



Winter 2024

Dear Families,

Raising children in the faith doesn't happen just at church, but at home and in everyday life. As parents, you have the unique role to walk alongside your children every day and teach them about Jesus. In order to help promote and encourage faith development at home, I have included several resources for you to use in your homes:

- Family Devotions
 - Skit Guys Bedtime Stories
 - Cedarmont Kids
- Talking to Your Children
 - Media and Technology
- Family Traditions
 - Christmas
- 16 Table Talk questions to use at the dinner table
- Advent Calendar
- Technology Conversation Guide
- Family Smartphone Charter

“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

Blessings,

Jen Roettjer, DCE

Director of Youth and Discipleship





[FAMILY DEVOTIONS]

LEARN

The Skit Guys Bedtime Stories
A Christian comedy duo present Bible stories in their own unique style.

<https://skitguys.com/sgtv/show/bedtime-bible-stories-with-the-skit-guys>

SHARE

Highs and Lows from the day
What are you thankful for today?

PRAY
Confess
Honor
Ask
Thanks

MUSIC

Cedarment Kids—Bible Singalong Collection

Spotify or Amazon—Search for Artist Cedarment Kids
YouTube @cedarmentkids



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[FAMILY TRADITIONS]

CHRISTMAS

Thoughts to Consider

For many people, Christmas is their favorite time of year. As you spend time with your family and friends, celebrating the birth of the baby Jesus, the traditions we make at Christmas carry with us for years to come.

Christmas Activities

- Christmas Caroling – Sing your favorite Christmas songs to your neighbors, friends, or even at a nursing home. Then surprise them with a gift of cookies or candy.
- Gingerbread House Decorating Contest – Pick winners from a variety of categories: best use of one type of candy, most structurally sound
- Play Elf – Take a family walk and do something nice for a neighbor or friend, such as paying for a meal, doing yardwork, or bringing a special treat.
- Let the Games Begin – Host a board game or card game family tournament.

- Special Foods – Nothing says holidays like good food! Try one of these during your holiday celebrations:
 - Cinnamon rolls for breakfast
 - Christmas brunch
 - Hot Chocolate Bar with different toppings and flavors of chocolate
- Food Traditions from Around the World – Did you know in Japan, many people like to eat chicken from KFC? Or in Costa Rica, they like to make tamales for Christmas? Pick a country and try a favorite Christmas food that they enjoy.

- Gift Opening – Make it more interesting with a scavenger hunt, singing songs, or a quiz game.
- In with the New/Out with the Old – For each new gift a person receives, they must donate that many items.



[TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN]

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Thoughts to Consider

Technology and media have become a part of our everyday lives. From tablets and smartphones to Snapchat and YouTube, our children have access to large amounts of information, both positive and negative. For most of us, we did not grow up in a world with this type of access, yet we must raise our children in a world full of media and technology. So how do we raise our children to have healthy media and technology habits?

Let's look at a couple of areas: What guidelines do you have in place in your home? What behavior do you model to your children as you use media and technology? How do you balance screen time and play time?

Books

- "The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place" by Andy Crouch
- "Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World" by Devorah Heitner
- "Screen Smart Parenting: How to Find Balance and Benefit in Your Child's Use of Social Media, Apps, and Digital Devices" by Jodi Gold

Websites

- Child Mind Institute <https://childmind.org/article/media-guidelines-for-kids-of-all-ages/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>
- Common Sense Media – Best Apps for Families <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/app-lists>
- The Everything Smartphone Guide <https://axis.org/resource/the-everything-smartphone-guided-toolkit/>



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]

IMAGINE YOU WERE IN THE
WOODS BY YOURSELF FOR A
WHOLE DAY. WHERE WOULD YOU
SLEEP? WHAT WOULD YOU EAT?

SET 14

IF YOU DID THE GROCERY
SHOPPING, WHAT WOULD YOU
BUY?

SET 14

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST AND
LEAST ABOUT YOUR LIFE?

SET 14

WHAT ARE 3 THINGS THAT YOU
ARE GOOD AT DOING THAT TOOK
A LOT OF HARD WORK AND
PRACTICE?

SET 14

IF YOU COULD GROW A
MUSTACHE, WOULD YOU DO IT?
WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

SET 14

CAN YOU TELL IF SOMEONE IS
TELLING THE TRUTH OR LYING?

