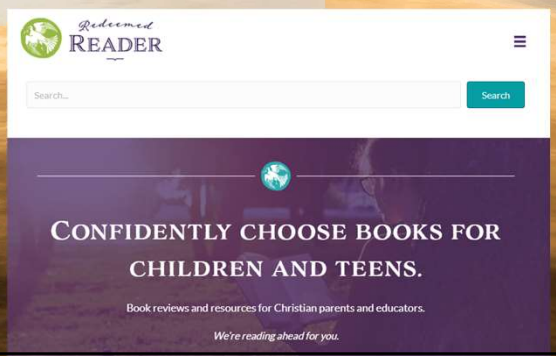
1. **What's *good* about it?**
2. **What's *bad* about it?**
3. **What's *missing* from this?**
4. **What's *confused* about this?**
5. **What does *the Bible* say about it?**

- *"How did you feel when you stopped playing that game after several hours?"*
- *"How does it compare with, say, creating something online or offline?"*

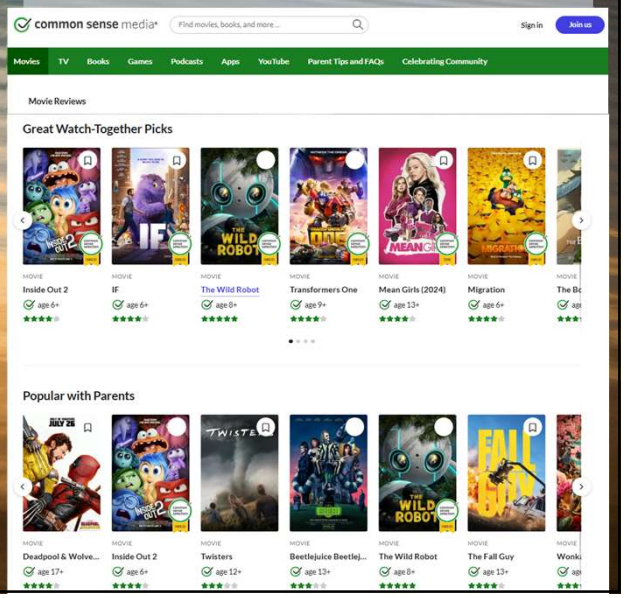
Online Resources: Curating Content

Axis Ministries

Redeemed Reader



Common Sense Media



Parenting in Technology

5. Talk: Monitor…

- **Be curious about their online activity.** Know what they're up to online; follow their social media accounts.
- **Praise healthy tech moments:** "Catch them doing good"
  - *"I'm so proud of you for getting off your iPad when I asked you to."*
  - *"I liked how you wrote that kind comment on your friend's Instagram post."*

Parenting in Technology

5. …but keep having conversations to get to the heart issue!

Our goal isn't foremost to control behavior, but to lead our children to Christ as ambassadors of reconciliation.

- **Active listening:** restate/reflect back what they're saying.
  - Practice the not shocked face!
- **Ask questions that get to the heart issue with your child.** (Paul Tripp)
  1. **What happened?**
  2. **What were you thinking and feeling?**
  3. **What did you do in response?**
  4. **Why did you do it? What were you seeking to accomplish?**
  5. **What was the result?**

Common Heart Issues in Technology for Your Child

https://mclean.capitalpres.org/resources/presentations/

Heart Issue	The Temptation/Accusation → Possible Fruit	Biblical Truths
Belonging	❖ I can feel connected without risk or vulnerability—social media is my imaginary buffer between emotions and reality. ❖ I can feel known and loved (e.g. receive affirmations and acknowledgement from others based on my day-to-day thoughts and feelings). ❖ I need to belong to these set of online relationships/social events to feel like I am part of my "tribe." →*anxiety; compromising choices; copycat behavior; unrealistic expectations for relational fulfillment*	• **I don't have to perform to belong; by grace, I belong to Christ.** Ephesians 2:13-16![1] In my online group, I often perform to belong. The audience is others; the standards are set by the group; they are undefined and changing. Under the gospel, I'm not performing. God is my audience. Th… righteousness of God, which I can't live up to—but … up to that standard, so that in Him, He is well pleas… • **Out of my union with Christ, I can pray for and se… community with other people.** I can look for comm… or other circles that provide healthier outlets for so… • **Because of my union with Christ, it's okay to be a…** citizen of heaven, I *will* be "left out" in one way or an… always "fit in" with the pattern of this world (Roman… • **"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, bu… will suffer harm" (Proverbs 13:20).** Are these frien… influencing me to behave in ways that are honoring … others? "Blessed is the man who walks not in the co… stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of s…
Body Image	❖ My body needs to be "perfect" as dictated by worldly or others' standards online →*anxiety; discontentment; depression; eating disorders*	• **I am beautifully and wonderfully made** (Psalm 13… • **Because I am "in Christ," I have the beauty and s… righteousness** (Isaiah 61). I don't have to live in sha… worthy by others in physical beauty (which is fleetin… out in the security of being eternally loved and acce… to achieve mastery over food and my physical body … peace. I truly have nothing to earn and nothing to prove. • **God is patient and gracious with me.** He knows my struggle; he is gracious and patient with those who are hurting; he lifts up those who are cast down (Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 42:3; Psalm 145:14; Matthew 11:28-30).

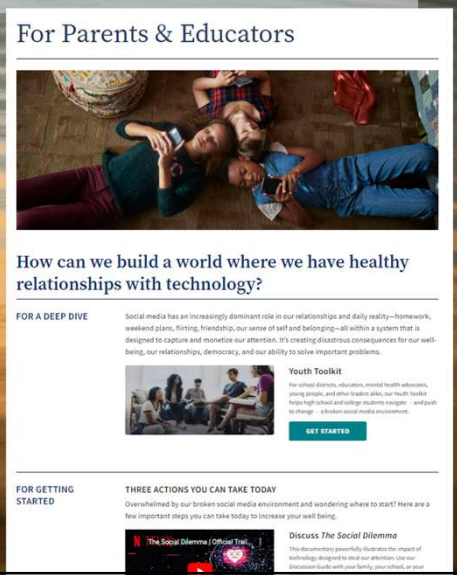
- Belonging
- Body Image
- Escapism
- Identity
- Immediate gratification
- Materialism
- Sexual gratification
- Social comparison

Online Resources: Equipping Parents to Talk with their Children

Axis Ministries

ScreenSense.org

Center for Humane Technology



In Closing: Two Comforts in the Gospel

This isn't our work, but *God's* (Phil. 2:13).

1. Let's be empowered by the **sufficient grace** He gives us (2 Peter 1:3-4, Titus 2:11-12):
   - Let's **pray** for His wisdom (James 1:5);
   - be **nourished by God's Word**;
   - and **seek Christian community** as we parent.
2. God is a **God of redemption** (Ps. 130:7). We aren't locked into our past mistakes! It is never too late to correct, reorient, and set new patterns.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
Psalm 130:7

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Q&A

Breakout Discussion in Small Groups

Anne Chen
MPC *MomsConnect*
Nov. 6, 2024