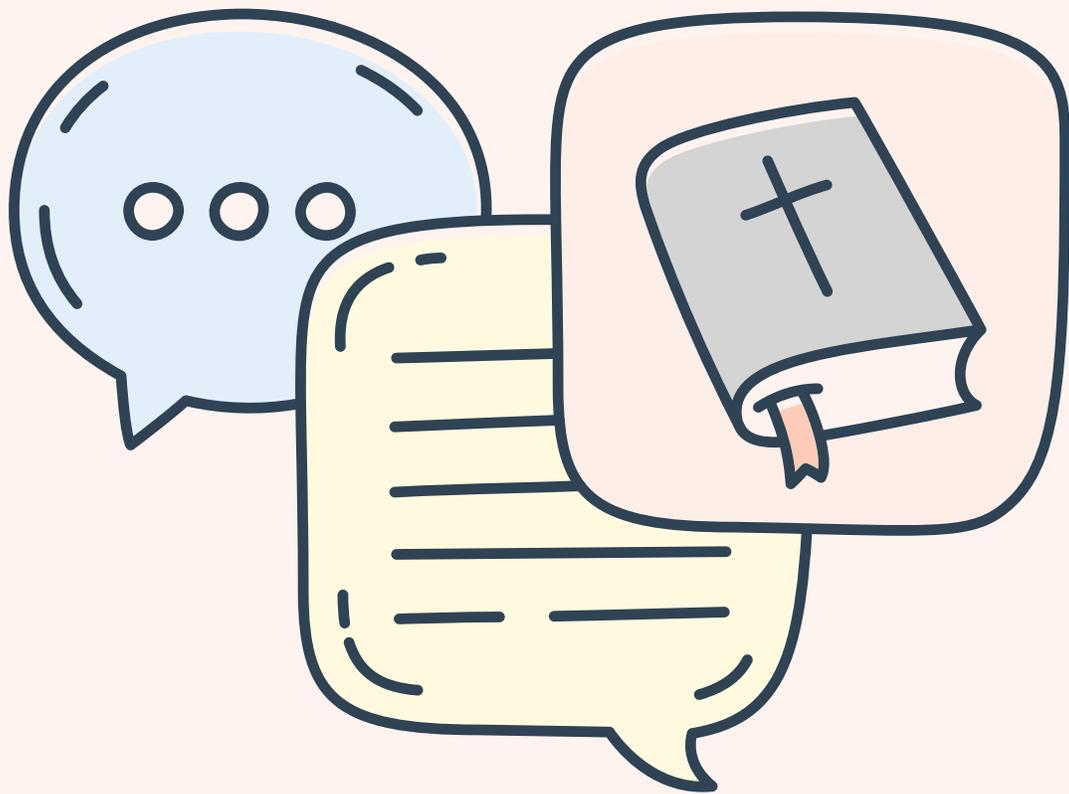


A CHRIST-CENTERED GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Helping Your Teen Navigate Social Media Well



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Hello there!

We live in a time where social media shapes so much of a teenager's identity, relationships, and worldview. For many students, the online world feels just as real, sometimes even more real, than face-to-face conversations.

When your teen makes a poor choice online, it's normal to feel embarrassed, frustrated, or even fearful of what others will think. But moments like these are discipleship opportunities, a chance to shepherd their heart toward wisdom, maturity, and Christlikeness.

God has called you to be the primary voice of truth, grace, and love in your child's life (Deut. 6:6-7). This guide will give you practical, biblically grounded tools to walk with your teen through the challenges of social media.

My heart in sharing this guide is to equip you with hope and confidence so that, when mistakes happen, you can turn those moments into Christ-centered conversations that point your student back to Him.

Luis Sanchez
Youth Pastor at Palmetto Shores Church

Understanding the challenges



Before we can respond well, we need to understand what's really going on behind what your teenager posts.

