

“How Can I Protect & Shepherd My Kids in a Digital World?”

Philippians 1:9-11

July 26, 2026

We must recognize the potential danger, damage & devastation

- ✓ Amount of screen time
- ✓ Exposure to explicit content
- ✓ Dangers of online – exploitation & trafficking
- ✓ Mental health & social media exposure

We must remember we have a calling from the Lord – to shepherd & protect our children, students & others

We need the right kind of love

- ✓ Our love for the Lord & others must be growing Vs 9a
- ✓ Our love must be informed by knowledge & discernment Vs 9b

With this kind of love...

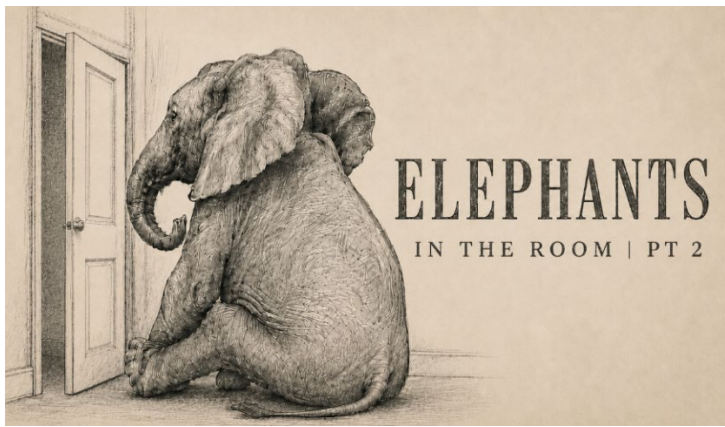
- ✓ We'll be able to approve what really matters Vs 10a
- ✓ We'll be able to live a pure & blameless life Vs 10b

This love will bring the right kind of life

- ✓ Our lives will be full of the right & good things Vs 11a
- ✓ Our lives will bring glory & praise to God Vs 11b

We must respond by making a plan & resolve to take the next step Proverbs 2:1-15; 4:1-25

- 1) (Be) Aware of the dangers & the good
- 2) Acknowledge who the real enemy is – Satan & his desire to deceive, defraud, & destroy
- 3) (Be) Authentic & Admit we all have room to grow & improve
- 4) Don't Abandon your role as a parent, as wisdom, or as a disciple maker
- 5) Don't Assume, be Apathetic or go on Autopilot
- 6) Don't Avoid tough conversations or be Afraid to ask questions
- 7) Assure them you're there for them – don't overact
- 8) Apply God's Word with them
- 9) Adopt clear boundaries, Adjust access & time as they age & mature
- 10) Address what to do when they are exposed to explicit content
- 11) (Be) Attentive to warning signs
- 12) Act now – don't wait



ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM Pt 2

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Resources

- 1) *Safeguards: Shielding our Homes and Equipping Our Kids* by Julie Lowe
- 2) *Raising Kids in a Scree-Saturated World: Help for Parents* Eliza Huie
- 3) *Raising Kids in a Hyper-Sexualized World: Help for Parents* Eliza Huie
- 4) *Every Parent's Guide to Navigating Our Digital World* Kara Powell / Art Bamford / Brad M. Griffin
- 5) *The Tech-Wise Famil: Everyday Ste[s] for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* Andy Crouch
- 6) *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* Jonathan Haidt
<https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/resources>

Apps for Parental controls MM Guardian, Aura, Bark, Quistodio, Mspy
Screen Time Labs, Circle Home Plus

Free online safety training <https://onemorechild.org/our-care/anti-trafficking/join-the-fight/online-safety/>

ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM Pt 2

“How Can I Protect & Shepherd My Kids in a Digital World?”

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We continue our much anticipated **Elephants in the Room Series Part 2**. Go ahead and turn to [Ephesians 5](#). I want to remind you that you can go on our website (petalfbc.com) or our YouTube Channel (type in Petal FBC) & find the ones we did in Part 1 in 2019 & the current series. I want us this morning to dive a little deeper into one that we talked about back in 2019, but not near to this depth

So let's read our **Text** & then **PRAY** & buckle up – we have a lot of ground to cover. **READ Philippians 1:9-11**

We must recognize the potential danger, damage & devastation

- ✓ Amount of screen time
- ✓ Exposure to explicit content
- ✓ Dangers of online – grooming, exploitation, & trafficking
- ✓ Mental health & social media exposure

The most current and best-supported research suggests that **roughly 1 in 5 teenagers have sent a nude or sexually explicit image of themselves, while about 1 in 3 have received one.**

What the newest research says

A **2025** review published in *Computers in Human Behavior*

- **19.3%** of adolescents reported **sending** a sext.
- **34.8%** reported **receiving** one.
- Receiving explicit images is considerably more common than sending them.
- **14.5%** had forwarded someone else's image without consent.

