Pornography Bonus Episode - Initial Edit

[00:00:00] **Shelby:** Welcome to Daily Grace. We believe the Bible is true trustworthy and timeless and we want to help women like you know and love God's word The Bible shows us who God is and who he is changes everything. My name is Shelby.

[00:00:17] **Krystal:** And I'm Krystal and we want to invite you to come join us as we chat about the truth of God's word in our everyday life.

[00:00:25] In today's bonus episode Shelby and I are joined by Chris McKenna who is the founder of Protect Young Eyes.

[00:00:31] Chris is a former middle school youth director and author of multiple resources for families and churches including Parenting the Internet Generation, and How to Heal and Protect Your Ministry from Pornography. His 2019 U S Senate judiciary committee testimony was the catalyst for new online child protection laws and earned Protect Young Eyes The Dignity Defense Alert Award in 2018. His team performs hundreds of presentations at churches schools and nonprofits. They receive over a million visits to their popular website annually have a committed social media following and were featured in the Childhood 2.0 movie. Chris is married to Andrea and is the father to four children ages 10 to 17.

[00:01:19] We enjoyed getting to know Chris and hearing his heart to equip families in this area. We get really practical in this episode including tips on having these conversations with your kids and principals to help protect your kids from exposure to pornography. We hope that you will be encouraged and challenged deeply about how to engage with your children on this very important topic. Come join us in this conversation as we chat with Chris McKenna about pornography and how to prepare and protect our children.

[00:01:51] Hey everybody! Thank you so much for joining us for another episode of the Daily Grace Podcast. This is Krystal and I am joined today by my co-host, Shelby.

[00:02:01] **Shelby:** Hey everyone! Glad to be back with you today.

[00:02:04] **Krystal:** And we are so excited to welcome Chris McKenna to our podcast. Thanks so much for joining us today, Chris!

[00:02:10] **Chris:** Hey, Krystal! Glad to be here. Hi Shelby

[00:02:12] **Krystal:** We are so thankful that you're here because as we've been preparing this series on pornography, a big question that has come up over and over is, how do I protect my children?

[00:02:22] And I think it's a scary topic to think about and it can be really intimidating to figure out how to have this conversation with our kids. And so obviously we asked you to be here because that's part of your job too, parents and families, but also you are a parent yourself which means you're having to navigate these same kinds of conversations. So before we jump in can you just tell us a little bit about yourself and about your family?

[00:02:47] **Chris:** Yeah, for sure. So, yeah, I'm in the spot where I have an elementary, middle, and high schooler right now. So the trifecta. I have a 17 year old daughter and then twin sons who are 12, who are in sixth and fifth grade, respectively, and then a fourth grader, Blake. So, Blake, Cole, Grant, and Lauren. And so I'm in it. I am in the trenches, bumbling and stumbling through the digital age.

[00:03:10] Just like all of those who are listening and maybe, you know, going to watch this later. So I'm right there with ya.

[00:03:16] **Shelby:** Yeah absolutely. So, obviously you just shared about your family but you've also started Protect Young Eyes. And so I'm wondering if you can tell us just a little bit about what Protect Young Eyes is and what it is that you do there?

[00:03:31] **Chris:** Yeah. So I didn't expect to be doing this. I can tell you that for sure. I'm a CPA, right? How did that happen? I'm a businessman by trade and the Lord called me into the local church after about 12 years in business. And from being a CPA and a consultant, I moved into middle school ministry because it's such a natural progression. Right? It's they just, they fit so well together from spreadsheets to silly string.

[00:03:56] And that was from 2009 to 2016, which we all know is the rise of portable internet, right? That's when we started carrying the internet with us. We didn't sit at desktops and do things, you know, in that way. And so parents just started asking me a lot of questions and were clueless about the new apps and the new technologies that their kids were using.

[00:04:17] Because I have a consulting background, I like to fix problems. So I simply created a closed Facebook group back in 2014. I also was starting to have some conversations with my congregation about online pornography, because I had struggled with that issue for years, um, was in an accountability group of men, was using Covenant Eyes and to come out of that had seen kind of the corrosive impact it had in my life.

[00:04:36] I was exposed as a child, and now I'm watching children with devices that could make it so much easier to have that same exposure that I had to actually hunt for. It was a lot more difficult to find that kind of content. You had to almost be strategic to find that content back in the 1980s when I was growing up.

[00:04:55] But now we were putting access to that content in their pockets under the guise of safety. And it really freaked me out. So, started having conversations with parents, put a closed Facebook group together that led to a local news story here in Grand Rapids. I know, Shelby, you know the area here, um, that there was a young lady out in Holland who had almost been kidnapped through the Kik app, which for a time was known as an app with a lot of predatory activity.

[00:05:20] And so a local news station found the work that I was doing, not a lot of people were talking about social media other than, oh, what's this cute picture app called Instagram. I'm like, "no, no, there's more to Instagram than cute pictures." And so that really started a lot of people noticing the work that we were doing that led to a website being launched, ProtectYoungEyes.com in 2015.

[00:05:42] And other than disruptions, like COVID, we are an organization that does hundreds of presentations all over the country. I have a presentation team. We create curriculum and resources, uh, a great free website. We have an app that we launched during COVID when we couldn't do presentations.

[00:05:58] So we just wanna, we want to take what can be intimidating, what can seem scary, because the enemy loves to use those opportunities to paralyze us, put us on an island to make us feel as though we're the only parent who is dealing with this. He does that, whether you're 14 or 40, and I wanted to say, no, that's, that's not true. I've heard that question a hundred times. You're not alone. We can do this.

