

# DEALING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

## How do we live as Holy Families who use social media?

In the past 10 years, the use of social media by adults has gone from 7 percent of all adults in 2005 to more than 76 percent in 2015, according to Pew Research. Teenagers are also using social media in record numbers these days, which means that they need parental guidance on the benefits and dangers of having a public profile. Whether your favorite is Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Pinterest, it is very likely that you are using some kind of social media at least once a day. This usage is not likely to decrease in the future.

Because young people are concrete, in-the-moment thinkers, it is very hard for them to predict the consequences of their actions. The human brain continues to develop into an individual's early 20s, and there are many situations that young people have yet to encounter and thus do not necessarily know how to handle. Situations that can arise in social media just might be one of those places as kids increasingly own tablets and smartphones where the Internet is just a swipe or click away.

As with any other aspect of family life, it is important to have a conversation about expectations. What do you expect out of your children when it comes to social media usage? Are there time limits that will be imposed? Do they need to "friend" you so you can see what they are saying? What about the posting of pictures or the kinds of information they can and cannot share?

Part of a conversation on expectations might include social media etiquette. How do we, as people of faith, treat others when we are online? No doubt we've all cringed in horror as one person has criticized or belittled another in full view of all their online friends. We can look to Martin Luther's explanation to the Eighth Commandment for some guidance in this regard:

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*As people of faith, we live all aspects of our lives centered in Christ, and social media is no different.*

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*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

*What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, lie, or gossip about our neighbors, but defend them, speak well of them, and put the most charitable construction on all that they do. (Small Catechism)*

Social media has valuable uses. It is a wonderful way to keep in touch with family and friends, connect with people who have similar interests or concerns, or even to seek advice. But, like anything else, it can have a dark side that families need to talk about together so that children are safe and unharmed. As people of faith, we live *all* aspects of our lives centered in Christ, and social media is no different.



**Topical conversation starters to help parents stay on the same page with each other and their families.**

### Things to Pray and Talk About:

- Have you ever witnessed negative interactions on social media? How did it make you feel to see it?*
- What are some of the dangers of social media? How can you protect yourself from those sorts of interactions?*
- Discuss together Luther's explanation to the Eighth Commandment and what that means for how you treat others in all aspects of life.*
- Who owns your phone, computer and tablet? What is your family policy on privacy?*

### Asking for God's Blessing:

*Creator God, you have made us to be social creatures who crave interaction and relationships. Protect us in all aspects of life, including the realms of the digital age. Help us to use those platforms to bring good news to the world and to be bold in our confession of faith to you. Open the lines of communication in our family and guide us in your holy ways in all we do. Amen.*