

View

NOVEMBER 29, 2009

"Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green;
something lives in every hue, Christless eyes have never seen."

New-Millennium Challenges

"Sexting"

"Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead. As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. They'll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they're animals. Stay clear of these people."

II Timothy 3:1-5, *The Message*

It's pretty scary when you think about it. Our young people are surrounded by challenges those of us in our 50's and 60s never dreamed about. We were raised in the era of telephones with cords, "record players," and 12" TVs, with many of the programs in black and white, with two or three channels. Usually, one of those was "snowy" (i.e., the reception was crummy). And we were raised to believe that if we got anything from anyone we had to *earn* it and if we had a problem, we had to solve it ourselves. We had no reason to believe anyone would step in and bail us out.

Moreover, sex was for marriage and marriage was between a man and a woman. People stayed married or suffered the stigma of being divorced. If a couple lived together, it was called "shacking up" in the popular vernacular, but "fornication" in the Bible (there's a word you don't hear very much outside the church building). People who wanted to dabble in illicit sex had to buy a magazine or go to a shady part of town. Communication was in person or by that corded phone; if one wanted to pass an immoral photo to someone else, he had to get it printed somehow and then mail it or hand it to them.

Boy, how things have changed. "Texting" is the word used to describe communication by short "e-mail like" messages sent from one cell phone to another. I've been the recipient of them on occasion and sent a few myself. They have their place and they are morally neutral, of course.

But you can do other stuff with cell phones besides calling and texting. For example, you can send pictures — I've done it many times myself; if I want Angie to see a particularly cool cake I'll take a photo of it with my iPhone and send it to her. It's instantaneous and she will often respond with a "text."

That's science fiction 30 years ago but these are not bad things just because they are new. They have been put to good use; it's hard to

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Service Times

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM
Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged at your convenience.

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imagine how many lives have been saved because of the plethora of cell phones. How many otherwise anxious parents' hearts have been comforted because Junior has a cell phone they can call? But every product or service the technological community has developed has also been used to spread evil.

For some, texting is not enough; it has been augmented by something called "sexting." That is none other than the sending of messages with sexual text (often hidden in a sea of acronyms) and/or photos.

This has become a huge problem and is practiced to some degree in all age groups. But it is becoming a major problem among young people; I mean, really young.

Think the problem is over-stated? Look at the latest statistics in the box at the right (from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy). Some studies show girls as young as 10 have received such messages.

OK, I know: what is a ten year-old doing with an unmonitored cell phone anyway? A lot of parents just need to wake up.

But the problem is not limited to young people. Do you belong to AARP (American Association of Retired Persons)? They have an article on their website about sexting by older adults ("C*U*2nite: Sexting not Just for Kids, November 2009, AARP.org). But are they critical of it? No. In fact, they offer some "do and don'ts" so that older folks can do it as well as the younger set does it. (If their politics hasn't deterred you from joining AARP, this should).

Jesus said that if a man looks on a woman with lustful intent has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Mt. 5:28). We need a reminder in these sex-crazy days that God still views sex as something reserved for marriage. That means that if it is practiced outside marriage — in whatever form — there will a price to pay and that price could be eternal.

But there's something else that young people should think about. After an argument with his 16 year-old girlfriend, an 18 year-old named Phillip Alpert was arrested for sending a picture of her to

"Sexting" Statistics

Young people who have electronically sent, or posted online, nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves:

- 20 percent of teens overall
- 22 percent of teen girls
- 18 percent of teen boys
- 11 percent of girls ages 13-16

The percentages are higher for teens who have sent or posted sexually suggestive messages:

- 39% of all teens
- 37% of teen girls
- 40% of teen boys
- 48% of teens say they have received such messages

mutual friends to "get back at her." But he was reported and convicted in a Florida court of sending child pornography and had to register as a sex offender. The picture that he sent was originally sent to him by his girlfriend.

For Christians, this shouldn't be an issue, of course. But whatever is going on in the outside world will eventually creep into the church. It would be naive to think that there is none of this going on "among us." Christie and I always believed that children needed to earn trust before they were entitled to it. Young people are easily influenced and need guidance and accountability as they strengthen their self-control.

It seems to go without saying that parents should monitor their children's online and cell phone activities. Paul said "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). "Bad company" can come in uninvited, if we're not careful. Encourage your children to report any intrusion into their personal lives, either through the Internet, on social networking sites (like MySpace, Twitter and Facebook) or on a cell phone.

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