[00:06:20] And to make our resources as accessible, as easy to find as possible. Regardless of your resources, a lot of it is free. Some of it is premium, but we just want as many parents as possible to have access, to prepare and protect their kids.

[00:06:34] **Krystal:** Yeah I feel like even in the last week or so as I've been just digging around the website I have learned so much and it's given me even language to be able to use in conversations with my kids. And so I think a lot of parents have experienced a lot of fear in this area. And as parents who may not know maybe the best way to handle the situation when it arises. So, how do you encourage parents to approach the topic of pornography with their children?

[00:07:01] **Chris:** It starts with four phrases, Krystal. You wanna know what they are?

[00:07:05] **Shelby:** Yeah

[00:07:06] **Chris:** Don't freak out. Don't freak out. Don't freak out. Don't freak out.

[00:07:12] Right? That's what I start now. Hashtag joking, not joking. But that's serious. We have kind of six different things we walk parents through, but the first thing, the first thing I say to parents is they're ready before you are, so just get it done.

[00:07:26] Parents ask me all the time, what's the right age to talk to your kids about pornography? I just did a talk yesterday and I have parents on their note taking guide, write down, you know, what do you think the right age is? And, I give them 10 seconds or so to write it down, but I tell them, cross it off, subtract two, and that's probably the right number.

[00:07:43] And they're all like, oh my gosh, like, yes, I make them say the word out loud. Like in my audiences, everyone repeat after me, pornography, pornography. I'm like, no, no, say it, pornography. It's just a word. Cause that's one of the very first things we tell them is normalize porn in your house. And they look at me like, what are you talking about?

[00:08:00] Make porn the norm is one of our phrases and people freak out when I say that because they wait a minute. That seems the exact opposite of what I need to be doing. Like, no, no. I want to rob the enemy of all of his curiosity power over our very curious children when it comes to this word.

[00:08:18] I haven't met a family yet, who based on that kind of advice, had this kind of conversation. We've talked to tens of thousands of parents and it's a lot of mama bears. So I'm guaranteeing that if one of them would have experienced this, I would've gotten a phone call.

[00:08:30] I've never had anybody say to me, "you know what, Chris, we took your advice. We sat down and we had a conversation. We talked about what porn was, why God's plans about love and intimacy and marriage are so much better. Not just why porn is bad, but why the alternative is better. And thanks, now, they are a porn addict."

[00:08:46] But like, that's not, I've not had that happen. And I'm guessing that if it would've happened one time, I would have had an irate mom call me and tell me about it.

[00:08:55] So seven years into this, I still stand by the idea, and not mine. Scripture tells us very clearly that that which is in the light can be dealt with. Right? That which is in the light automatically has less power over all of us, because whether you're 4, 14, or 40, one-on-one with the internet, you will eventually lose.

[00:09:15] **Krystal:** Hm. So what are some just practical tips that you encourage parents in this topic? So whether it's protecting their kids whether it's preparing them for exposure to pornography, what are just some tips that you give to parents?

[00:09:29] **Chris:** Yeah. Well, let's start on the practical side because you can't pray away porn. You can over spiritualize porn. And if you pray it away, you will still have a kid who finds a way through an unprotected device to get to pornography. So I think I just want to first, and that sounds so like, wait a minute, what did you just say?

[00:09:49] Like, yes, don't over spiritualize the porn issue. Because you will miss the practical if you only address the spiritual. And I think if we miss the practical, then we still have a pretty good chance of young people because digital doorways are ubiquitous. There will still be a door that they'll get through.

[00:10:06] It's the combination that's powerful, but I don't want us to forget the practical. So on the practical, the number one most important digital device in every single house is your router. Especially for parents of young children, because it's not often that they're looking for it. Yes. They may search for certain terms that they hear.

[00:10:23] Right. Right now it's all about Huggy Wuggy in that really creepy blue faced creature with the horrible teeth. And that comes from a,

[00:10:30] **Shelby:** goodness

[00:10:30] **Chris:** it comes from an app that's been out for awhile, but TikTok, of course, which is slowly ruining the world, ruined that too, and turned it into something that went viral.

[00:10:38] But my point there being is that there's always going to be things that are out there and kids are always going. So what I want to do for young kids who, maybe out of curiosity are searching for something, or just out of innocence, because you can search. If you are a kid who loves dinosaurs and you type in T-Sex instead of T-Rex, cause my son who's home sick from school right now is watching Jurassic park. That's all it takes to have an early accidental childhood exposure that traumatizes children.

[00:11:11] And the way to stop those accidental exposures at the sources through the router, because it's probably kids don't often have data plans on the devices that we give them.

[00:11:21] They're almost all connected to the network in your home, a wifi, whether it's the smart TV, which is really just a big smartphone attached to the wall these days because of the apps and the access and the YouTube, anything you can do on a smartphone, other than call grandma, you can kind of do on your smart TV now.

[00:11:36] Smart TVs and Chromebooks and Switches and gaming devices, Xbox's are all connected to the internet and that all is controlled at the source. I have an app on my phone, the Gryphon app. I recommend the Gryphon router. It's what I use. I can control every single device in my house, anywhere in the world, right from the app on my phone.

[00:11:54] I could be in the Kansas City Airport, and that could turn off the orange Chromebook in our house. I want that kind of control. And that's not something we keep secret from our children. The routers are often something that you kind of freak out about. You don't understand. So you put it behind the couch and it collects dust.

