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Meet Matt Guevara

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How Does Social Media Impact Kids?

In this issue we explore the impact (both positive and negative) of social media on Kids, and Children's Ministry! The great news is, the discussion doesn't end with this report. You can dig into this topic with us, ask questions, develop strategies and become more effective in your ministries by [joining us online!](#) Read, think, react, interact, and share your thoughts on this topic and others in the Kidology Discussion Forums. [What do you think?](#)

Is Social Media Helping Or Hurting Our Kids' Ability To Connect Relationally? by Matt Guevara

At the heart of the debate weighing the value of social media for today's kid is the question, "What is real?" There is a great concern that the bonds that are formed between kids digitally are somehow less real than bonds created between kids occupying the same physical space. There is growing anxiety that children who relate digitally are inept socially.

Hogwash.

Here are three important things to remember as you wrestle with the question, "Is social media helping or hurting our kids' ability to connect relationally?"

1. Kids speak the language of technology fluently

Marc Prensky coined the term digital native to refer to today's students. They are native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet. A study done in 2003 revealed that nearly 70% of 4 and 5 year olds are computer users and about 25% of them use the Internet. The digital space is an intuitive environment for today's kids.

2. Kids are natural collaborators

Children learn best in arenas where they can solve problems in groups. Edutopia.org is one of the best resources to discover project-based learning. This propensity for collaboration is a primary characteristic of today's kid. Kids desire to work together to figure things out. By far the most impactful learning moments for children happen in small groups where they can collaborate with other people, not in large groups where adults talk without stopping.

3. Kids are relational

Kids have been busy adopting new systems for communicating (instant messaging), sharing (blogs), buying and selling (eBay), exchanging (peer-to-peer technology), creating (Flash), meeting (3D worlds), collecting (downloads), coordinating (wikis), evaluating (reputation systems), searching (Google), analyzing (SETI), reporting (phones), programming (modding), socializing (chat) for over a decade. These actions are evidence of children's attempts to build relationships in the digital context.

I've heard leaders at various children's ministry conferences talk passionately about how children's and family ministry leaders need to reexamine their views on media. Media has become a hot-button issue because it is viewed as entertainment and light on Bible content. To pacify the worries of leaders who are hesitant to adopt media in their ministry, I've heard curriculum providers state, "Media does not replace relationships, it enhances relationships." Don't you feel better now? This paradigm needs revision.

The truth of the matter is digital media does not replace relationships and it does not enhance relationships. For digital learners, digital media IS relationship. Social media gives kids tools in their native language to engage in the type of collaboration that feeds their souls and is a rich environment for spiritual growth. And as kids share through social networking, relate online, and create long lasting bonds of friendship through digital portals, leaders like you will need to provide help and support for those kids to meet Jesus and become more like Him; not as second-class citizens who do not understand what real relationships are – but as a new generation of Christ followers. – Matt Guevera

Social Media and The Nugget Theory by Nicki Straza!

Social media - 15 years ago if you said that phrase no one would have known what on earth you were talking about, but today - everyone knows and nearly everyone participates. On one hand we have amazing tools in Facebook, MySpace, Twitter etc, to connect with friends and family on a global scale. It increases communication, keeps people more aware of what is going on in the lives of others, and offers a simple and easy way to participate in many peoples' lives.

Interestingly enough however, like every new technology, we often don't understand the negative impact until we see it in hindsight. Statistics show that the Internet is now the MAIN source of information for people, including their facts about religion, God, as well as sex, drugs and rock and roll! As an adult, I have a fairly well-adjusted sense of "what's right and wrong" and my ability to discern when I am being misled is pretty well founded (although, I have been deceived on occasion).

What does this mean for Kids Min? Simply put, we are at risk of developing a generation with "nugget theology," meaning little quotes, lines, snippets and tidbits from all over that they grab and call "facts" because they "read it on the Internet", or some famous person quoted it. Even the media has become "sound bite" driven. It seems that long gone are the days of researched facts, expository articles and accurate reporting.

I am all for participating in the social media world, but as Leaders, we must be keenly aware that the biblical foundation that many of us had growing up, which gives context to the sound bites we see/read/hear is eerily absent in the next generation. Even scripture memorization isn't enough if

Meet our other authors

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the CONTEXT of the verse isn't understood. Even scripture can be reduced to sound bites taken completely out of context and used to prove anything and everything - nay.. it IS being reduced to sound bites taken completely out of context.

Our kids like their chicken, and their theology delivered in bite sized pieces, but I want to encourage you to challenge yourself, and your kids to dig deep into God's word to get a big picture sense of what God is about so that our kids do not become easy targets for half truths and twisted scripture.

How do we do this? Ask Socratic questions that engage thinking vs. dictate thinking. Let your kids explain things so you can gauge their understanding, quiz 'em, ask them a "trick" question, set up debates. In a church culture which often values good behavior over critical thinking we must be intentional about teaching our kids how to think, to research, and to define what they truly believe about themselves, their world, and God! - Nicki Straza

Social Media and Kids from a Conflicted Social Media Junky by Karl Bastian (a.k.a. Kidologist)