New U.S. Survey (2026)

One recent U.S. survey of **13–17-year-olds** reported somewhat higher numbers:

- **24%** had **sent** a sexually explicit image.
- **32%** had **received** one.

Even with these higher figures, the researchers emphasized that **most teens still do not participate in sexting.**

Barna/Pure Desire Study 18-37 year olds

55% report sending a nudge image of themselves or anyone else via text, email, social media, or app 53% of practicing Christians said they had 74% reported receiving a nude image via text, email, social media, or app

Opening of the message – cell phones/Ipads – hold them up – now put them if you will under your seat and make a commitment not to look at them for the next 30+ minutes **Toy Story 5 - pressure for parents – pressure for them to be accepted by their peers**

Stats

Amount of time we spend on digital devices – adults/teens/children (vs time we spend in church, in God's Word, having conversations etc.

Children 0-8 Around 2 hours

Children 8-12 – 5 hours 33 minutes

Teenagers 13-18 – 8 hours & 39 minutes (not including for schoolwork)
[50% of US teens reporting 4 or more hours of screen time each day are more likely to experience insufficient sleep, less physical activity, more weight concerns & irregular sleep schedules

Adults (18+) – 7 hours a day (this includes work related screen time)

Pornography – dangers lurking everywhere – not if your kids see it but when they see it

Overall Exposure Before Age 18

- **75% of teenagers (13–17)** report having seen online pornography.
- Among those who had seen pornography:
 - **44%** said they had intentionally viewed it.
 - **58%** said they had encountered it accidentally. (Some reported both intentional and accidental exposure.)

Age of First Exposure

- **Average age of first exposure:** 12 years old.
- **15%** of teens reported first seeing online pornography at **age 10 or younger.**

How Exposure Happens

According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#):

- **58%** of teens report that their first exposure was **unintentional.**
- Many first exposures occur between **ages 10 and 13.**
- A significant portion of youth encounter pornography **through social media platforms**, not just dedicated pornography websites.

Boys vs. Girls

An OECD report summarizing U.S. research found:

- **93% of boys (ages 13–17)** had been exposed to online pornography before age 18.
- **63% of girls (ages 13–17)** had been exposed before age 18.

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Sex exploitation/trafficking stats

Dangers of exploitation & sex trafficking on the Social Media, Messaging Apps, Online Gaming Platforms, livestreaming services & chat applications
300 million children around the world are impacted by sexual exploitation every year

21.3 million reports of suspected child exploitation were received in 2025 that included more than 61.8 million images, videos or other fields related to suspected child sexual exploitation.

Reports of online enticement was over 1.4 million of 2025 (that's 2,800 per day!) that's a 156% increase from the same time period in 2024 (note these were just reports, not the one that were not reported most experts believe it is scarily substantially higher)

What does online enticement include

- Grooming a child for sexual purposes
- Requesting sexually explicit images or videos
- Sextortion (blackmail using intimate images)
- Coercing a child into sexual acts over video
- Attempting to arrange an in-person meeting
- Sending obscene sexual material to a child

There were 1.5 million calls to the NCMEC in 2025 for Generative AI (GAI) & child sexual exploitation – this number has exploded & is rapidly evolving.

113,500 potential reports of child trafficking were received by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

Sextortion – people blackmail children/teens for sexual pictures of themselves – the reports have skyrocketed with just over 10,000 in 2022 to now well over 50,000 in 2025 – averaging 137 reports per day

Mental health & social media

Here are some of the **most recent and most credible findings (2024–2026)** on the effects of social media on children and teenagers from major organizations such as the Pew Research Center, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the American Psychological Association.

Overall Use

- **95%** of U.S. teens (ages 13–17) use at least one social media platform.