[00:12:11] And you're like, ah, I don't want to think about my router. It's the device that is often most confusing to parents. I want kids to know that we have a router, what it's for and why we use it. These are the sorts of conversations that build a digital trust early on. We have a router because it's one that has controls on it because, honey, it's not just you. Dad doesn't need to see certain things either.

[00:12:35] And with something so powerful, like the internet, it would be the same way if we had weapons in the house, like we were hunters or whatever it might be. We are careful with things that have great power and the internet has great power. And so this is a device that helps us take this very powerful thing and help us use it well.

[00:12:53] And I want them to know that from the very beginning that we're using these sort of practical tools, not as a way to catch our kids doing something wrong, but to explain why they're beneficial to help them use it right. And there's a difference. There's a mind shift like, it's subtle, but I think it's very important because if we are going at the practical from a parental control perspective, then we miss the points.

[00:13:19] I want us to come at it from a carrying control perspective. I don't use parental controls because I am trying to catch you doing something wrong. I use parental controls, amazing, beautiful, 17 year old daughter of mine, because every single time you get online, it's like I'm letting a hundred million people into your life.

[00:13:38] What kind of father would I be if out of care for you I didn't have these kinds of controls in place? It's not because you are going to do something wrong. It's because I don't want them doing anything wrong to you.

[00:13:52] I get emotional about that because there's a big difference between those things. And I just want us to nail those conversations because our kids need us to know that we're on their side, we're rooting for them. We want them to get this right. and they can smell the difference a mile away.

[00:14:08] **Shelby:** You know you used a phrase a little bit earlier. You said digital trust, and I think it'd be helpful for me and probably anyone listening If you can unpack that just a little bit and help us understand what that is.

[00:14:21] **Chris:** Yeah, that's more definitely on the preparation side. So routers and parental controls can be on that more technical, practical side. On the preparing side, the digital trust framework is something that we created a few years ago. I was sitting at a Whole Foods Mart over in Chicago, getting ready for a parent talk back at the end of, I think it was 2018, and I just was like, Lord, you know, we've to a lot of parents, what is that they're doing right? I'm a framework guy. That's my consulting days. Everything fits better in spreadsheets, in rows and columns.

[00:14:54] And so, that's just the way my brain works. And so I was looking for a framework, something that I could sort of hang what I've noticed in parents on that I could then repeat with other parents. And that's what became the Digital Trust Framework, which is a series of five phrases that believe we've seen over and over again in parents that we've talked to who have kids who use technology in a good, God-honoring way, do certain things persistently and consistently.

[00:15:19] Number one is, Copy Me, number two, Co-Play, number three, Curiosity for Conversation, and five, Coaching. So like any good sermon, they all start with C, right? That's a requirement.

[00:15:31] **Shelby:** Absolutely

[00:15:33] **Chris:** Right? And so those, and people can find these, and they follow us on social media, just look for Protect Young Eyes. Or if you download the app, the Protect App was built on the Digital Trust Framework, those five words are woven in or five phrases are woven in throughout. In fact, on Saturday, Or tomorrow, I can't remember the calendar.

[00:15:51] I'm going to be posting a video out on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram explaining Copy Me because I had some questions about different parts of the Digital Trust Framework. And they're in a hierarchy because you know, modeling is first. I want kids to model what they see in their parents.

[00:16:06] When you look at all the screen time studies that are out there, one thing they all have in common is they say that the way in which children acquire technology is what they observe in the adults around them and how they use their technology. Whether it's the world health organization or pediatric societies, they all come to that same conclusion. So that's Copy Me. And Co-Play is shoulder to shoulder doing technology with your kids, watching YouTube with your kids, working with them.

[00:16:30] I want them to know from a very young age, that technology is a "we" activity, and not just a "me" activity. Because again, one-on-one with tech, whether you're a kid or Dad, you all lose. The algorithm, eventually figures you out and it'll feed you something that is toxic to your soul. So I want them to know early on that we work better together, online with something this powerful when we do it together.

[00:16:50] The other part of Co-Play, which is really important is the idea of co-ownership. Every single internet connected device in my house is co-owned by this guy. And those who are listening to the podcast miss that I'm pointing at me. I'm pointing to dad. And again, that's, that's because I want them to know from the very beginning, that's why we never buy kids their devices.

[00:17:13] Tell grandmas and grandpas, you do not gift or give for birthdays or Christmas, grandchildren their devices. You give devices to parents that then become family devices that kids are given to use. They're allowed, they're stewarded this device to use. Because I don't want them to believe there's anything to hide on my device.

[00:17:34] It's the fallacy of ownership, right? The Lord owns all of it, but I think that's extremely toxic when it comes to digital devices that if you don't believe anybody else is going to see what you're doing, you automatically make different choices. As a man who struggled with porn for years, I know that's true. So I don't want my children to believe those lies either. So everything is, you know, co-owned under the idea of, you know, doing technology together.

[00:17:59] So those are just a couple of, you know, sort of the relational components of digital trust. I think digital trust is something that's built over time. One of the phrases that we use, Shelby, is, "Delay is the Way." That's a campaign that we've kind of put together as #DelayIsTheWay.

[00:18:15] "Delay is the Way" is not a no tech strategy. It is a slow tech strategy. I want us to learn how to use technology, even if you've said no to certain tech with your kids. I want parents to teach their kids as if they've said yes, because there are digital doorways everywhere. There are friends with devices, there are burner phones, there are all kinds of ways to get to the internet.

[00:18:38] And so those are some of the tenets behind, digital trust and also putting off certain technologies that aren't appropriate for young brains, as long as possible.