I both love social media and fear it. I can't attack it too much or I'd be a hypocrite I have over 10,000 "[tweets](#)" so far, and nearing 1000 friends on [Facebook](#), but why do I still feel so lonely? Social networking is a part of my daily - O.K., let's be honest, moment by moment, life! I do not, not, think it is an addiction or bad for me! (I could quit any time I wanted to, right? I just don't want to!) Quite to the contrary, it has given me yet another avenue to amplify the message God has given me to share. Unlike many who live their lives like a pin-ball game bouncing through life from one opportunity to another with no clear game plan, I sought God for a very specific [Life Mission](#) at age nineteen and have had a laser focus on that Mission ever since. It is written and defined and has enabled me to say "no" to many good things and focus on the Great my entire life and ministry (not that I haven't gotten distracted and needed to get back on course at times!). Social Networking has enabled me to expand this Mission into spheres that otherwise I could have never reached, and on a daily basis during idle moments that other wise could have been wasted... Relaxing? Reading? Enjoying my family or praying or... There I go again... the internal struggle erupts! But would I truly be doing those noble things every time I tweeted or updated by Facebook status? The simple answer is no. Social networking has enriched my life with friendships I would have never made until heaven! Now heaven will be a grand Tweet-Up!

But enter children into the conversation, and the conversation shifts. Is it good for them? Unfortunately, folks, there is an element of surrender here. Frankly, we can't stem this tide - only steer it. Let's look at it from a different or historical angle. How many teenagers DIE annually driving cars? Do we ban them from driving? Perhaps we should! Unfortunately, that will never happen. You, like them, were destined to drive. My preschooler is already talking about when he will get to drive. In fact, all he wanted for his fifth birthday last month was a REAL Jeep. So we rented one for a day and I taught him how to control the wiper blades and turn signals and let him sit on my lap and steer around the block. My own dad understood both the dangers of driving and the inevitability that the son he loved would soon be on the road without him. Once of the best things he did was take me out and teach me, not only how to drive, but how to slide and spin and control a skid. He had me memorize, "When you are spinning, you are not out of control, you have only lost the ability to stop." This saved my life years later when my wife and I spun out of control on the highway in winter on the highway. As we crossed the center line spinning with a semi-truck plowing toward us and cars spinning in all directions off the road I yelled at my wife, "I AM NOT OUT OF CONTROL! I HAVE ONLY LOST THE ABILITY TO STOP!" And I control spun the vehicle in front of and around the semi, and back to the correct side of the highway, all while spinning. While God had a lot to do with it, for sure - my dad had trained me for this event, and saved our lives.

The point? Today kids are driving Social Media! We cannot prevent it. We would be fools to think we could stop it. They are in the drivers seat. But we can, and MUST prepare them for the spins and wipe outs ahead. They will listen to our wisdom and advice, and we can give them the guidance and protections they need to keep them safe. We can teach them to put it down. We can give them limits. We can help them find balance and foster real relationships outside of 140 characters and

digits and keyboards. We can show them sunshine and go for walks and plan outings and plan in-person socials. We can help them stay real and remind them that we care and make sure they know they don't need to turn to anonymous sources when they need companionship, counsel or help.

- Karl Bastian, Founder of Kidology.org

Media and the Church by Scott Phillips

We live in a world of technology that is continually changing and evolving. Technology affects every aspect of our life and has even become expected. Imagine going to work tomorrow and preparing your daily report on a manual Remington typewriter or going through the day without a cell phone (although sometimes we may wish we could). All these modern "conveniences" have become a part of our life and have made their way into the lives of children. We see 5 and 6 year olds today that are more technological savvy than their parents. The big question to ask is "Is All This Technology Good for Our Children"?

Look at the past 100 years. We see incredible progress in technology! Let's just list a few to get a perspective: George Eastman makes the first portable camera (1900), electric typewriter (1901), first comic book (1904), answering machine is invented (1904), jukebox is invented with 24 songs (1905), animated cartoon is created (1906), color photography created (1907), first automobile – Model T made (1908). Moving into the year 2000 we have available to us cell phones, 3-D High Definition flat panel TV from 30" to 72", laptop super computers, digital recorders for both audio and video, microwave cooking, projectors, etc. Technology is ever increasing! It was not too long ago that we had the great shift from video cassette tape to DVD. We are now looking at a new shift from DVD to Blue-Ray. Technology has been described as a target that is moving faster each year.

What has all this progress meant to our culture? In the early 1900's it was very common to leave your home with the doors unlocked. Assault and murder was a crime mentioned in those "Wild West" stories. The introduction of new technology was viewed as moving forward to a brighter and richer future. Today, new inventions are seen as the next version of something to make our life easier - which cannot come soon enough. But with every advance we seem to move further from our dependence our God.

In the church, technology has certainly made its inroads. We live in a day were many churches the success of Children Ministry is measured on it creative use of technology. People have looked for the spectacular instead of substance, the dynamic instead of discipleship, entertainment instead of enrichment. Thirty years ago, state of the art in Children Ministry included flannel graph, transparencies and cassette tape music. Today people are flocking to the multi-media presentations, live bands and interactive centers. Over the years we have replaced relationship building with presentation building.

It is time the leaders in the church, and in particular Children Ministry, take a step back and look at our goals. We want to reach this generation for Christ, we want to build relationship with God's children, we want to encourage this generation of kids to develop a personal relationship with God himself. Our direction in Children Ministry must be directed to helping the children build healthy and spiritually strong foundations with their heavenly Father. If we can do this with the ADDED benefit of technology all the better. BUT we should never sacrifice the development of this personal relationship for the sake of technology. – Scott Phillips



Kidology is a non-profit organization dedicated to equipping and encouraging those who minister to children. Our website offers a massive database of searchable ideas, curriculum, resources, a job center, resource directory, personalized coaching, online training, discussion forums and much more. Join our online community and find the help and encouragement you need!