



THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL FRIENDS

Remember this common scenario? Kids arrive home from school, throw their backpacks in the hall, grab a snack, and head outside to play with neighborhood friends. Well, things have sure changed. These days, many kids come home from school, go into their room, pick up a cell phone or other device, and start interacting with their “friends” digitally.

What can parents do in this connected culture? One of the best ways you can help teenagers curb screen time is to examine your own habits. Kids are natural copycats, even as teenagers. So when parents spend a lot of time on social media or staring at a laptop or phone, teenagers will follow suit.

Here are some other tips for managing digital relationships:

1. Talk with your kids about their friends and interaction habits.
2. Help kids develop healthy boundaries regarding how much time they spend connected digitally.
3. Encourage in-person or real-life interaction and friendships. This might take some extra “pushing” if kids have become too dependent on digital interactions. Help kids take small steps to grow comfortable building face-to-face connections.

—Lars Rood

THE VIEW

Although the average teenager has more than 300 Facebook friends, intimate friendships among young people have been on the decline. Developmental psychologist Patricia Greenfield says many teens now find affirmation and support based on feedback from their online postings.

Her research shows that having large networks of online friends—whom kids don’t necessarily ever meet—makes young people feel socially supported. Thus, all these quick, easy connections now trump personal intimacy.

“The whole idea behind intimacy is self-disclosure,” Greenfield says. “Now they’re doing self-disclosure to an audience of hundreds.”

—www.cbc.ca

TIPS >>>

MEDIA-FREE ZONES

Social media is here to stay. Though platforms may change (remember MySpace?), teenagers are digitally connected now more than ever. Whether it’s thumb conversations (texting), photo-feelings (Instagram and Snapchat), or status updates (Twitter and Tumblr), kids are rarely far from their cyber homies.

All that constant connection can make real-time family conversations nearly impossible. Yet asking kids to completely disconnect is often a losing battle.

One solution that’s worked for our family is developing some media-free zones. Here are a few we’ve introduced in our home:

- **Dinner.** Everyone’s cell phones are turned off, as are any TV sets and computers. (No “pings” interrupt prayer time, thankfully.)
- **Television.** Wait, that isn’t media-free! But even watching a show or movie together is almost impossible with cell phones and extra screens. Although our kids assure us they can multitask and check Reddit while watching Netflix, we shut them down anyway.
- **Bedtime.** Our kids have to leave all their devices in the living room when they go to bed. That way no 2 a.m. texting can occur.

Your family doesn’t have to completely disengage to create some media solace. Just wisely select special moments you want to protect.

—Darren Sutton

PONDER THIS

- In what ways does our “connected” culture affect your family? your relationship with your teenager?
- How can all this connectedness actually leave people feeling lonely?
- What can you do to encourage more face-to-face interaction with your teenagers?





How We Partner

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Lars Rood

Youth pastors and parents haven't always partnered well. The pendulum swings from youth pastors not wanting much to do with parents to giving parents all the responsibility for every part of their teenagers' faith journey. The great reality we're starting to land on is that partnering together is most effective.

That's why I'm grateful for the book *Sticky Faith* (Zondervan) by Kara Powell and Chap Clark. It discusses how both youth pastors and parents can help kids develop relationships with other Christian adults. The authors say every teenager needs five Christian adults in his or her life. These

adults love them, go to their events, model what it means to be a Christian, care for them when they're hurting, and listen when they need to talk.

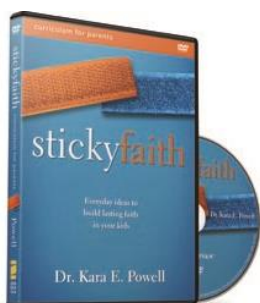
With this approach, a partnership with parents becomes much stronger and more focused. Everyone needs to look out for adults who can be involved in young people's lives. A youth pastor is probably one, yet your son or daughter may feel more connected to a small-group leader. Youth pastors make sure those leaders are trained and prepared so they can care for your teenagers just as you would. Parents should feel free to contact youth pastors

to brainstorm other Christian adults who can contribute to their students' lives and faith.

I believe very strongly that if both youth pastors and parents are looking for people to be in their kids' lives, then we've figured out the best way to partner. It means we've no longer made it just about us and what we can do. Instead, we've invited a whole crew of people on board to help.