[00:18:50] **Shelby:** Yeah that's really helpful. And you know, I have young ones, my oldest is eight, and my youngest is one. And so just as my kids are starting to get a little bit older these questions are coming up of like, "Should we have a tablet in the house?" A friend has a phone that she brings over do we do about that?

[00:19:09] And so I really like what you just said that it's "slow tech not no tech". Because my husband and I in our conversations we said, "Well we can't do no tech. Then all of a sudden one day they're going to have access to it all."

[00:19:20] That's super helpful. You know I'm wondering like everything that you just explained can you just give us a couple examples of what that really looks like in your house? Like how you do those things with your kids. Whether you're building trust or um you know putting protections in place or just in an everyday family, like . What does that look like?

[00:19:39] **Chris:** Oh, we are far from normal, but I'll give you some ideas. Um, and you know, if I could reach it, I would, I would pull out it's sort of a, a Relic and I love to keep it because it represents so much. So in a drawer over under the coffee maker is a hot pink Kindle. Okay. So this was the very first internet connected device that I gave for Lauren to use when she was 10 years old.

[00:20:00] So it was seven years ago and she wanted something that she could play certain games on, watch certain videos on. And so we decided on a Kindle because I knew Kindles really well. I knew, you know, the Amazon controls. So that's what we got. She was allowed to pick it out, but the moment we pulled it out of the box, because you can give a Kindle in name and the name sits in the upper left-hand corner.

[00:20:22] We named it Dad's and Lauren's Kindle from the very beginning. I wanted her to know that that device was co owned and the picture, the profile picture was a double selfie of Dad and Lauren. So every time that she used it, it was like, hi, I'm right here. Yeah. I'm I'm with you on this. wanted her to know from the beginning and

[00:20:39] **Shelby:** Like

[00:20:39] **Chris:** Trust me, Shelby, I didn't need to use the hot pink Kindle, but I would pick it up and walk around the house, holding it every once in a while. I would make sure she saw that. She didn't need to, you know, I just needed her to know that I still was interested in it and I would, I kid you not, I would literally grab it and I would just sit at my lap and she'd be doing something else, but I just wanted her to know that I could use the Kindle. And that sort of translates then into things later on.

[00:21:09] Okay. She's 17. Now, what does that look like at age 17? What that looks like: me, Andrea, my wife and Lauren, we all have the same six digit passcode for locking our iPhones. But my other two sons, they know along with Lauren and Andrea, the six digit passcode to my iPhone.

[00:21:27] I want them to know there's nothing to hide. So that again, that was a seed planted very early on with Lauren. And a seed that's now being planted very actively right now with my sons, that when they get devices, we just know each other's codes. That's just the way it is. So that's somewhat of a, some practical ways to think about that idea of co-play, co-ownership, being involved.

[00:21:54] Good luck starting that at age 15. Right? That doesn't work unless you've, I mean, it's painful. It can work, but I think it's less painful if that's the only digital culture environment that your kids have known.

[00:22:10] **Krystal:** Yeah it's good to hear about the framework but then also how it practically plays out. And so even in conversations surrounding pornography how did you normalize that in your own household?

[00:22:21] **Chris:** so I remember a time when my, I mean, we talked, so when Lauren got, um, she was about eight when I started really getting into this subject, you know, so, you know, back in 2013, 14, uh, when she would've been about eight. And so, you know, I just talked to her about the word. I was like, this is the word, this is what it means. With my sons, who I was able to start even a little earlier.

[00:22:47] I remember Blake, sitting at the kitchen counter and he had, this is like two houses ago. Um, he was five years old at the time and he had the Chromebook. Was it the Chromebook? Tablet? He had a device and he had it out and I was like, "You know what, Blake? You like the device, right? You love playing games and stuff."

[00:23:05] "Oh yeah. Dad, I love it."

[00:23:06] "I was like, okay, good. Now, Blake, you know what your private parts are, don't you?"

[00:23:10] And he's like, "Well, yeah."

[00:23:11] I mean, at four years old, every boy knows what his private parts are. Shelby. I don't know what the gender of your kids, but

[00:23:17] **Shelby:** boys

[00:23:18] Yeah

[00:23:18] **Chris:** yeah, yeah. You know?

[00:23:21] **Shelby:** it went

[00:23:22] **Chris:** Right. You know what I'm talking about?

[00:23:24] It's more often do take your hands out of your pants more. I mean, it's just, you know, it's like this just a boy thing.

[00:23:29] And so it's like, "Yeah, I know where are private parts."

[00:23:30] I was like, "Good. Hey, man, if you're ever on this computer and if you ever see someone else's private parts, if somebody's naked on the computer, somebody's bathing suit isn't on their body, on the computer and you see all their parts. You know what I want you to do?"

[00:23:45] He's like, "What?"

[00:23:45] Like now he's listening. Like, "What the heck is dad going to say next?"

[00:23:48] I said, "I want you to do two things. I want you to put it down and tell someone. That's it. Repeat after me, put it down,"

[00:23:54] "Put it down,"

[00:23:55] "Tell someone,"

[00:23:56] "Tell someone."

[00:23:57] And as often as I can remember, once a month hanging out in the car or walking down the road, I would say, "Hey, what do you do? If you see something uncomfortable, scary, private parts?"

[00:24:04] "I'd put it down. I tell someone."

[00:24:05] And that's what started that. And we practiced it because kids don't think abstractly at age four. It's one thing to kind of have that conversation, but the application of it needs to be practiced tangibly.

[00:24:18] So it's literally putting him in front of a Chromebook and say, "I want you to pretend that you just saw private parts on the Chromebook and Dad's over across the room. What do you do?"