Students often feel a pressure to perform. Likes, comments, and shares can begin to feel like a scoreboard for their worth. They also live in a comparison culture, where it's easy to measure themselves against the highlight reels of others (Prov. 14:30).

Many fall into impulse posting, sharing in the heat of the moment without considering the long-term consequences (Prov. 29:11).

There is also the challenge of a distorted identity. Instead of rooting their sense of self in Christ, many allow followers and trends to define who they are.

Finally, peer influence plays a huge role. Online communities can either build students up or tear them down (1 Cor. 15:33).

When parents recognize these pressures, they are better equipped to lead conversations with wisdom and compassion.

Instead of only addressing the surface behavior, you can help your teen see the deeper heart struggles behind their online choices. Understanding these challenges helps you shepherd their heart and point them to an identity that is firmly rooted in Christ.

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth

1. Begin With Calm and Care

When you discover your teen posted something inappropriate, your first reaction matters more than you realize. If you come in angry, lecturing, or shaming, they will almost always shut down or push back. Before speaking, pause. Breathe. Pray for wisdom. James 1:5 says **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”**

This is not just about discipline. This is an opportunity for discipleship. Teens live in a world where online presence is part of their identity. A mistake online can feel bigger to them than it looks to us. Show them that your love for them is secure, even when they mess up.

Example way to start the conversation:

“I want you to know I love you and I am for you. I’m not here to attack you. I want to understand what happened and how you were feeling when you posted that. We’ll figure out the next step together.”



Psychology research shows that when teens feel emotionally safe, they are more willing to self-disclose and process (National Institute on Adolescent Development, 2021). Leading with care creates a foundation for discipleship instead of defensiveness.

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth

2. Ask Heart–Level Questions

The surface issue is the post. The deeper issue is the heart. Jesus said in Luke 6:45, **“Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”**

Today, we could say that “mouth” is also the words we use online and the things we post. If we want to disciple our teens, we have to get underneath the behavior and discover the desires that fueled it.

Don’t settle for yes/no answers. Ask questions that help them reflect on their motives, their longings, and the pressure they feel online.



Examples of questions to ask:

- ✓
 - ✓ “What were you hoping people would think when they saw your post?”
 - ✓ “Who were you imagining would see it, and how did you want them to respond?”
 - ✓ “Do you think the post shows what you really believe, or was it more about fitting in?”
 - ✓ “How do you think Jesus would want you to represent yourself online?”
- “When you look back at it now, do you feel peace about it or regret?”

Research from Common Sense Media shows that nearly 1 in 4 teens say they post things online just to “get a reaction” even if it does not reflect their true self. These heart-level questions help them become self-aware and open the door for Spirit-led conviction.

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth

3. Connect the Heart to Scripture

After they share, gently guide them to see their choices through the lens of God's Word. Scripture is not meant to be a hammer but a light (Psalm 119:105). Open the Bible together, let them read it out loud, and then discuss how it applies.

Anchor verses to use in this moment:

- Philippians 4:8: "Is what I'm posting true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable?"
- Ephesians 4:29: "Will this build others up or tear them down?"
- Colossians 3:17: "Am I doing this in the name of Jesus?"
- Proverbs 18:21: "The tongue has the power of life and death." (Remind them: online words carry weight too.)

Example way to lead this moment:

Instead of just quoting a verse, invite your teen into the Word. Sit together with an open Bible or Bible app. Have them read it aloud. This slows the moment down and makes it participatory. Teens often tune out when parents tell them what the Bible says, but their guard drops when they're the ones reading it.



01

READ TOGETHER

"Let's read Philippians 4:8 together. Go ahead and read it out loud."

02

REFLECT ON THE WORDS

"When Paul says 'whatever is true,' what comes to mind? Can you think of something online that wasn't true but still spread quickly? How does that connect with your post?"

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth



03 **APPLY PERSONALLY**

"Do you think your post lines up with things that are noble and pure? Why or why not? If Jesus scrolled past it, what do you think He would say?"

