

For the Love of the Family Ministries

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Protecting Yourself On The Internet

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Many people who contact us here at For the Love of the Family have asked for help because of them or their children getting into problems by looking at inappropriate material on the Internet. The following gives some basic information about the Internet and some places to get help in protecting yourself on the Internet. It also gives some helpful ideas on how to protect yourself.

The article below is written by Dr. Jim Townsley, Pastor of Central Baptist Church in Southington, CT and is used with permission.

Dangers of the Internet- 01/27/08

TEXT – 1 John 2:15-16 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

2 Peter 2:12-14

INTRO – I am not even going to try to wax eloquent on this topic. There are many, many articles -- secular and religious which deal with all the "ins" and "outs" of the Internet. Let me simply say that the Internet is a system by which my computer can access, over a telephone line, literally millions of other computers around the world. I can gain access to the information on them and I can communicate with the owners of those computers via e-mail and other means.

In order for me to access to the Internet I need several things. Obviously a computer and that computer then must have in it a modem - a device which enables me to connect to the world via the phone lines. I must then sign on with an ISP (Internet Service Provider) -- this is where you get to pay money! There are many different ISPs out there. I will also need an e-mail program for sending e-mail.

WHAT CAN I DO ON THE INTERNET?

One of the wonderful aspects of the Internet is the ability to e-mail. That is, I write a letter and send it over the telephone line to another person with an e-mail address. It is sent immediately and I often get responses within a day or even hours. I can communicate with several of our missionaries. I have family and friends scattered across the USA with whom I can write quickly, easily, and I can even type

my replies within their original letter to me and send it back.

The other main aspect of the Internet is browsing and accessing Web Pages. The Internet or World Wide Web offers an overwhelming amount of information on just about any and every topic under the sun. I can check the weather anywhere in the world, read newspapers from every major world city, search for medical information, find good Christian literature, and yes, fill my computer screen (and mind) with pornographic images. Hence, the delight and danger of the Internet. But there are many evils lurking out there that I believe can be combatted by a few simple, common sense tactics that will go a long way in preventing a slide into the filth of the Net.

Some have likened the Internet to a bookstore. There are good books and bad books, you just have to be discerning. The analogy works to a point; what makes this "bookstore" so different is that there is no one else around, I have the store to myself. Would you take your children into a large store of which one half is filled with interesting, clean magazines and the other half with pornographic magazines. Then saying to them, "I will leave you alone in here for an hour, be sure to stay away from all those bad magazines." By the way, there is no store staff and no other customers. Would you leave them there? I sure wouldn't! It is playing with fire and I don't want my kids to get burned.

So it is with the Internet and that is why I wish to leave you with a few simple ideas that can help you keep yourself and your family pure while venturing on to the Internet.

Myspace and FACEBOOK are social networking sites. THIS enormously successful American business describes itself as "a social utility that connects you with the people around you". But hang on. Why on God's earth would I need a computer to connect with the people around me? Why should my relationships be mediated through the imagination of a bunch of supergeeks in California?

And does Facebook really connect people? Doesn't it rather disconnect us, since instead of doing something enjoyable such as talking and eating with my friends, I am merely sending them little ungrammatical notes and amusing photos in cyberspace, while chained to my desk? A user recently said that he had spent a Saturday night at home alone on Facebook, drinking at his desk. What a gloomy image. Far from connecting us, Facebook actually isolates us at our workstations.

Facebook appeals to a kind of vanity and self-importance in us, too. If I put up a flattering picture of myself with a list of my favourite things, I can construct an artificial representation of who I am in order to get approval. It also encourages a disturbing competitiveness around friendship: it seems that with friends today, quality counts for nothing and quantity is king. The more friends you have, the better you are. You are "popular", in the sense much loved in American high schools. Witness the cover line on Dennis Publishing's new Facebook magazine: "How To Double Your Friends List."

Facebook claims 60 million active users, including 7 million in Britain, Facebook's third-biggest customer after the US and Canada. That's 60 million naïve people, all of whom have volunteered their ID card information and consumer preferences to an American business they know nothing about. Right now, 2 million new people join each week. At the present rate of growth, Facebook will have more than 200 million active users by this time next year. And I would predict that, if anything, its rate of growth will accelerate over the coming months. As its spokesman Chris Hughes says: "It's embedded itself to an extent where it's hard to get rid of."

Social networking sites promised to bring not just people together but also our own fragmented selves — what we do, what we like, what we buy. Then we found out that promise was actually made to the identity harvesters — not to us.