[00:24:27] And I wanted to watch him close the screen and walk over and tell me like that kind of practice was really important. He also knew who his someones were.

[00:24:37] There was a list of someone's because if dad isn't available, who he talk to? You could talk to Aunt Suzy, you could talk to Grandma. And now it's really important that those people know they're on the someone list so they know what to do. That's a really important step because I don't want them freaking out because he does what I've asked him to do.

[00:24:52] And people that he loves freak out. That creates a very toxic conflict and break Blake sprain about. I did what dad told me to do, but I made grandma upset. And I'm never going to tell anybody when that happens again. So that's really important. Now in all of what I just described to you, did you hear me use the word pornography at all?

[00:25:10] **Shelby:** Not yet. No.

[00:25:11] **Chris:** Not, not once, but did I just teach my son what to do when he sees porn? Yeah. And then when he turned five and a half, whatever it was, and he periodically started riding the school bus because he was in kindergarten. I said, "Blake, people being naked on the computer, that's, there's a word for that. It's called pornography."

[00:25:30] I remember I can vividly see, he was sitting in the backseat of my car and I was driving and we had this conversation, " It's called pornography. And if you ever hear that word on the bus, because chances are, you will, you're surrounded by a bunch of unsupervised teenagers. Chances are you will. Do you know what I want you to do?"

[00:25:46] He's like, "What?"

[00:25:46] I said, "I just want you to tell someone."

[00:25:48] He's like, "Oh, I know that. You've been saying that for a year."

[00:25:51] Like, it was a framework he already knew there was nothing surprising. The word now had context, it had action. He knew what to do, and that has just continued and continued and continue to the point where, you know, at some point I know we're weird.

[00:26:05] You know, we talk about porn all the time. To hear my conversations, I'm on conference calls all the time with people dealing with this issue, the word is just, it's like saying pizza in my house. It's no big deal. And there's a really funny video that I have on social media about that, about my kids really normalizing this word to the point where I have to tell them sometimes, you know, not all families are like this.

[00:26:27] And you can't talk about it this freely in school, because I'm going to get a phone call from your teacher. Okay. They'll think, what, call CPS, because this family is off the hook. Those are some practical ways in which, and you know, if people were friends, if those listening, um, if you went to protect young eyes, you would also find this in the protect app.

[00:26:47] There's um, writing, we don't call how to talk to a five-year-old about porn and it goes through these stories and other stories. How to have practical age-specific conversations. That's on the preventative side, on the reactive side, in the Protect App, there's a whole emergency section of what happens when my child has seen porn?

[00:27:06] How do I react? Are the ages zero to seven? Are they ages eight to 13? Are they ages 14+? There's different ways to respond to that, but they all begin with the same four phrases and that is don't freak out, don't freak out, don't freak out, don't freak out. Chances are they've felt shame. Chances are the enemy has already told them what they did was wrong and horrible. Chances are they've already felt like they themselves were horrible.

[00:27:33] They don't need our help. We need to invite them back to the side of grace and unconditional and love and forgiveness as quickly as we can.

[00:27:44] **Krystal:** So you've mentioned that these resources are on, I believe you said the website and your app?

[00:27:50] **Chris:** correct.

[00:27:51] **Krystal:** Okay, are there some just general principles that you could encourage parents, like if their child comes to them or maybe the parent finds out that they've viewed pornography either on accident or on purpose, you know those four phrases that we can remember, sometimes we can forget that in the moment. So what are just some practical maybe some just principles that we can kind of hold to as we enter into those conversations?

[00:28:15] **Chris:** Yeah. Yeah. I've, I've pulled it up. I know people can't see me sharing through the screen, what I'm showing you, but I simply right now just pulled up, what's the SOS emergency help section. Um, and there's four sections here in our app about mental health, sexting, predator activity, and pornography. And so under pornography is for ages zero to six, exposed to porn.

[00:28:36] Number one, don't overreact. And talks about in this moment, you will either establish yourself as a trusting, soft place for them to land, or as the freak out parents who they'll never tell again. At very first reaction. And then it says to be strategic about who is involved in the conversation, maybe just one parent. Don't gang up on them.

[00:28:55] Number three, remind your son or daughter that you still love him or her, no matter what they do. There's a quote here, you know, kind of leading them and saying, "You know, that there's nothing you can ever see or do on the computer, or the device that would ever change the way I feel about you. You're still my boy. You're still my girl. And I love you."

[00:29:13] So even giving parents some words to use. And then calmly present what, you know, "Hey, I was looking at the computer and I found some websites you visited. Can we talk about it?"

[00:29:22] And then explain why, you know, if you think your child is ready, you might explain how our brains have a feeling part and a thinking part.

[00:29:28] And we have to sometimes use our thinking part to turn away from some of the things that we feel like we're drawn to. And then it gets into the practical of closed the digital doors that may be allowed the access in the first place, whatever it was, the Chromebook, maybe need a better router. So they're just, again, those are things that are kind of laid out bullet by bullet to help parents through.

[00:29:47] And there's another panel for age seven to 12, another one for 13 plus, and then a fourth panel, which is how do I know if my child requires counseling, we've done research to find out what are some specific behaviors that would indicate a problem that's maybe above our pay grade as parents. Which is tough. Our pride, right?

[00:30:08] First of all, we feel horrible that we let it happen and that can sometimes then bleed into pride of not wanting to admit to somebody else that we need help because we let it happen. I'm a parent, just like many listeners. I get that. But there's some attributes to look for. And then there's a link to the network of Christian counselors and a general network of adolescent counselors that they can go to across the country. They're in the app to find someone to connect to. So those are some of the just tips that we share with parents.

