**“Parents and Children,” Part 2**

**(Children and Cell Phones/Social Media)**

In 1Cor.15:33, the last half of the verse is in quotation marks (at least in most major translations except KVJ), despite not being an actual quote from the OT, or from any revealed or attributed NT source. The most likely explanation is that it was a *commonly known/quoted adage of the day,* rather than a divinely inspired one (such as in Ezk.18:2 rather than Proverbs). Thus the apostle Paul is merely using a commonly known saying or general truth to make a specific point. The general truth was *“Bad company corrupts good morals.”*  In context, the specific point being made is that the *bad company* of false teachers either had or would *corrupt the good morals* of the Corinthians, cf. vv.12ff,34! Now, let’s set that aside momentarily for a related question…

**Parents: What if your child had a best/closest friend who repeatedly:**

* Demonstrated questionable general character, and at times showed remarkably poor specific character and choices (perhaps had been in trouble with the law)?
* Took advantage of their youthful innocence or naivety?
* Either directly lied to or misled them?
* Encouraged them to keep secrets from you, and “educated” them in ways to do so?
* Undermined your authority and encouraged rebellion disguised as “being your own person” and “following your heart”?
* Got them into trouble at school or other occasions when they were away from you and your supervision?
* Flattered them regarding how “special” and “mature” they were, but how unfortunate it was that you (parent(s) didn’t really “understand” or “get” them?
* Used language to and with and them that was at best “too old,” or at worst was suggestive, lewd, and downright “dirty”? You know they did so because you heard “new” words creep into your child’s vocabulary.
* Encouraged them to not only view “inappropriate” (pornographic) pictures, but encouraged them to take and share the same kind of pictures of themselves?
* In general or specific ways, encouraged them to “hang out with” other kids that were completely unknown and out of reach to you?

**Parents: What if I told you that you not only *introduced* this “new best friend” to your child but *encouraged* the relationship, and continue to not only *allow* but *support* it?** As you’ve probably guessed, this “new best friend” that you *introduced, encouraged, allowed,* and *supported* is your child’s **cell phone and social media access!** Look again at the list above and realize that **every single one of the “attributes” on it, are the destructive influence(s) you provide your child** when you give them a cell phone with access to the Internet and Social Media.

**I. Are there *positive benefits* for your child having a cell phone with access to the Internet and Social Media?** Perhaps a few:

1. It can be helpful for convenience/security: for *you to maintain contact with them* and *vice versa*. They can contact you when they need a ride, or you can “check” on them (advice: the *first* time they fail to return a text or pick up a call w/o good reason- revoke the privilege!). While this *may* be a good reason for your teenager to have a phone, it is NOT a good reason for them to access to the Internet/Social Media on it.
2. It can be used to “study” with friends. While this *may be possible,* it is not probable. This is much more likely a “reason” given by your child to get one, rather than a “use” of it after they do. It is much more often a “cover” for other types of interactions.
3. It can enable them to interact with “good” kids not otherwise easily accessible to them- such as friends from *church camp.* While this is a legitimate and even “good” use of a phone/social media access, unless YOU KNOW the “friend from camp” yourself, and the *nature* of their interactions with your child, how can you be sure: 1) this is actually who this person is; and, 2) whether or not they are actually worthy of contact with your child (church camp notwithstanding)?
4. As with Social Media in general, it can be a *tool* for them to help or influence others positively in a Matt.5:14-16 kind of way. This is only true IF you child is mature enough to *be an influence for good* rather than *being influenced for evil,* cf. Heb.5:11-14.
5. As we discussed in a previous lesson, the Internet *can be* a source of good and wholesome entertainment. But it can also be a very dark and dangerous place which gives your child(ren) *unfiltered access* to people and things that are either counterproductive to what you’re trying to teach/train, or people and things that have designs on taking advantage of or influencing them (porn sites are known to register site names that are common misspellings of children’s games/video sites). *Filters* are available and can be effective assets, but are no substitute for UNFILTERED PARENTAL ACCESS TO DEVICES ON A DAILY BASIS!

**II. We’ve already noted several *negative influences* of Cell Phones and Internet/Social Media access, but let’s also consider these:**

1. Hampers development of “people skills” like face-to-face communication. Your child will have to be able to *live in the world* where the ability to successfully interact with *real* (rather than *virtual*) people is required, cf. 1Cor.5:10ff. Encouraging them to withdraw into a *virtual* world doesn’t help.
2. Puts them *at risk* to be misled by false and counter-productive information, and thus to be taken advantage of. Children are “children” because they are *immature, impulsive, unsuspecting, naïve, malleable, unwise, undiscerning,* and *unable to see* long-term benefits and short-term dangers clearly enough to make *intellectual* rather than *emotional* decisions*.* They do not yet have the *mental* or *emotional maturity* to *“have their senses trained to discern good and evil,”* Heb.5:11-14.
3. Encourages bad habits and even destructive and sinful behaviors. It’s not just abbreviated and coded “gibberish” that they promote, but gossip that runs rampant and often leads to violence, bragging and prideful arrogance, negative self-images and even suicide, stupidly destructive pranks and “challenges,” and supposed anonymitythat is actually visible to the world,cf. Rom.12:9b; 1Thess.5:21-22.
4. And perhaps most seriously, it robs them of their youth by allowing them into and then further forcing them into a world for which they are simply not yet ready. Let them be children! Let them learn to play and interact as children. Let them enjoy the benefits of child’s play and fun, child language, child emotions, and child responsibilities rather than forcing them into an adult world with its dangers and responsibilities for which they are not yet (nor should they be!) prepared, Matt.18:1-3. Protect them from being forced to “grow up” too fast- it’ll happen fast enough as it is.

**III. Conclusions (in the form of *advice*):**

1. **If you must provide your child with a phone, give them one a “dumb” one (without Internet/Social Media access). Or barring that,**
2. **Check their phones and other electronic devices EVERY SINGLE DAY. They are *your* children- they don’t need *privacy,* they need *parenting!*  Educate yourself regarding their devices, programs, and apps. Make them accountable to you or take away the device! If they must have a phone, teach them *when* and *how* to use it politely and for the right reasons. Be firm, Abuses = Denial of privilege.**
3. **Be *proactive* in these regards. Don’t depend on *school* or *others* to do your job as a parent. Spend time daily talking *with* rather than just *to* your children. Have *phone-free* places, times, and occasions. Create phone and Internet-free experiences such as outings, trips, and vacations.**
4. **Understand that THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE your child will ever be is *alone on the Internet.***