

kathy ireland

By kathy ireland

*“finding solutions for families,
especially busy moms.”™*



Christians in the Age of Social Networking

The world around us is forever changed. Recently, I heard someone speak about raising children today. The speaker—someone I greatly admire—said, “If we raise our children today the way we were raised, they won’t make it.” That profound statement required a great deal of prayer and thought.

Today, we can be close to other human beings in an instant. Today, we have new measures of social proximity. We can network with countless numbers of people all over the world with just one touch of a key on a computer. I used to think that networking was the future. I now understand that networking is here now, and it’s going to stay. We have many choices and options for communication.

Networking Options

Networking presents brilliant opportunities and some pretty scary challenges. The obvious online resources of YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and Google are amazing. However, there are dangers parents and children need to be alert to in these networks.

My personal favorite? tangle, formerly known as GodTube! Tangle is a Christian web site which allows members to upload Christian videos and blog with other users. It encourages them to broadcast Him! So far, tangle has been a fun, safe and uplifting experience. It’s wonderful for the whole family. Tangle offers Bible study, student ministries and groups for Christian children, teens and young adults.

We encourage our children to interact safely and successfully with their friends via the Internet. My husband and I, however, have family time with our children to teach them the pros and cons of social networking online. We have fun, but we also have serious conversations. You may want to invite your child to sit next to you when you visit tangle.com.

Networking Challenges

Wherever there is freedom and innovation, you also find people who want to exploit the opportunity. I believe most people are good, yet that belief does not prevent me from being cautious. The Internet is a training ground for people who could and would harm a child. Predators know how to make kids feel vulnerable. We cannot let this happen. We must not let this happen.

Our family is blessed to know some extraordinary people.

Two of our close friends are Erik and Nanette Estrada. Erik is one celebrity who uses his fame in a powerful way to help others. Erik is involved with a great organization called Safe Surfin. The Safe Surfin Foundation and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces around the country fight daily to protect our children from the predators who prowl the Internet with the cruel, sick and heartbreaking intention of harming young people. Much information is shared in these situations.

People who join a social network typically begin by establishing a profile. They then build their own network by connecting family members, old friends, new acquaintances and other personal and sometimes professional contacts. People do this either by locating others who are already active within the network or by inviting strangers or people they know to join the social network and become active in it.

Inviting strangers is where danger may occur. There are terrible stories, particularly about young people who have been deceived by people who misuse this genius technology. Over 35 percent of Internet use is dedicated to pornography! Heartbreaking? Bad? Yes! True? Absolutely!

Network Evangelism

As Christians, we can use these wonderful new tools to spread the Gospel beyond the reach of our own church doors. We are able today to go directly where needs are found. We have the opportunity—without leaving our homes—to tell the world about Jesus Christ.

We can blog. We can share pictures. We can join groups. We can post our favorite lessons from scripture.

Please don’t be afraid of social networking. As Christians, we want to be front and center when it comes to sharing the good news that we know to be true. He’s coming again! We want the world to receive Him.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (NKJV).

God is all powerful. God is all knowing. Our Lord surely knew that social networks would one day be a tool that we could use to bring glory to Him. When we honor Jesus in this way, we are fulfilled and deeply grateful.

Thank you for visiting this month. God bless you.

Love, ~ kathy

For more great family solutions go to: www.kathyireland.com