[00:30:37] My hope would be that you exit, what in the moment is a horrible experience, that you exit that experience with more digital trust than when you started. I think that's possible if it's handled in the right way.

[00:30:52] **Shelby:** Yeah, absolutely. What a great resource and that SOS, like I mean that is what would be happening in my brain, I feel Just knowing like all right I'm a little disoriented, confused, maybe even just you know frustrated or angry or whatever, but I have like a place to go to find these practicals steps. So um I think that's so helpful. We are absolutely going to be linking to your website and app everything in the show notes of this episode for our listeners.

[00:31:16] But I'm wondering if we can talk through some specific apps. Because we know that kids and teens they love to use TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, I'm sure by now there's a new one that's come out, but I don't even know about. And so are these apps safe? Should we allow our kids and our teens use them? What advice do you have on this?

[00:31:39] **Chris:** Yeah, so just to put it right out there. So nobody has to guess, I don't believe that any child who isn't, at least in high school needs a smartphone. That's number one, and at least age 15 for social media. Their brains just aren't ready for these supercomputers and for these godlike algorithms that we're putting inside of their precious developing brains.

[00:32:01] Shelby, trust me, as a former middle school pastor, middle school has enough drama. It doesn't need help. It already has enough distortion, chaos, complexity, and confusion. All these apps do. You know, if you study adolescents and I'm going to get to your specific question around, are they safe? Are they not?

[00:32:20] But I think there's a bigger question that needs to be asked first, because if, if I say, well, this is how you make Snapchat safe, then I think we still miss the point. At the end of the day, Snapchat is not congruent with an adolescent brand. It is not an app that actually was crafted with the adolescent brain in mind.

[00:32:44] Right, so when you understand adolescent neurology and the triune brain, the reptilian, the limbic, and the cortical part of the brain, and what places are plugged into what are. And what things are activated in adolescents. And then you put an app in their hands that actually allows content to disappear and a brain that is all go and no slow.

[00:33:04] That doesn't know how to judge risks. That has a hypersensitive reward center, which in the moment is on fire because there's a hot girl that wants a nude photo of me. When that happens in young boy brains, they quit thinking rationally. And yet we have handed them a match that will burn down a part of their life.

[00:33:23] And we then get upset with them when they make a mistake. It makes no sense. So I just want to put that out there at first that friends, none of these apps, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube. That's the big four in the United States that we are. You know, internationally, I would name WhatsApp. None of them were designed with children in mind. None of them. They were designed to consume as much of our time and attention as possible at all costs. So I just want to put that out there.

[00:33:52] Now to the specific issue of pornography. If the app allows human beings to post content, it will always have inappropriate content. It's just the way it's always been online.

[00:34:05] All of those apps contained inappropriate content and have access to inappropriate content. Instagram is full.

[00:34:11] Now, here's the thing. We're quickly getting to a, to a spot where the world's definition of pornography is becoming different than our definition of pornography.

[00:34:22] And I think most of your listeners will know exactly what I'm talking about. Where what is considered appropriate now, in other words, consistent with community guidelines in Instagram, is not consistent with what we want to be feeding our young, precious brains. And that's not just with the content itself, but it's the, what I will call the micro-sexualization of our children.

[00:34:46] Right? Where young girls find themselves conflicted because they know what certain behavior earns them on TikTok. And by doing certain things, they get certain credit and they get certain affirmations. And that dopamine reward system is just firing like crazy. They know these things and they find themselves helpless to stop because there's just so much social currency that's attached to doing certain things inside of these apps.

[00:35:16] And so it's not that it's. outright pornography, but it's that it's in the zip code and isn't that kind of bad? And I know it's, it's so hard. It's the slow fade to gray that I'm more concerned with in these apps today where it's, it was a lot easier to go, "That penthouse is porn." It had a label. It had a thing, it had a definition, a tangibleness to it that, that we could say this was porn and this wasn't. And porn lived in specific places when I was growing up.

[00:35:47] That's not the way it is anymore. We'd given them these apps and these devices where they do their homework, where they keep in touch with us, where they talk to grandma and they look at porn, right?

[00:35:56] It has this sort of very confusing duality to it. And we expect them to constantly navigate how to manage that duality. Oh my gosh, that is such a pressure and a burden that we've put on our children.

[00:36:13] So I know it's a really, long-winded answer to your question and I answered it a little more philosophically than I did practically, but I cannot over emphasize the potential for damage that is done in the devices and the apps that were not made for our kids.

[00:36:31] So, yes, there are things that we can do to make Instagram a little bit safer, although it still doesn't have any parental controls. There are things that we can do to make Snapchat a little bit safer, although right now it still doesn't have any parental controls. There are things we can do to make TikTok a little bit safer. Ironically, it has the best parental controls, although it has the most addictive algorithm on earth. So we've traded one thing for another thing because kids simply can't put it down.

[00:36:55] So there's, trade-offs here that whenever you're going to put a young person in those environments, they're going to be exposed to words and content that yes, they adhere to community guidelines, but they do not adhere to what the three of us and many of our listeners believe to be good and true and honorable and praiseworthy exposures to our brain.

[00:37:16] I mean, Saint Paul said it, you know, you knew what was coming when Philippians 4:8, he said, "Put your mind on things that are good and true." And you know, that whole list that he goes through. And boy, you pull up those eight or nine adjectives and then pull up TikTok and tell me if there's consistency. It's just not there and it's not porn and it's still not there.

