

Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

UPON THIS ROCK:

Guarding Against Internet Pornography

Generations ago, pornography was covered in brown paper labels or hidden out of sight of children. But now, our children are growing up in an environment where they do not have to find porn — it finds them. The issue of pornography exposure is not something that parents can ignore.

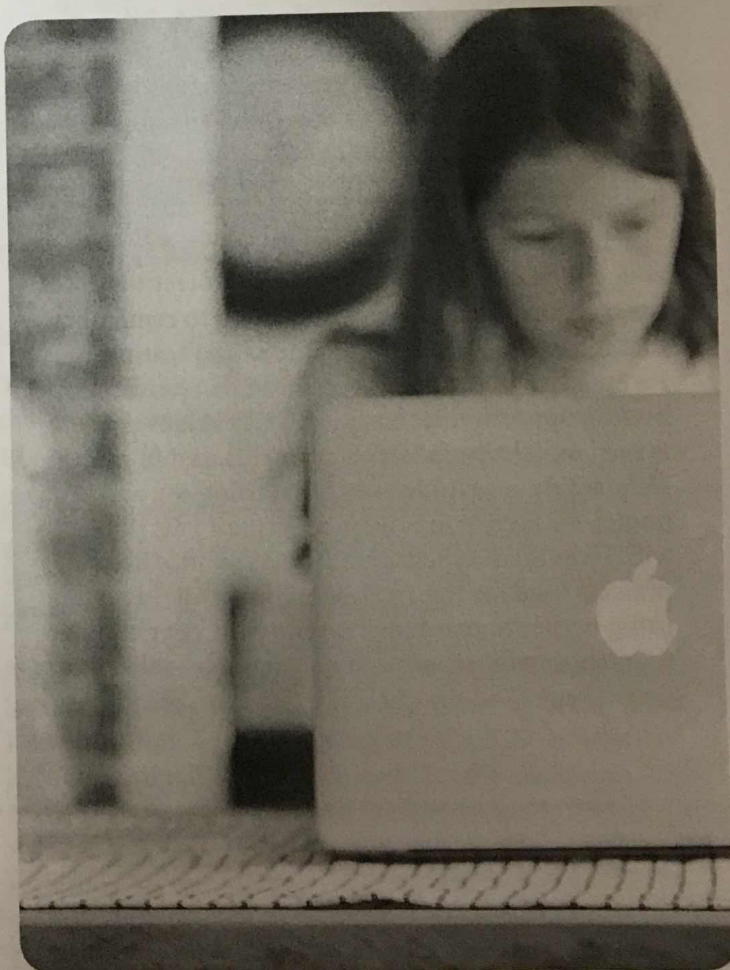
The statistics on pornography are as disturbing as the material itself: 1 in 5 mobile searches are for pornography. Approximately one-third of minors have viewed pornography online, with numbers as high as 70 percent for teens older than 14. The average age of first exposure for boys is 12 years old. Furthermore, 28 percent of children and teens view porn unintentionally through pop-up ads and hard-to-leave sites that repeatedly bring up new windows of porn as the viewer desperately tries to shut it down. Online porn is far more aggressive than the stereotypical magazine found in a friend's garage.

We are just starting to understand the negative effects of easy access to online porn for adults. The concerns raised are even more distressing for children and adolescents. Exposure for young children is confusing and interferes with their moral development as they seek to learn which behaviors are acceptable and healthy. For pre-teens and adolescents, pornography exposure interrupts their understanding of sexuality, confuses new feelings brought on by hormones, and opposes what they learn about God's will for their sexual behavior.

It is not God's desire for His children to be exposed to pornography. In the Small Catechism, Luther reminds us of God's promise of protection from evil as part of the morning and evening prayers we are encouraged to teach our children. Psalm 91 has comforting words for us regarding God's longing to protect and shelter His

children from the evils of sin: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11-12).

There are several ways in which parents are encouraged to shelter their children from pornography.



“When we dwell in the shelter of God, we live in a place of safety. Research indicates that people who attend church regularly are 26 percent less likely to indulge in online porn.”

1. Be your child's first and most important teacher regarding sex. When you are able to set aside your squirmy embarrassment about the subject matter and educate your children about sex on a regular basis as they grow in their ability to understand, you will be setting a strong foundation by which they can compare anything else they are taught about sex. Your words should be the first they hear on the subject, so that your voice and God's will are the strongest influences. Check out Concordia Publishing House (especially cph.org/c-268-learning-about-sex-series.aspx) for helpful materials. Research tells us that good, values-based sex education reduces, rather than promotes, promiscuous behavior in teens.
2. Teach your child discernment. Parent-led sex education is a great foundation for protecting children from online porn. Yet, it is important to remember that information is not the same as application. Parents also need to teach children discernment by finding opportunities to apply God's values to what is seen on television, on social media and in movies. Help children to understand that using sex and human bodies for humor or advertising is not part of God's will. Help them to recognize the difference between praising God for the creation of our bodies and using bodies to manipulate feelings. If your child is unintentionally exposed to pornography, take time to pray. Thank God for our bodies and for His protection.

3. Be involved. Many parents are turning to electronic filters to reduce the chance their children will be inadvertently exposed to porn. (Check out a recent article on the subject at pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2346997,00.asp.) This can be a good start. It is also recommended that computers in the home be in public places and that phones spend the night in a central recharging station. This lessens temptation and makes it more likely you will see any porn that forces itself into your child's view. Also, do not assume that your children and their friends are using social media appropriately. A watchful parent will make inappropriate texts less likely to happen and your child more likely to tell you when it does.

Psalm 91 suggests one more piece of advice regarding protection from evil: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust'" (Ps. 91:1-2).

When we dwell in the shelter of God, we live in a place of safety. Research indicates that people who attend church regularly are 26 percent less likely to indulge in online porn. Through the Sacraments and the study of God's Word, our faith is nurtured and strengthened. Our God-given faith is an important way that God shelters us.

For Further Study

Find statistics at covenanteyes.com/pornstats/.

Parent Pages

Vol. 16 • No. 6 • February 2017

Parent Pages is an LCMS School Ministry newsletter published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
314-965-9000 • lcms.org
Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Annie Monette

TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