04 **CONTRAST THE OPTIONS**

"What would it have looked like to post something that pointed people toward what is lovely or admirable instead?"

05 **PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE**

Encourage them to imagine the "next time" scenario. "So let's say you feel like posting something tomorrow. How could Philippians 4:8 guide that? How might that shape the post?" This moves the conversation from shame over the past to vision for the future.

By walking slowly through each phrase, you aren't just asking if their post was "good or bad." You're teaching them to filter all of life through the lens of God's Word. This takes what feels like an isolated online mistake and reframes it as spiritual formation.

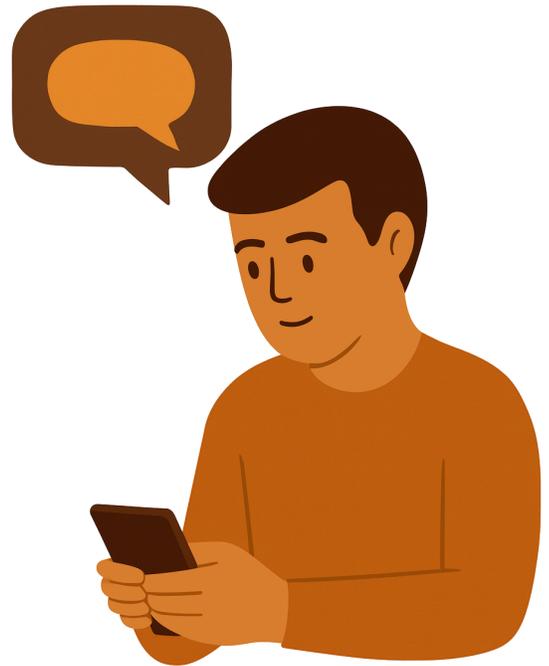
A Barna Group study found that 66% of teens say they don't know how the Bible connects to real life issues like social media, friendships, or stress. That means if parents and leaders don't model this, they won't see the connection themselves. Showing them that God's Word has something to say about what they post is crucial for building a biblical worldview.

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth

4. Plan for Repair

True repentance means both turning from sin and making things right. Online, it is easy to think that deleting a post is enough, but discipleship is about restoration, not just removal. Psalm 32:5 shows confession to God, James 5:16 reminds us that confession to others brings healing, and Zacchaeus in Luke 19 shows that real repentance includes repairing what was broken.

Help your teen consider steps like deleting or editing a post as a sign of repentance, offering a personal apology if someone was hurt, or posting something truthful and encouraging to replace what was harmful. This keeps grace at the center and reminds them that God's goal is restoration, not shame.



Example way to start the conversation:

"I know this feels awkward, but making things right is part of following Jesus. What do you think would honor Him the most? Deleting it, apologizing, or posting something better? I'll walk through it with you."

If repair is skipped, teens may learn that sin can just be erased. But when they take steps toward restoration, they learn the gospel in action. Galatians 6:1 reminds us: "If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." This is not about punishment but about shepherding them toward grace.

Research shows that when teens are guided to take responsibility for their actions (instead of parents fixing it for them), they develop stronger empathy and resilience (American Psychological Association, 2020). Helping them repair the impact of their choices builds maturity and spiritual depth.

When Something Goes Wrong: Responding with Grace & Truth

5. Set New Guardrails

One of the best gifts you can give your teen is helping them not only recover from mistakes but also learn how to prevent them in the future. Teens may act impulsively online, but that does not excuse them from responsibility. Instead, these moments are the training ground where they can practice wisdom and self-control, which are fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). When you involve your teen in setting boundaries, you are showing them that following Jesus means owning their choices and putting safeguards in place to honor Him.



How to frame it with practical examples:

"I don't just want to make rules for you. Let's brainstorm together some guardrails that will help you honor Jesus online and protect you from pressure. What ideas do you have?"