[00:37:36] **Krystal:** So okay I have a question. I'm thinking of parents that might be listening and thinking, "Oh man, my kids have all of these apps. They have all of these devices." And so they're trying to think of, "Okay, how do I backtrack? And maybe how do I start putting some of those boundaries in place?"

[00:37:51] And so from the kids' perspective they've had all this access that now is being restricted. And then there's peer pressure. There's all kinds of stuff. My son, when he was in kindergarten, the first week he came home from school and he asked if he could have an iPhone. I said, "No you're not going to have an iPhone."

[00:38:06] He's like, "Well my friend has one."

[00:38:08] And I said, "Your friend is five and it's probably not his. So it's going to be okay."

[00:38:12] Um so I think just parents as they're hearing these from, you know, these things from their kids how do you encourage parents as they're putting boundaries in place? Hearing kids dealing with peer pressure, hearing the "It's not fair." You know, all the things that they're probably gonna maybe say as those restrictions are put in place. How do you encourage parents as they kind of navigate those waters?

[00:38:34] **Chris:** I don't want anybody to listen to this and smash any devices after you listened to it. That corrodes and removes digital trust really, really fast. I want it to prompt us towards a posture of curiosity instead of a posture of just freaking out and paralysis. I think it's okay to say to kids, "Hey, I listened to this podcast and I've learned some things and you know what, I'm sorry that I did not do a good enough job preparing you for some of the technology that I gave you. And if there are times with this device that you felt uncertain or pressured or not ready, that's my fault. And I'm, I'm sorry that I put you in that situation."

[00:39:22] " And I want you to know that there's total amnesty right now. I'm not going to take anything away if you tell me something has happened. But I want you to know from this point forward, I am your advocate. I am your ally. I'm still your parents, right? And I still may have to punish you from time to time, because if I didn't, I'd be a bad parent. But I, I want you to know that when it comes to this device, I am safe and I need you to know that."

[00:39:45] And I want our kids to hear that from us often. So if you're listening to this right now, if I asked you, "Do your children and your teenagers know whether or not that unconditionally beyond any doubt they can land safely and softly with you?" if you don't know the answer to that question then you have 48 hours to make sure that they know.

[00:40:08] I mean, that's the first thing that I would say I would say to that family. And then I think you get really open and honest about, "I'd like to change some rules, no matter what this looks like. Even if I only change one and I want to change five, you're probably not going to like it. So I just want to be really honest about that. And I'll listen to the pain points that you have in this, but I would love to change this and this and this."

[00:40:33] It all falls under the, philosophy I share with parents of tell them everything that freaks you out about technology. Tell them the things that you're thinking. If you're concerned about the possibility of them seeing pornography, say to your amazing son or daughter, "You know what, by you having this device, I am concerned that you are going to see pornography. Help me not be afraid of that. Talk to me about what that means to you or how you would address that or what things, you know, you're doing to try to avoid it."

[00:40:59] If you're concerned that they're going to get a text message from somebody that they don't know what to do. And at some predator or something, say to them, "I'm afraid that by having this device, that you might receive a text message from somebody who's trying to do something to you. And that really freaks me out."

[00:41:13] Because what I want to do is, wherever possible, I want to invite them into the solution. I want them to have some skin in the game, some agency in saying, "You know what, Mom? I've received that message. And this is how I handled it."

[00:41:26] "Oh my gosh, you have? That's amazing! Great job!"

[00:41:29] Like I, I want to create dialogue around the things that we're afraid of instead of it making us retreat into a corner and try to control them more because that never goes well.

[00:41:40] I mean, parents who're listening to this, think about your 14 year old version of you right now. Like, whatever, whatever that was. And I want you to imagine your parents walking up to you and saying, "You know what, Chris?" or, "You know what, Krystal?" or, "You know what, Shelby, I've got a great idea for you. Do you know what it's called? It's called parental control."

[00:41:59] Wouldn't the 14, wouldn't the 14 year old version of you just've gone, "Yes! That's what I want more of in my life. I want more parental control."

[00:42:08] No!

[00:42:10] Said no 14 year old ever. And so I think when we kind of step back and go, "Oh yeah, right. That that's a horrible thing to call it. And if I approach it that way, of course, they're going to resist."

[00:42:20] And I think, again, it's just these little pivots, these little mind-shift changes, these little just shifts in how we think about stuff. And I think they make a really big difference. So, I want us to be scared enough to do something, but I don't want that to put us in a position of fear where we do the wrong things.

[00:42:38] So do something. Have the conversations. Adjust a few rules. I'm all for that. But how you do it makes a big difference.

[00:42:46] **Krystal:** What obstacles do you tend to see in parents as they're trying to navigate these conversations, put some of these boundaries in place? Because I'm just thinking of you know some of our listeners that are trying to figure out, like, what do they do next? So, could you just speak to maybe some of the obstacles that you've seen and then just maybe some maybe tips on how they can overcome some of those obstacles?

[00:43:09] **Chris:** Well, what they might do is if you went to ProtectYoungEyes.com, at the very top. So in the hero section kind of the top, there's a button and there's a 10 question quiz that you can take. It's a simple home assessment. How safe is your home? Just as a place to start. Um, it asks questions about the conversations you've had around routers, that kind of thing.

[00:43:31] And so that's really simple. That's right on the homepage. And it'll give you a starting point to know where some of the soft spots might be in having an internet safer home. There's no such thing as an internet safe home, but there are internet safer homes than others. And so that might be a place just to sort of start.

[00:43:48] And then from there that quiz points towards the solutions. If you go, "No," to question three it'll point towards kind of what you can do in order to maybe find a solution that that could help. The one thing that I would say, though, to listeners is that if you're going to get one thing right, you know, get the relational right.

