

Article 06 – For Parents

23rd May, 2025

Digital World Stewarding

Your child is growing up in the most connected generation in history, but not necessarily the most protected. We are in a season of overwhelming knowledge and constant information. While this digital access brings opportunity, it also demands vigilance. The need to be alert has never been more critical.

From smartphones to YouTube, gaming apps to social media, today's digital world is a powerful shaping force. It can mold your child's mind faster than a sermon ever will. What they consume, they become. What they scroll, they start to believe.

As parents, we are divinely called to guard their hearts. Proverbs 4:23 reminds us: *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

This is not a call to fear. It's a call to wisdom. A call to be intentional. A call to shepherd your child's digital life with the same care you give their physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing.

How to Guard Their Heart (Not Just Their Screen)

1. **Watch Together:** Don't just ask *what* they're watching, *watch with them*. Let digital time become family time, not isolation time. Shared screens allow shared values.
2. **Set Boundaries Early:** Establish tech-free zones and sacred times, meals, bedtime, family devotionals. These pockets of disconnection become moments of deeper connection.
3. **Ask Questions, Not Just Enforce Rules:** Engage their minds and hearts. Ask: *"Why do you like this show?" "What do you think that song is saying?"* These questions build discernment.
4. **Disciple Through the Digital:** Don't just monitor content, curate it. Introduce Christian podcasts, worship playlists, Bible animation channels (like *The Bible App for Kids*, *Superbook*, or *Saddleback Kids*), and age-appropriate devotionals. Let their feed be a stream of faith, not fear.
5. **Model It Yourself:** Children don't follow rules; they follow examples. Let your own phone habits reflect the boundaries you're encouraging. They'll do what you do before they do what you say.
6. **Create Digital Contracts:** One of the most effective tools I used with my children was a family electronic usage contract. We clearly stated the rules,

usage hours, allowed websites/apps, and consequences for breaches. Every quarter, we reviewed and updated the contract to reflect their growth and maturity. It created structure, trust, and accountability.

7. **Use Digital Parental Control Apps:** For younger children especially, consider using **digital nanny apps** that help manage screen time, block inappropriate content, and monitor activity. Some highly rated tools include:
 - o **Google Family Link** – Manage apps, set screen limits, and track usage.
 - o **Qustodio** – Monitors social media, sets usage schedules, and provides detailed activity reports.
 - o **Net Nanny** – Offers real-time internet filtering and alerts.
 - o **Bark** – Detects signs of cyberbullying, self-harm, and inappropriate messages across multiple platforms.
 - o **Canopy** – Uses AI to block pornography and inappropriate images instantly.These tools give you visibility and control, while teaching your children the value of wise digital behavior.
8. **Steer Their Digital Education:** Beyond monitoring, also **guide them towards good digital exposure**. Sign them up for coding programs, STEM platforms, digital art, or entrepreneurship courses. Platforms like **Khan Academy**, **Tynker**, **Code.org**, and **Brighterly** offer inspiring, age-appropriate content that fuels creativity and skill development.

In a digital world, hearts aren't just influenced, they're formed. Let your child's digital diet be one that nourishes the soul, not just entertain the eyes.

There is still much more to explore in this area, and every family must find a rhythm that works for them. But start with prayer, stay informed and don't hesitate to seek help if needed.

If you'd like further resources or counsel, feel free to send a message through the Feedback/Contact section of the **TiVH website**. We're here to walk this journey with you.

Love from the TiEH Team