- **46%** of teens report being online "**almost constantly.**"
- Nearly **40% of children ages 8–12** report using social media despite most platforms requiring users to be at least 13.

Teens' Views of Social Media (Pew Research Center, 2025)

One of the most significant findings is that teens themselves have become much more skeptical about social media.

- **48%** say social media has a **mostly negative** effect on people their age.
 - Up from **32% in 2022.**
- Only **11%** say it has a mostly positive effect.
- **45%** say they spend **too much time** on social media.
 - Up from **36% in 2022.**
- **44% of parents** identify social media as the single biggest negative influence on teen mental health.

Reported Negative Effects

Mental Health

According to Pew (2025):

- **19%** say social media has hurt their own mental health.
- Teen girls report substantially greater harm than boys:
 - **25% of girls** say it hurt their mental health.
 - **14% of boys** say the same.

Sleep

Among teens:

- **50% of girls** say social media hurts their sleep.
- **40% of boys** say the same.

Self-Confidence

- **20% of girls** say social media hurts their confidence.
- **10% of boys** report the same.

Productivity

Many teens report social media reduces their ability to focus on schoolwork and daily responsibilities, with productivity being one of the more commonly reported negative effects.

Social media presents a meaningful risk of harm to youth, while also providing benefits

The types of use and content children and adolescents are exposed to pose mental health concerns. Children and adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media face double the risk of mental health problems

including experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety.³ This is concerning as a recent survey showed that teenagers spend an average of 3.5 hours a day on social media.⁴ And when asked about the impact of social media on their body image, 46% of adolescents aged 13-17 said social media makes them feel worse.⁵

Some of the most common risks for kids using social media include:

Fear of missing out (FOMO)

“FOMO” – seeing peers engage in exciting and interesting events – can negatively impact mental health. Kids may be more likely to try risky behaviors or “social media challenges” to fit in.

Overemphasis of looks

Social media is increasingly visual. Girls can be especially impacted by the effort involved in maintaining their online presentation, and the peer feedback they receive. Social media encourages kids to think about themselves as a brand. This puts kids at risk for worse body image.

Replacement for real life interaction

Spending too much time on social media can prevent kids from learning skills to interact with others in real life – skills like understanding context, starting and maintaining conversations, and interpreting body language.

Permanent and public

Social media posts and interactions never really go away. This means the mistakes kids make as they grow and learn on social media don’t go away either. It can impact peer relationships, mental health, and even prospects, such as employment, in adulthood. Sexting is a risk here too.

Brain development

Social media is designed to be...social. No matter the platform, social media is designed to hijack our brain’s reward center, there are rewards for

engaging, whether it's posting, commenting or reacting. . Brains that are still developing are at risk for permanent changes to how rewards are perceived and sought.

Exposure to advertising

Social media is a powerful vehicle for advertisers to reach kids. And kids have a harder time identifying when advertisers are influencing the content and messages they see.

Exposure to negative content

Unbalanced exposure to negative news and hate speech can negatively impact the mental health of adults and kids.

Cyberbullying

Social media can provide space and easy access for kids to be harmed by peers – and to cause harm.

Pretenders

It can be difficult to know who exclusively online friends really are. Kids are at risk of meeting people online who present themselves as trustworthy confidants but actually seek to access or harm kids.

What the U.S. Surgeon General Says

The 2023 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory (reaffirmed and republished in 2025) concluded:

- There is **not yet enough evidence to conclude social media is sufficiently safe for children and adolescents.**
- Social media may benefit some youth through:
 - social connection
 - identity exploration
 - support communities
 - creativity
- But there is a growing body of evidence linking heavy or problematic use with increased risk for:

- anxiety
- depression
- poor sleep
- body dissatisfaction
- cyberbullying
- problematic use/addiction-like behaviors
- exposure to harmful content
- reduced attention and concentration.

American Psychological Association (APA)

The APA does **not** recommend eliminating social media altogether but recommends safeguards because adolescents are particularly vulnerable to:

- social comparison
- appearance-focused content
- cyberbullying
- hate speech
- self-harm content
- excessive algorithm-driven engagement
- disrupted sleep from nighttime use.

Benefits Teens Report

The research is not entirely negative.

Many teenagers also say social media helps them:

- stay connected with friends
- express creativity
- find supportive communities
- learn new skills
- receive emotional support during difficult times.