From there, suggest practices like:

- **Pause-Pray-Post habit:** Before posting, pause to pray and ask, "Does this reflect Christ?"
- **Device-free zones or times:** Protect family meals, bedrooms, or Sunday worship as phone-free spaces where God and people in the room get your full attention.
- **Parental controls and accountability apps:** Guardrails are not only internal habits but also external helps. Filters, time limits, and accountability software can create space for healthier rhythms and protect against temptations. The key is to use them openly and with conversation, so your teen understands these tools are not about control but about care. At Palmetto Shores, we also provide guidance for families who want help setting up these safeguards.

Barna research has found that teens are far more likely to follow through with boundaries when they help create them, compared to when parents simply impose rules. In other words, ownership leads to commitment. By letting your teen co-create guardrails, you are not just managing behavior but shaping them into disciples who take responsibility for their walk with Christ.

Proactive Discipleship: Building a Healthy Digital Life

- 01 MODEL IT YOURSELF**

Your online habits speak louder than any rule you set. Teens are constantly watching how you scroll, what you share, and how you talk about others online. Live the example you want them to follow.
- 02 TEACH MEDIA DISCERNMENT**

Don't just ban content, discuss it. Talk through ads, trends, and viral videos from a biblical worldview. Ask, "What message is this sending? Does it align with Philippians 4:8?"
- 03 CREATE A FAMILY RULE OF LIFE**

A shared rhythm gives clarity and freedom. Simple practices like docking phones an hour before bed, reviewing social media follows together, and avoiding anonymous accounts create accountability and peace in your home.
- 04 ENCOURAGE PURPOSEFUL POSTING**

Challenge your teen to see social media as a tool for mission. Share stories of God's faithfulness, celebrate others, and use platforms to reflect Christ's love. Even one encouraging post can impact someone scrolling in a hard season.



NEED HELP WITH TECH? REACH OUT TO ME!

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Quick Conversation Prompts

This section is designed to help parents spark meaningful, faith-centered conversations with their teens in everyday moments. Use these questions casually in places like in the car, at dinner, or while winding down after school. They're not lectures, just gentle prompts that open doors for discipleship.



WHAT YOU CAN ASK:

- ✓ “If Jesus borrowed your phone for a day, what would He post?”
- ✓ “What’s one account you could unfollow for your peace this week?”
- ✓ “Who online builds you up in your faith?”
- ✓ “If you could redo one post from the past month, which would it be and why?”
- ✓ “How are you feeling after posting? Proud, embarrassed, anxious?”
- ✓ “How do you feel when a post flops? When it blows up?”

PRACTICAL TIP

CONSISTENCY BRINGS CHANGE. EVEN FIVE MINUTES OF INTENTIONAL CONVERSATION EACH DAY CAN HAVE A LASTING IMPACT ON YOUR TEEN’S WALK WITH CHRIST.

Closing Encouragement

Parenting in the digital age is not easy, but you are not walking it alone. God chose you to shepherd your teen in this season, and He has promised to supply every bit of wisdom, patience, and courage you need. Remember that even small, faithful steps, like one conversation in the car or one prayer before bedtime, can shape a digital life that honors Christ.

A PRAYER FOR YOU AND YOUR TEEN

“LORD, WE ASK FOR YOUR WISDOM IN EVERY CLICK, POST, AND CONVERSATION. GUARD OUR HEARTS FROM PRIDE, COMPARISON, AND CARELESSNESS. HELP US USE SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY TO ENCOURAGE, TO BUILD UP, AND TO REFLECT YOUR LOVE. TEACH US TO HONOR YOU IN ALL WE DO, BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE. AMEN.”

Luis Sanchez is the Youth Pastor at Palmetto Shores Church. Together with his wife Lindsey and their daughter, he loves encouraging families to walk closely with Jesus. His heart is to help the next generation navigate life's challenges, including the digital world, with wisdom and faith.

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