

Is a Skunk in Your House?

How to prevent technology from creating a stench among your family

When I was kid, a skunk died in our garage. That wasn't the worst of it, either. My dad, in his hurry to get to work, didn't realize that this creature had breathed his last right behind the tire of his vehicle. Yes, you guessed it: He then backed over the skunk in our garage. It smelled disgusting for months!

The world sometimes has a way of sneaking into our homes as well. We might realize there is a bad odor somewhere in our homes. We catch the scent of something unpleasant. This might manifest itself in our children's attitudes or actions, like when we can't get our son to come to dinner because he just *has to* conquer the next level in his online game. Or when our daughter looks like her thumbs might fall off because she's texting that boy she likes. This is the scent of an invader in your home.

This isn't to say technology is a bad thing. I believe that it has the power to reach the ends of the earth with the Lord Jesus Christ if it's used with a motive to advance God's kingdom, rather than becoming a teenager's little empire of self by putting his or her face all over Facebook. For those of us who are parents, managing technology in our homes is critical. If we don't, it will become the skunk in the garage!

Remember, our kids are natives to the tech world, while we parents are immigrants to this new land. We can make our "immigration" worse by spoiling our kids with all the tech toys and privileges we shower on them as they grow older into their tween and teen years—the new video games, movies, iPods, iPhones, i-anythings. It's bad enough when those tech gadgets leave a foul smell in our homes; but then we as parents are

just like my dad: We run over the skunk because of our tech ignorance! Without realizing it, we make the problem worse because we don't know how to keep up with what our kids are doing. Meanwhile these toys gain more and more control of the hearts and minds of our children.

The truth is, we're sending mixed messages to our kids when we give them access to technology without setting guidelines and boundaries for them. We hand them the latest gadget and then get frustrated when it's dinner or family night and we can't pull them away from it. This is where I see parents losing the battle with their kids every day. They won't take the time to invest in this virtual world where their kids live. Parents often say they don't understand all the gadgets their kids have and, as a result, give up the healthy mentoring process.

Second Corinthians 2:15 says: "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." How can we get rid of the stench of the world that insidiously sneaks into our homes, and instead become that fragrance of Christ not only to those around us, but to our families as well?

It starts with being aware that the world, especially through technological gadgets, has a way of intruding into our homes like an unwelcome visitor—unless we as parents have healthy boundaries and guidelines to keep them in check. There is a destiny at stake in each of our children. What I see so often are things such as pornography, unhealthy relationships and bullying tripping up kids. They need us to be their guardians and protect them in this cyberworld.

What does diving into this world look like for us as parents? First, if you don't know how these things work, you should find someone who does (not your children).

Second, start implementing some basic guidelines for monitoring your kids' technology influences. For example:

Have filtering or monitoring software installed on ALL computers your kids have access to at home.

Don't give your kids any kind of phone, iPod or device that you can't or don't sufficiently monitor.

Always have their passwords.

Make sure virtual friends are individuals they've met face to face.

These tips will help you sniff out the dead skunk before you experience running over it.

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