SET 14

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU
COUNT ON OTHER PEOPLE TO
DO FOR YOU? WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN IF THEY STOPPED DOING
THOSE THINGS?

SET 14

DO YOU PREFER TO PLAY INSIDE
OR OUTSIDE?

SET 14



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]



[TABLE TALK]

HOW IS YOUR FAMILY DIFFERENT
FROM OTHER FAMILIES?

SET 14

WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING
THING THAT HAPPENED TO YOU
THIS YEAR?

SET 14

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BUGS?

SET 14

WHAT IS THE BEST JUNK FOOD
EVER CREATED?

SET 14

WHAT SUBJECT ARE YOU TAKING
THAT YOU WISH YOU COULD DO
MORE OF?

SET 14

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE
ANIMAL?

SET 14

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE
FAMILY VACATION?

SET 14

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PIECE
OF ART?

SET 14

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

Let them earn it: Reward what you want repeated by allowing your kid to earn technology time by using access as currency. For example, if your child reads for 20 minutes, they earn 10 minutes of technology time. If your child completes certain chores, instead of money, they're given minutes to use on approved electronic devices. If your child gets a good behavioral report at the end of the school week, they are given a set amount of time over the weekend to use their tablet or device.

Keep it social. Keep your kids' technology in plain sight. Designate a common area in the house where your kid(s) have permission to use their technology. Have them help you set it up with a comfy chair, lamp, charger, and any other supplies frequently used with their devices. As you set it up, talk about the importance of having rules and boundaries when it comes to using technology. Talk about all the ways keeping what happens *online* in plain sight keeps everyone safe.

Talk about the good and the bad. It may feel early, but it's important for your elementary schooler to know that there are people who use the Internet for good *and* for evil. Give your kid a "pop quiz" on online safety by providing them with a variety of scenarios and asking them how they'd respond. Praise them for answers that support your family's boundaries, and redirect when they don't.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your elementary student develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



For more information on The Phase Project and other great parent resources, visit theParentCue.org
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TECHNOLOGY

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

They might have not asked yet, but kids want to know when they'll be able to get their own phone, have their own social media profiles, and interact with friends online. Start the conversation about technology now, and begin setting clear guidelines. Kids know they can get their license at sixteen, which gives them something to look forward to. Set expectations about when they can get their 'technology license' too. Technology can be a positive experience as long as parents stay informed and involved. Remember, your role in the elementary phase is to help them . . .

EXPLORE
The possibilities



So your child will . . .
**UNDERSTAND CORE VALUES
& BUILD ONLINE SKILLS**

This guide is designed to help you meet elementary-age kids where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.

TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (K-3), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"Never use Google (or any search engine) alone."

"I don't know, but we can look that up together." *(Use technology to enhance your conversations.)*

"I'm texting Grandma to ask a question."
(Talk openly about technology as you use it.)

"Siri doesn't always know what we are asking." *(Turn on safe search, and don't let Siri answer your kindergartner's questions.)*

"You have ten more minutes and then it's time to put the iPad away."
(Set limits for screen time.)

"Let me see what you did." *(Show interest in what they do with technology.)*

"Never post a phone number or address without checking with me."
(Kids are often naïve about sharing personal content with strangers.)

TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (4-5), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"What do you think is a healthy amount of time online?"
(Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)

"Can you help me figure out how to . . ."

"Tell me more about how that works."

"Have you ever seen someone say really mean things online?"

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know." *(Look up things like age limits, content ratings, and connection to strangers.)*

"Can we play together?" *(Make technology social by playing online games together.)*

"Have you seen anything online that surprised you?"

"We should respect people online just as much as we respect them in person."
(Talk about how devices sometime escalate bullying.)

"Sometimes people pretend to be someone they aren't online."
(Caution against contact with strangers.)

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The elementary years are full of possibilities and you want to engage their interests in a healthy way. Use technology to share things you enjoy. Stay curious about what they are seeing and learning, and help them to feel safe in bringing questions to you. When they push back against your rules and guidelines, engage them in talking about the 'why' behind the rules. Stay informed. Stay involved. Keep the conversation going.

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities you can try:

Engage with technology. Every other week or so, challenge yourself to become familiar with a new aspect of technology—a filter, a GIF, an app, a game, etc. Engage with your middle schooler by sharing the new skills with them, and ask them to show you anything new they've learned, too.