Common Risks Identified Across Studies

Researchers consistently identify these concerns:

Effect	Research finding
Anxiety & depression	Heavy use is associated with higher rates of symptoms, though causation remains under study.
Poor sleep	Nighttime use and constant notifications reduce sleep quality.
Cyberbullying	Increased exposure compared with offline interactions.
Body image	Particularly affects adolescent girls through appearance-focused content.

Effect	Research finding
Attention	Frequent interruptions and endless scrolling may reduce sustained attention.
Addiction-like behaviors	Platforms are designed to maximize engagement through variable rewards and recommendations.

Important Research Caution

Leading medical organizations also emphasize that:

- Social media is **not the sole cause** of rising youth mental health concerns.
- Outcomes depend on factors such as:
 - total time spent
 - age when use begins
 - type of content viewed
 - active vs. passive use
 - parental involvement
 - existing mental health conditions
 - family environment
 - peer relationships.

Key Takeaways

- Nearly **half of American teens now believe social media is mostly harmful to people their age.**
- **45%** admit they spend too much time on it.
- Teen girls consistently report greater negative effects than boys, particularly regarding mental health, sleep, and self-confidence.
- Major health organizations conclude that social media offers real benefits but also poses significant risks, especially for younger users and those who engage heavily or encounter harmful content.

We see massive warning signs

Stats &

We have a calling from the Lord

We need the right kind of love

- ✓ Our love for the Lord & others must be growing **Vs 9a**
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We must love our families well

Our agape Love must abound – love would grow for Christ & for each other – in this case we're going to be talking about family – parent & child – Paul was talking to the church, but it applies in this specific arena as well. Love would be present in abundance and that it would be more & more – this isn't some of ooey gooey love, but instead a sober kind of love – love in the sense of placing high value on a person or thing, which expresses itself in actively seeking the benefit of the one so loved.

We must balance that love with knowledge & discernment (depth of insight) – conveys moral discretion

We can't love with just our feelings & emotions blindly – we must engage our minds – knowledge and then wisdom/discernment we can't truly & completely love without knowledge & discernment

The more we know about God, the more we love Him – the more we know about Him the more we will want to follow Him, to serve Him, to love Him We need to know God's Word – His instructions to us – remember we said last week – His Word isn't simply a reference point, it has to be the starting point. Every time we learn something new about Him and His perfect plan and how we live our lives, it's another fresh reason to love Him.

Discernment – practical insight that informs conduct - practical conduct – wisdom (word used 22 times in the book of Proverbs in Greek Translation of the OT) **Proverbs 2 & 4** Helps us what to do is right, what is best – how to obey God's will generally and more specifically, of how to make moral decisions based on God's will in the give-and-take of everyday living.

Godly common sense & godly wisdom – James 1:5

A spiritual sixth sense if you will

Why? We'll be able to understand what really matters!

So we **can approve/discern** (affirming & embracing the best of good choices – the ability to discern moral conduct & values so that life and energy are not misdirected- to put to the test/examine) **the things that are excellent/superior**

To determine what is best, what is wisest, what is right/wrong between better & the best, things that matter & things that don't

To be sincere/pure & (free from blame) blameless until the day of Christ we live with eternity in view – living for what matters most – prepared to meet Jesus knowing we've done what we were called to & to live

Blameless – in the sense of not offending or not causing someone else to stumble

(having been) Filled with the fruit of righteousness – right living – living like Jesus - life produced by Jesus with life in the Spirit

That comes through Jesus Christ

To the glory & praise of God the chief end of man is to glorify God with their lives – to bring glory (praise) to His name

1) I pray for you to... Vs 9-11

a) Grow in your love for one another Vs 9

Because he loved them so much he prayed for them so much! We have so lost the meaning of the word love in the English language, and there are as you know several Greek words used to describe love, here we find the strongest. **What kind of love** are we talking about here?