In November, users discovered that Facebook's aggressive tracking system was compiling their purchasing history through vendors like Fandango and Travelocity. What's more, Beacon was sending our friends lists of where we'd been and what we'd bought — connecting our dots without permission. Users squawked, and Facebook backed off.

There is no control as to where our personal information may go and into who hands it is given.

COMMON SENSE HELPERS - here is a list of a few tactics that will strengthen the resolve of everyone involved to succeed in remaining pure on the Internet.

USE COMMON SENSE

1. Keep your computer in a public, open room. This is so simple! In a room that you can pass through at any time without warning will keep everyone on the right path. Having a computer in a bedroom with the door closed (when there is an Internet connection available) is not a good idea. Your family needs to understand that you have a right to see what they see on the Internet.
2. DO NOT give your children the Internet password! All ISPs require a password for account security, etc. You will need a password to connect to the ISP (and the Net) from your home computer. Not giving the password to the children will ensure that they only have access to the Internet while you are at home with them. If you are already "online" and they have access to the password, change the password.
3. Set a strict time limit. I believe that the longer we wander around on the Internet the more likely we are to get ourselves into trouble. Setting limits - 15 minutes, half hour, etc. will greatly reduce the temptation factor. We have recently signed on with an ISP that has time limits built in. It automatically disconnects us after fifteen minutes. We can reconnect again, but it certainly helps us know how long we have been online. (It also greatly reduces our cost as well) I mean, how long does it take to find out today's baseball scores?
4. Keep a check on where you kids are going on the Internet. Exactly what is it they are looking for? Sports scores, a school research paper, or the Spice Girls? I would like people to know that every piece of information that comes to you over the Internet is stored on your computer until you remove it. From a practical sense, you are filling up your computer's hard drive every time you browse. (Some time ago I helped a friend remove 130 Mgs of information he did not know he still had!) It also allows you to go over some of the sites visited from your machine. (A U.S. study of computers at work found that the most visited site on work computers was the Penthouse site -- a pornographic magazine)
5. Never forget we have an adversary without and we have an old nature within. I want to trust my family; I want to trust myself; but I am foolish to do so. It is far better for me to flee youthful lusts than to think I can handle the temptations (Pastor Gordon Conner).

STAY OUT OF CHAT ROOMS

Much of the danger to young people on the Internet is involved with the chat rooms. Internet chat rooms are becoming more of a problem with teenagers than even television, movies, videos, rock music, and such things. Pastors have ruined their ministry and family by developing a romance via a chat room. While e-mail between friends and relatives can be a very wonderful and effective means of communication, chat rooms commonly involve communication with strangers. The Bible strongly warns, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Unwholesome relationships always bring moral corruption.

FILTERING SOFTWARE

Beyond basic common sense and godly caution, there are a number of filtering solutions to this problem which are available. One type of filtering is available in software which operates on the Internet user's own computer. Two of the most popular are NET NANNY and SURF WATCH. HEDGEBUILDERS is another Internet filtering software package which blocks inappropriate web sites from a Christian perspective. Hedgebuilders@ij.net (e-mail), www.hedge.org/sr/0004.htm (web site).

FILTERED INTERNET PROVIDERS

An even better solution might be provided by the following services which operate on the side of the Internet provider before the content even reaches the user's computer.

CLEAN INTERNET is a service operated by Bible-believing Christians who attend a fundamental Baptist church. It offers filtered high speed Internet access and is protected by a tamperproof server-

side filtering system. The filtering database is updated daily, not weekly or monthly. There is no software to install, just fast, reliable, filtered Internet access. Contact 2318 Dombey Rd., Portage, IN 46368. 219-763-6344, sales@cleaninter.net (e-mail), <http://CleanInter.net/> (web site).

Following are other filtered, family-oriented Internet providers.

CLEAN FAMILY INTERNET

<http://www.cleanfamily.com/>

FAMILIES ONLINE

<http://www.familiesonline.net/>

FAMILYCLICK

<http://FamilyClick.Com/>

FAMILY NET

<http://www.family.net/>

GLOBAL FAMILY NETWORK

<http://www.globalfamilynetwork.com/>

INTEGRITY ONLINE

<http://www.integrityonline.com/>

INTERNET 4 FAMILIES

<http://www.globalfamilynetwork.com/>

SAFE BROWSE

<http://www.safebrowse.com/>

TRUSTED NET

www.trusted.net

WISE CHOICE

<http://www.wisechoice.net/home/>

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