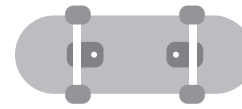
Sign an Agreement. At theParentCue.org, you can find a cell phone agreement with some healthy guidelines you can establish with your middle schooler before (and even after) they get a phone. There are items for them to initial their agreement to, like where they will keep their technology at night, as well as items they can hold you accountable to, like not texting and driving! Use this agreement to lay out a plan of expectations for technology use that leads to increasing freedom.

Build others up. Technology is a tool that can be used for good or . . . well, evil. Challenge your middle schooler to say at least one positive thing about something or someone on technology three times a week. Help them learn to make a habit of using technology to build others up, and never tear them down. And make sure you're modeling this one as well!

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your middle-schooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



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Middle School

TECHNOLOGY

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Your middle schooler might seem tech savvy, but they're not life savvy yet. They might want freedom online, but they're not ready for it. Don't make privacy something you're taking away from them, but rather something you're working toward as a team. Be clear about it and to the best of your ability, paint the picture that both of you have the same goal—an awesome experience with technology. Remember your role in this phase is to help them . . .

COLLABORATE
A plan



So your child will . . .
**RESPECT LIMITS & STRENGTHEN
SOCIAL ABILITIES**

This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep the end goal in mind:

TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.

TO SIXTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

"I need your phone at 7pm every night." *(Whatever your expectations may be, make them clear up front.)*

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know."

(When they get a phone, share an account and research their apps.)

"I saw this video and it made me think of you." *(Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)*

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." *(Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)*

"Which of your friends have a phone? What do they do on their phone?"

(Know what kind of access they have when they are with their friends.)

"I will always love you no matter what you do and you can always come and talk to me." *(Create a safe place to be honest.)*

TO SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

"Let me check the age restrictions first." *(Most social platforms require a minimum age of 13 years.)*

"Saw this video and it made me think of you." *(Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)*

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." *(Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)*

"Can you teach me how to use this app?" *(Use mobile devices to connect: text, share, learn, and play together.)*

"What you post is public, even if it feels private. And it can be permanent." *(Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)*

"What do you think is a healthy amount of time for you to spend online?" *(Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)*

"What should the password be?" *(When you are ready, set up social media accounts together, and know their passwords.)*

"Is it okay if I comment on your posts?" *(Be considerate about how you engage with them online.)*

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The middle school years are a great time to affirm their journey. Respect their growing need for privacy, but don't hesitate to establish boundaries. They won't always act like it, but they need you now more than ever as they enter the much bigger world of technology. They're now connected to people and information at the touch of a finger. The world of technology can open up a super fun time for your family but it can also bring stress and anxiety. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

Family Smartphone CHARTER



As your parent, I am responsible to God as the ultimate steward of your phone. As long as the phone is paid for by me, and/or while you live under my roof, here are our **non-negotiables**:

- ✓ All passwords are public and accessible, including for apps.
- ✓ Parents have full access to any phone at any time.
- ✓ No sneaky apps designed to hide or keep secrets.
- ✓ Calls from parents are answered or responded to in a certain time period we decide.
- ✓ No pornography, or sharing of images that exploit, harm, or shame other people.
- ✓ No dating apps.
- ✓ We will not use our phones to bully or gossip.
- ✓ No abusive or inappropriate language communicated through this device.
- ✓ If this phone is broken or lost, the repair or replacement will be your financial responsibility.

Our grace policy

Systems break, technology fails, and sometimes you will find a way around the rules. You can still tell me anything. I want to know if you are being bullied online. I care about who you talk to and what you watch. I'm making these rules because I care about you and want to help you become responsible.

5

Essential Conversations to Have First

Who pays for the phone? **Ownership and responsibility**

When and **where** can this phone be used? **Basic ground rules**

How do we know what to trust online? **Representation does not always equal reality**

Why do we avoid harmful content? **A Christian ethic for deciding what's appropriate**

What if everything goes wrong? **Positive motivation, consequences, and support**

The 8 Smartphone Domains

Phones are very good, cursed, & can be redeemed. God owns everything, & He owns all phones. Parents are responsible to God as the ultimate steward of the family phones.

Move from left to right across each of the 8 domains.