Agape - Self- sacrificial love that Jesus displayed on the cross is the kind of love that we are talking about here. A God Love – Really cannot adequately describe this love in our language – other than Jesus on a cross for us – [John 15:13](#) In other words our love for one another should grow daily, and that love should be the same kind of love that Christ loves us with, it is that unconditional love, no strings attached, sacrificial kind of love. Not only what kind of love, **but how is to grow exactly?** Not just more, or more and more, but still more and more! Here it tells us that our love should **overflow** more and more, it should grow everyday, to the point of overflow. It was to be ongoing, present all the time. **This love will flourish in an environment where these 2 things are present and growing as well.**

Knowledge We are not to love in ignorance, but with knowledge based on God's Word. We love people based on God's Word which means we love them the way He loves them and the way that He sees them, their heart. This happens only by experience. That is also what this word means, to know something, means there it is not just mental

understanding, but something we experience. “You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush.” Message

Discernment – depth of insight, understanding, perception.

In our love, we must grow in depth of our walk with Jesus and then how that affects our love of others. We must not be dumb, but discerning. Much like an art critic is able to see what is real and what is phony. We must see things as they are, and also how they could be. We move past criticism of people and see how we can help them become more like Christ.

b) Grow in your pursuit of excellence Vs 10a

“so that you may be able to discern what is best...” NIV

It is not just deciding between what is good and bad, right or wrong because as a growing Christian, we should be past most of that, but instead a decision between what is good, better, and best. “The good is the enemy of the best.” Many Christians struggle here including me, and we really miss out, because we might be doing a lot of good, but not doing the best. The idea here is that we will be able to discern what ultimately is God’s will for us which is the best, **what is excellent**. As we grow in our love for God and others, we desire to live according to His will as fully and faithfully as possible. Not as a duty of obedience. but out of a deep, genuine love for God.

Obedience motivated by love for God not only becomes a believer’s supreme objective but also their supreme pleasure and satisfaction. Here Paul is praying we will have this discernment, or understanding of what is best. The word was used in the **determining of the purity of metals**, whether it was pure or not. The idea also of **tested by trial**, in other words we must study, investigate, pray, and determine the best possible way to obey & please the Lord & then live accordingly! It’s the Refiner’s Fire – tough times by the way have a great way of doing this.

c) Grow in your purity Vs 10b

Pure/Sincere or Moffats suggests **transparent**

To be untainted, not polluted, clear, not contaminated The word only occurs one other time in the New Testament – 2 possible meanings for

this world, both work here. **Idea sifting out the impurities, through a sieve & Exposing pottery to the sunlight, where the markets where, could not see, hold it up to the sunlight and see if there was any cracks or wax to conceal those cracks** True growing believers are constantly holding up their lives to the Word of God to expose themselves to that sunlight to see what is really there. **Is your life and mine pure and sincere? Do people see that in you and also when no one else is looking?** We need to be certain that we careful where we walk and what we allow ourselves to be exposed to. We need to live transparent lives – real lives that people can see and relate to... I try to do that. **Blameless** to be free from blame, a passive voice Without stumbling or offense, has both the idea of not falling into sinful conduct and of not causing others to fall into iniquity. We need not sin nor cause others to stumble and sin. This is not a call to perfection, that is true only of God, but instead a call for us to do all we can to give glory to God and to live honorably before Him and others.

d) Grow in your integrity Vs 11a

Fruits of righteousness = integrity -the proof of who we are comes shining through. We have a harvest of fruit in our lives – we are filled up. meaning crammed full, full to capacity Our goal and aim as a child of God is to abide in Him, grow in our love for Him and His people, to grow our pursuit of excellence, choosing the best (God's will) growing in our integrity and the byproduct of that is that Jesus can bear fruit through us as we are abiding in Him. **John 15** We are not bear fruit, but to abide and the fruit is the direct result of an obedient life. We aren't just talking about living a moral life – but instead those eternal things, those righteous things... **Fruit** is telling others about Jesus, helping other Christians, worshiping God, any good work that brings glory to God, Fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians We are to live in such a way that Christ can work in us to produce a great harvest through our lives. **Where I get messed up** is trying to produce results on my own, most of the time not intentionally, just by not being focused. Paul is not telling us here to bear fruit, try harder, do things in your effort, but simply and quietly abide and allow His life in me to produce that fruit. **A reminder**, the fruit we are talking about is not simply “church activities”, or religious activity. **True spiritual fruit** is

so beautiful and wonderful that no man can claim credit for it; the glory must go to God alone, which leads to the ultimate objective.