So schedule some time to meet with your teenagers' youth pastor. Figure out who's already involved in your son or daughter's life. Then determine who else you need to find and where you might find them. By working together, we can ensure that kids' faith truly "sticks."

RESOURCE



The video-based parenting curriculum for *Sticky Faith* (Zondervan) consists of five 20-minute sessions. Kara Powell offers loads of practical ideas for encouraging young people's spiritual growth. She developed the curriculum out of the desire to see her own kids emerge from adolescence with an intact faith.

BIBLE FOCUS

I'll let you in on the sweet old truths, Stories we heard from our fathers, counsel we learned at our mother's knees. We're not keeping this to ourselves, we're passing it along to the next generation—God's fame and fortune, the marvelous things he has done.

Psalm 78:2-4 (The Message)

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



MOVIE: *NOAH*

Synopsis: After the Old Testament hero dreams of impending doom, he moves to save his family and the animals from a watery grave.

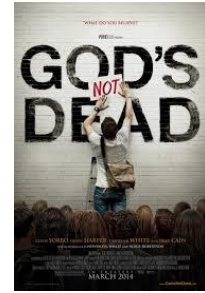
- What's your reaction to people taking creative liberties with biblical accounts? Is it okay to make a movie that isn't scripturally accurate if it piques someone's interest in the Bible? Why or why not?
- In this film, the fallen angels are portrayed as merciful while God is portrayed as a harsh judge. How does your perception of God affect your relationship with him?
- The movie ends with a second chance focusing on mercy and love. Who do you know who needs a "do-over"? How can you show them God's mercy and love?



MOVIE: *SON OF GOD*

Synopsis: This film covers the life of Jesus, from his birth through his ministry to his crucifixion and resurrection.

- When Jesus wades out to Peter's boat and tells Peter to simply fish on the other side for a great haul, Peter thinks he's crazy. When have you sensed Jesus asking you to do something that seemed crazy? Share your stories.
- Pilate wrestles with who Jesus is, finally washing his hands of the situation. What are some ways you've struggled with who Jesus is? As you grow up, what's changed about what Jesus means to you? Who do you need him to be in your life today?



MOVIE: *GOD'S NOT DEAD*

Synopsis: A philosophy professor challenges Josh, a college freshman who's a Christian, to prove that God isn't dead.

- Talk about a time when a friend persuaded you to abandon something important to you. Never underestimate the power of your story and how it speaks into your teenager's life.
- When is it easiest and most difficult for you to speak about your relationship with Jesus? What might it look like for you to take a more public stand for him?
- What are some ways of acknowledging Jesus without using words?

WHY MEDIA DEBRIEFING MATTERS

Quite simply, media debriefing is just grabbing the teachable moments you have with your teenagers after an event such as going to the movies. It doesn't need to happen immediately, and it doesn't even need to feel like a formal conversation. Debriefing is simply a tool to keep the lines of communication flowing. With media, debriefing helps bring a faith-walk moment to an event that may or may not have a single thing to do with faith...at least on the surface. Although the three movies listed here have a direct connection to the Bible or faith, you can debrief any media experiences and tie in faith-related questions.

MAY 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				National Day of Prayer	BASEMENT 7-10pm Harpers' Home 53 Berkshire Dr Bring a snack and drink to share! HS Students only	IMPACT VA! TRAINING 8am
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ELEVATE 5-7pm WC			MIDWEEK 6-7:30pm Chapel		BASEMENT 7-10pm Martins' Home 456 Telegraph Rd Bring a snack and drink to share! HS Students only	IMPACT VA! TRAINING 8am
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
NO ELEVATE BAPTISM SUNDAY HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!					BASEMENT 7-10pm Goods' Home 11 Latham Lane Bring a snack and drink to share! HS Students only	SELF DEFENSE CLASS 10am-12pm Worship Center
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
ELEVATE 5-7pm WC Senior Pictures Due for Banquet and Worship Guide			MIDWEEK 6-7:30pm Chapel		NO BASEMENT ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAY WEEKEND!	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
NO ELEVATE HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY! Senior Posters Due for Banquet and Senior Sunday	HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY!				BASEMENT 7-10pm Honigs' Home 35 Easter Drive Bring a snack and drink to share! HS Students only	