



D I G I T A L D I S C I P L E S H I P

How Pastors Can Equip Families to Navigate the Online World

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be." – 1 Peter 5:2

By Parent ProTech



The Church's Role

The digital world is here to stay, and our churches must be equipped to guide families through its challenges. In the United States, kids ages 8-12 typically spend 4 to 6 hours a day using screens, while teens average up to 9 hours daily. Nearly a third of children report having negative experiences online. At any given moment, an estimated 50,000 predators are actively seeking out minors. The risks are real, and the need for leadership is urgent.

As a pastor or ministry leader, you are on the front lines. You are called to protect His flock—both in the physical world and the digital one. Today, that means guiding families through online challenges that many parents feel unequipped to handle. Parents in your community are looking to you for guidance. By providing Biblical wisdom and practical strategies, you can help families navigate the digital world safely and faithfully.



"Screen Time and Children." American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, n.d., https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-O54.aspx.

Child Mind Institute Releases Internet Usage Report: Helping Teens Make Online Spaces Safer." Child Mind Institute, 13 Feb. 2024, <https://childmind.org/blog/child-mind-institute-releases-internet-usage-report-helping-teens-make-online-spaces-safer/>.

"Project Safe Childhood." U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edtx/project-safe-childhood>.



5 Practical Ways Pastors Can Lead Families in the Digital Age

1. Model Healthy Tech Habits

Your example matters. How you use technology—whether in the pulpit, at home, or in meetings—sets the tone for those around you. Those who constantly check their phones during conversations send a message that a screen is more important than relationships.

Encourage parents to model healthy habits for their children. Challenge families to create tech-free zones—like during meals or family devotionals—to prioritize face-to-face connection.

Biblical Connection: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)



2. Encourage Active Tech Use Over Passive Consumption



Not all screen time is created equal. Just as we teach stewardship over finances, we must also teach stewardship over digital time. Encourage parents to guide their children toward purposeful, creative tech use—such as learning a new skill, connecting with family, or engaging with educational apps like Duolingo—rather than mindless scrolling.

John Mark Comer warns that constant digital engagement fuels restlessness and anxiety, making it harder to cultivate silence, prayer, and true Sabbath. When families are intentional with technology, they create space for spiritual growth and deeper relationships.

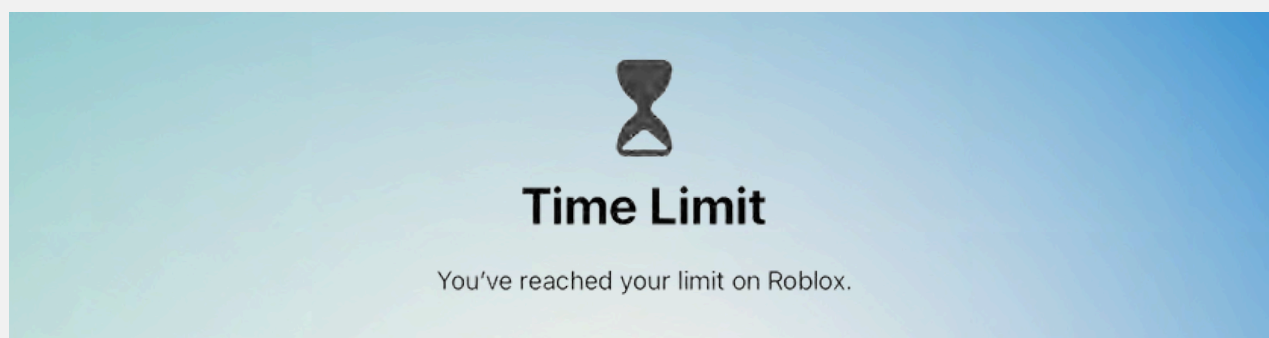
Think of it like a healthy diet: Active tech use nourishes the mind, while passive consumption is digital junk food. Help families find balance by encouraging activities that engage the heart and mind.

Biblical Connection: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Comer, John Mark. *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World*. WaterBrook, 2019.



3. Establish and Communicate Clear Digital Boundaries



The internet is like a city with both safe neighborhoods and dangerous alleys. Without boundaries, kids are vulnerable. Pastors can encourage families to set clear tech expectations—such as no devices in bedrooms or a "No Screens After 10 PM" family rule.

Teach parents that boundaries are not about punishment, but protection. Just as we disciple children in their faith, we must guide them in their digital habits.

Biblical Connection: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)



4. Foster Community Around Digital Discipleship

America faces an “epidemic of loneliness,” and excessive screen time can further amplify isolation. Church leaders can encourage social engagement through shared tech experiences.

Start a parents’ workshop on digital safety, launch a tech-free youth retreat, or encourage group esports in your congregation. Keep digital conversations in the open by recommending that families keep devices in shared spaces. When technology use is brought into the light, it promotes accountability, wisdom, and healthy relationships.



Biblical Connection: "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."
(Ephesians 5:13)

"What Is Causing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and How Can We Fix It?" Usable Knowledge, Harvard Graduate School of Education, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/24/10/what-causing-our-epidemic-loneliness-and-how-can-we-fix-it>.



5. Teach Digital Wisdom: Think Twice Before You Post



A single post can alter the course of someone's life. Countless young people have lost scholarships, job opportunities, and friendships because of impulsive online decisions. What's shared in seconds can live online forever.

Pastors can equip families to instill digital discernment in their children. Encourage the "Grandma Rule"—if you wouldn't want your grandmother, pastor, or future employer to see it, don't post it. Before hitting "send" on any photo, comment, or personal detail, teach families to ask: *Would I be okay with this resurfacing years from now?*

In a world where careless words can go viral and digital footprints never fade, wisdom and self-control are more crucial than ever. Help families understand that what they post not only reflects on them but should also honor God.

Biblical Connection: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)



The Church: Guiding Families in Digital Safety

The battle for online safety is not just about restriction, **it's about engagement.** Church leaders have a unique opportunity to shepherd families in digital discipleship, helping them use technology as a tool rather than a trap. Digital discipleship is about more than limiting screen time—it's about preparing families to navigate online dangers like explicit content, cyberbullying, and online predators with wisdom and discernment.

By modeling wisdom, establishing boundaries, and fostering community, pastors can equip families to create a safer digital world—one that honors God and protects the next generation.

Will you lead the charge?



For more resources on equipping your congregation with digital safety strategies, visit [Parent ProTech](https://parentprotech.com) or reach out to team@parentprotech.com!



About Parent ProTech



Parent ProTech is dedicated to equipping communities with tools to safely navigate technology.

Their team of parents, tech experts, ministry leaders, and educators provide 300+ churches, school districts, and community organizations across 18 states with tech resources. These resources include guides on trends and parental controls, an ISTE-based K-12 digital citizenship curriculum, a newsletter on tech updates impacting students, and presentations for families, students, and leaders.