In the end, “until the day of Christ” implies we are held accountable now for what we are doing, and there are rewards to be gained and missed if we are not being pure and blameless. But also, on the day of Christ – the rapture or our death that we will be held accountable for what we did with what we had. There will be rewards given and not given if you will. NO way will those who have lived a carnal Christian life receive the same reward as say Paul or say Billy Graham or the unknown believers who served faithfully & willingly behind the scenes with no recognition whatsoever & served & gave even their very lives!

e) Grow in bringing glorify & praise to the Lord

“...for this will bring much glory and praise to God. NLT & John 15:8

Paul here reminds these Philippian believers and us as well that our ultimate calling is to live for the glory of God by reflecting Christ character in our lives, in everything we do. Our motive is not to earn our salvation or to hope that God will love us – that is already settled but instead we live our lives in such a way that causes other people to think much of God because of who we are!

This is what makes the heart of God smile, a believer who lives for the glory of God. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 & Ephesians 3:20-21

Parents

We must model what is appropriate use of digital devices

Limit time, where & when we use it – give examples

When to let them have access – it’s not so much the when though it matters, it’s the how

The dangers – warnings – the signs to watch for

It’s not keeping them from it – though we must try – it’s also teaching them what to do when they see it

The concern the alarm – the warning – be aware of the dangers

Teaching your kids what to do in situations where they are exposed

What are the Takeaways – practical suggestions/ideas/thoughts

Help them connect them spiritually – encourage them, help them, at home – encouraging them to be a part of student ministry – you’ll never regret it & think oh I shouldn’t have invested there

Limit screen time – especially for younger children (weekdays vs weekends)

Develop & implement a plan for your family

Severely limit or allow no access to social media until they’re 16

Help them make the transition when they do get it

Anxious Generation

Protecting your kids from AI

Kids

We must respond by making a plan & resolve to take the next step

[Proverbs 2:1-15; 4:1-25](#)

- 1) (Be) Aware of the dangers & the good**
- 2) Acknowledge who the real enemy is** – Satan & his desire to deceive, defraud, & destroy
- 3) (Be) Authentic & Admit you have room to grown & improve** – lead by example **model** We must model what is appropriate use of digital devices
- 4) Don’t assume be apathetic or go on autopilot** and think not my kid don’t assume kids know what to do, how to behave, how to handle situations, etc online – anymore than they do knowing how to drive – stick you head in the sand – close your ears & eyes, don’t want to see or hear what’s going on **don’t just hand them a device to substitute parent**
- 5) Don’t Avoid these kind of conversations because it can be hard or uncomfortable or difficult**
- 6) Don’t Abandon your role as a parent, as wisdom, as a disciple maker**
- 7) Don’t be afraid to ask questions**
- 8) Don’t Appease kids**
- 9) Assure them** – don’t overact – you’re there for them if they mess up can come to you – you are the expert authority
- 10) Apply God’s Word** Help them connect them spiritually – encourage them, help them, at home – encouraging them to be a part of student ministry – you’ll never regret it & think oh I shouldn’t have invested there
- 11) Adjust access & time they age & mature**

- 12) **Adopt Arrange clear boundaries - lines**
- 13) **Address what to do when they are exposed to explicit content**
- 14) **Allow & Approve**
- 15) **(Be) Attentive to warning signs**
- 16) **Act now – don't wait**

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Develop & implement a plan for your family

Severely limit or allow no access to social media until they're 16

Help them make the transition when they do get it

Resources

Safeguards: Shielding our Homes and Equipping Our Kids by Julie Lowe

Raising Kids in a Scree-Saturated World: Help for Parents Eliza Huie

Raising Kids in a Hyper-Sexualized World: Help for Parents Eliza Huie

The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness Jonathan Haidt

<https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/resources>

Apps for Parental controls MM Guardian, Aura, Bark, Quistodio, Mspy
Screen Time Labs, Circle Home Plus

Free online safety training <https://onemorechild.org/our-care/anti-trafficking/join-the-fight/online-safety/>

Have you come to the place today where see & understand that without Christ you have no hope or life and today you want to surrender your

life to Jesus? Share the **ABC's!** **Identify with Jesus** Be baptized!
Identify with His Body Are you a member of a Church? Without one a
Christian is an orphan. Don't just attend step over the line today & join this
family! **Invest in your calling** – to answer God's call to full time ministry
Identify where is the Lord speaking to me from the message today
PRAY Invitation: "Blessed Assurance"