[00:44:10] Start with the relationship, right? Start with some of those humble apologies, those little conversations. You don't change family culture with technology, with a dosing of water. You change it one drip at a time. One little conversation. So one thing that we say to parents is 10 before 10. I want 10 conversations about pornography before age 10.

[00:44:31] And often when I say that, it kind of freaks parents out because they think, "Oh my gosh, I got to create a PowerPoint presentation and they have to sit there and then they have to clap when I'm done and it needs to be amazing."

[00:44:40] And none of those, none of those things are true. My kids have never clapped when I've told them something never.

[00:44:45] They roll their eyes at my jokes and that's about it. But, if you're sitting in your car and you're driving somewhere at a captive audience, shoulder-to-shoulder, and just look at them, say, "You know what? I just want to know if you've seen anything that's bothered you online recently. Okay. You haven't. Good. I just want you to know that if you did, you can, you can always tell me whatever that is." And then just keep driving. That's a porn talk.

[00:45:06] Okay. I mean, this, you just got to keep reminding them that the door's open, that there's a, again, a soft place that they can land with you.

[00:45:13] I had a mom tell me a fabulous story. I just love this. She's. She was a mom who did the cooking and you know how people end up all sort of in the kitchen. I don't know why kitchens just are attractive. You end up around the island and hanging out in the kitchen. And her kids ended up hanging out in the kitchen with her a lot, doing homework, whatever it was at night as she was getting dinner ready.

[00:45:30] And she had her back to her daughter. Daughter was 12. And she was cooking and she said those things she said to her daughter, "You know what, if you ever see something online, I just want you to know that you can tell me about it. I'm here. You know, I want you to know that mom's here for ya and you can tell me." And she just kept cooking.

[00:45:45] It was just a conversation. Back to back. Didn't even know if her daughter heard her or not, but she wanted to say it. And it was two weeks later, she sent me a DM and she said this through Instagram, she was two weeks later and she was putting her daughter to bed and, um, she had totally forgotten this even happened. And her daughter, it was quiet and said, "you know what, mom, you said, I could tell you anything."

[00:46:06] And like, in that moment, all it took was that little drip of a conversation, and her daughter just blah, about something that she had seen online. She just needed to hear it and to know that Mom was safe.

[00:46:18] So those are what I mean by those little drips. Don't let the enemy freak you out into it, being something big and beautiful. It just needs to be a drip here and there and those drips add up. And they really do make a difference.

[00:46:32] **Shelby:** Well is definitely been encouraging practical just taking a lot of I think fear out of this topic for me. So I really thank you much for your time.

[00:46:43] You know we have two quick questions before we wrap up. The first one is just, do you have any final words of encouragement for us on the topic of protecting and preparing our kids for exposure to pornography?

[00:46:55] **Chris:** I know that I said don't over spiritualize it, but please do spiritualize it. Find scripture of some kind, something that you can pray over your children in this area. And if you don't know where to begin, one that I recommend to parents is Psalm 119:37, which says, "Turn my eyes away from worthless things. Preserve my life, according to Your Word."

[00:47:17] And not because God's word is inadequate, but I think to personalize, it really can be special to put my children's names in that. Turn Cole's eyes away from worthless things. Preserve Cole's life according to Your Word. And that was a prayer.

[00:47:31] I didn't often know what to say about this issue or how to pray about it. So I was like, um, well, I guess I have a book that sort of has some words called the Bible. That's a good one.

[00:47:39] And so I simply started using that specific verse to pray very specifically for the eyes and the hearts of my kids, as it pertained, as a dad who had struggled with porn. Now, it was just very initially fearful, right, that my sins will become their sins. And so I use that as a way to, to pray through that.

[00:48:00] So I know this has been a conversation, very focused on more of the philosophical and the practical side of things, but I don't want to underestimate that tool, a weapon that we also have.

[00:48:11] **Shelby:** Yeah absolutely I love that. And I love the idea of praying that over my my children, um, as well. You know our our very last question, and this is a question that we ask every single guest that we have on the podcast, at The Daily Grace Co., we often say that the gospel changes everything. And so, Chris, we would just love to know what has the gospel changed for you?

[00:48:35] **Chris:** Wow.

[00:48:37] The gospel, reminds me, and I know the timing of when people will listen to this may be different, but we're having this conversation here on the cusp of good Friday, right? And on Easter at a time when the gospel really comes into to full focus and fulfillment.

[00:48:52] I am reminded often that even at my deepest and darkest moments, um, was never outside of the reach of grace.

[00:49:00] I think I felt at times that I was. I think that's so sinister about pornography is that it is an equal opportunity destroyer. It doesn't matter how much you love Jesus. It will still come after you. And at times, I needed to be reminded. And that's what a loving group of guys, you know, we were made in community in a Trinity.

[00:49:21] And I think we're better in a community. And pornography is such an isolator and one-on-one with porn, you always lose, you always lose, you always lose. And so to know that, through the power of that community, through a God who lives in community, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that I was still forgivable, made all the difference.

[00:49:41] So that's how I would answer your question.

[00:49:44] **Shelby:** Thank you for sharing that. You know, Chris, we are just so thankful that you have joined us today and shared your wisdom. I'm sure this conversation is going to benefit so many.

[00:49:56] **Chris:** I'm glad. Been a pleasure.

[00:49:58] **Shelby:** Thank you all so much for joining us today on the Daily Grace Podcast. Until next week we hope that you'll come join this conversation as we continue it over on Instagram at Daily Grace Podcast. But we'll see you next week