

Protecting Your Teen From This Counterfeit Connection

Being a teenager in a biblical community does have its perks, like the worship and face-to-face community. But what's hardest for me is finding quality relationships and accountability in those you surround yourself with. In reality, it's hard to surround yourself with people who will keep you accountable because those who are around you aren't really paying any attention. Some of my friends I don't talk to face-to-face in person for months at a time—just an endless stream of texts—a phone-based relationship. I don't actually understand who they are as a person other than what they convey to me in our short, dysfunctional, and self-centered conversations.

The point is, we spend too much time on our phones, rather than getting to know another person as a valued, struggling child of God. What happens then? We lose the biblical value of friendship and accountability. We get lost in self-pity because our lives aren't as exciting as that girl who lives in Cali with the skin you wish you could have or that guy who has better abs and more girls than you do. We suffocate in our assumptions and gossip because we have no real connection with anyone around us, and we are drowning for anything relatable to say.

Our self-image has become so important to us that we forget to care about our spirit and the endless eternity we will have to live with the consequences of our actions. Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 says, "Now all has been heard. Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole *duty* of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

That's freaky. Every single thing we say, do, or think has been heard, and we will be judged on it, whether we will stay in heaven or burn in hell for all eternity. To me that's more important than what Jessica said to Rachel about what Amber told her concerning Heidi when Dana told her about Lydia's sister.

If anyone among you seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless (James 1:26).

He will find everything. Every hidden thing. And it will be revealed. Scary, isn't it? Life is more than just relating to the people around you and being liked. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Life is not to glorify yourself and enjoy yourself forever, nor to enjoy and glorify man. So why do we put that as our priority? Because in the void of no God, we lift up something else in His place—social media. It's going to kill your heart of love.

Why Am I Here?

Every person who ever lived asked the same question at least once in their lives: Who am I, and why am I here? Is it all for power and respect? Maybe for attention and self-image? They all tell us life is for knowledge and understanding, or family and happiness or even friendship and living life to the fullest. But which is right? Which is truly the reason we are alive?

Actually (shockingly), absolutely none of these defines what we're here for. We all grow up in the ideals of our broken cultures and try to fulfill the broken desire of what our fathers and their fathers and their father's fathers thought looked pretty on a Hallmark card, rather than stopping and wondering what the original desire of our first patriarch was.

Remember the one who was made before there were even names to

go with the things around him? The one who was popped right into the presence of the Lord, probably without a belly button, and stood vulnerable and safe, wanting nothing more than to seek out every aspect of the unending, ageless, and eternal being whose breath filled his veins?

He was made by the Lord of heaven to love and be loved there in the garden. He was made to walk with God in the sparkling dew, the breezy afternoon and in the cool of the evening. He was made by a God so beautiful and so gentle, yet so big and omnipotent, that he simply spoke and suddenly, things were. God is kind and merciful, yet the judge of all things living and dead. How is it that anyone can be so ignorant as to choose any other path but towards him?

We Were Made for Face-to-Face

Moses glowed after a face-to-face conversation with God. We were made for face-to-face. We were made to walk side by side. Not over a blind wide space with a lit-up screen. Unable to see in someone's eyes if what they are saying is real or if it is a brush off.

Why would we even think of living for a like from that girl on Facebook when we could stand in His peace and joy for all eternity?

We, in our negation of Christ and lack of anything filling the gaping hole within us, strive to find a god in the things around us. Like the early Greeks and their crazy immoral idols or Americans now and their self-image or television, we are just weak humans in our self-reassurance, striving for a something to take the place of God. Social media is an idol we use to replace God. We worship our self-image. We worship the image of others.

What I hate about social media most is the fact that people become affirmed in their sin and in their darkness because "everyone else is doing it." Your only motivation on something

should be for the glory of God. Not for your glory in the eyes of man. You know what else everyone else is doing? Lying alone, lost in their sin and emptiness, slave to the whim of Satan, longing for Jesus. Don't do something just because everyone else is doing it. Do something because Jesus did it. He has a plan for you. It's going to be wild, strange and a little bit insane, but everyone who went before us has proven that it is absolutely amazing. That crazy journey all leads to the face-to-face for all eternity the one that we have longed for since creation.

God is Your Father

Who am I and why am I here? What scientists want you to believe is that you're an accident. They want you to believe is that after trillions and trillions of years, there was suddenly a you and there is nothing to live for but eventual death. Just one question. If we are simply accidents, why are we not without feeling and lawless as the animals? Because you are not an accident. You were formed carefully and meticulously for a specific purpose—to glorify and enjoy the God of heaven for all eternity. In other words, to love and be loved.

God is a Father. God is your Father. This is life changing to any man who, upon hearing this, fully understands what this means. To those that need a little help, this means that the Lord, the God of heaven, Creator of the universe and all the intricacies of every molecule, the God that never ends in size or age, has adopted you as His child. He has paid the price to the abusive orphanage that owned you and called you His own. All He asks is that you let Him take care of you and help you grow. Let Him be your Father. But a common mistake is to project the mistakes of your own father on God.

How amazing is God? He never had a beginning. He never has an end. He has lived and will live for all eternity with Himself as a trinity and has always known everything. He has all

knowledge, all wisdom, all glory.

He is Love. That is His name and nature. One common argument against God is that if He knew we would sin, why did He create us? Well, because He loved us so much and wanted nothing more than to be with us for all eternity.

And Another Thing

I was asked to write an article about the downfalls of social media, but I really struggled with it because I myself don't have unlimited access to social media. This is because of my parents and their many convictions, much to my dismay when I was a 12-year-old girl who wanted a "designer" texter like all my friends. Over the years, this has been a real jab in my side as a sheltered pastor's kid who only wanted to be connected to the world. But what I failed to realize over and over is how much these boundaries my parents have set up have really been a blessing in disguise.

Being connected to the world is the exact opposite of what Jesus called us to do (Rom. 12:2). When we become a part of this world, we lose our deep connection to the Holy Ghost. Paul calls us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. To be changed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Instead, our minds are filled to the brim with social media and the constant and an obsessive need to check on how many likes we got on that picture and how Julia's food looks. How tiring is it to worry about how awesome everyone else's lives are.

By being withheld from that whole world, I was able to learn the difficulties of face-to-face interaction with the Holy Spirit and the navigating of my soul, void of the constant traffic surrounding unlimited "conversation" with my friends. I got to have a conversation with people. I got to figure out my personality and my own individual beauty and be confident in it. That is not something you can achieve in a life never separate from the traffic of everyone else's lives and you get

to focus on your own. No matter how painful it can be, no pain can overtake the healing love of Jesus Christ.

Our brokenness and sin are traps to trick us into thinking that life is hard. That we are empty and alone and shattered by our perceived meaninglessness. I challenge you to appeal to Christ to help you break out of that lie and see that His burden is light. You have a purpose. You have meaning. You are not forgotten. Let Him love you, for He is not far away. He waits on you to let Him in. Thanks for reading this. {eo}

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