

welcome to empowering
homeschool conversations
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse
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ployer from sped homeschool
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jackson from don jackson
educational consulting and tutoring
With over seventy five years
of combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.
So grab your favorite mug,
settle in and get ready for
insightful discussions,
valuable insights and practical tips.
Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.

hi everyone and welcome to
empowering homeschool
conversations today we are
going to talk about screen
savvy parenting navigating
tech with biblical
boundaries and today my
guest is david tucker david
is an author speaker
husband and father of three
who resides in cleveland tennessee

Throughout his career,
David has served as both a
pastor and technology executive.

The intersection of his
faith and his passion to
see families widely wisely
use technology led to his
founding digital parenting
dot com and writing the
Digital Parenting Guidebook.

Welcome, David, to the show.

Thank you so much for having me.

I'm really excited about
this conversation.

Oh, absolutely.

Yes.

And we were talking ahead of

time just how pertinent this topic is,
especially when we have
kids sometimes that get a
little screen addicted or
it's their calming device
and or maybe even a communication device.

And so that leads us to
tricky places as parents
who have kids with various
learning struggles,
communication struggles.

And so I really feel that this is a must,
a must listen to
conversation that we have ahead.

And so I'm excited to have
David on and bringing his expertise,
especially from a biblical perspective.

Um, a lot of people, maybe, you know,
or don't know our
organization has a
Christian founding principles in it.

It doesn't mean that if
you're not Christian, don't listen to us.

Um, we,
we want to encourage you in all
your areas of parenting and
homeschooling and, um, and you'll,
you'll get, um,

You'll get our background with that,

but that doesn't mean that
what we talk about is not
pertinent to every family.

So, David,

I always ask my guests when we
first start out the
conversation just to tell them why,
to share with our audience
why you're just so
passionate about this topic.

Yeah, absolutely.

So because of kind of this
dual background that I've had,
so as you mentioned in the intro there,
I've had a chance to
actually be on staff at a local church,
you know, as in a pastor role,
I've had a chance to also
be out in the tech world.

And so even though now I'm
not on staff at a local church,
I still volunteer at my
church and still very active and
one of the things that
started happening was
families would come to me
if they were having
problems with technology.

I kind of became the go-to
guy to help them address
some of those challenges.
And that came after I gave a talk, gosh,
it's probably been eight
years ago now at the church
that I'm at to really just explain, Hey,
Here's some of the dangers
that you need to be on the lookout for.
And while I was sharing these dangers,
I'll be honest, eight years ago,
I thought those dangers
happened in other places
with other families,
not the ones that were in my church.
But over that next year,
I learned that pretty much
every single danger I was
talking about was happening
to a family in our church.
And so through that,
I began to see that these
problems were more
widespread than what I thought.
And then with my background in technology,
I started to see that the
problems were going to get
worse with some new
technologies being introduced,

with some new capabilities,
with kids getting devices
at younger and younger ages,
that it was going to be really hard.

And even with my own kids,
I remember thinking about
how this was going to make
certain aspects of their
life more difficult.

Not to say that there aren't
things that are going to
make their lives better in
other ways too with technology,
but it really just became
something that I was
passionate about to help
give parents tools so they
can wisely approach
technology use in their homes.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It is amazing.

That's a lot of stuff we,
we definitely don't talk about,
but when you start like
sharing things that are going on,
you know,
in confidence with other

believers and friends, you, it's amazing.
They're like, oh, you too,
you're struggling with this as well.
And it is a topics, you know,
these things we need to be
talking about because they are happening.
They are happening within the church.
They are happening in places we don't
think that they should be happening.
Like we're in this protective community.
But we live in a society now
that's so interconnected
that there is just no
getting away unless you
live in a zone where you
have no connectivity at all.
There's very few spots that
even exist anymore like that.
My husband usually finds
those when we go camping though.
Exactly.
So.
So, yes, that's that's awesome.
So talk to us just a little
bit about the work that you
do then at digital parenting dot com.
Yeah, absolutely.
So at digital parenting dot com,
we really want to see there

be a generation of youth
come out of the church that
are free from the burdens
that come from the misuse of technology.

And so we want to do that by
really equipping two different groups.

Obviously,
parents are the number one group.

It's in our name.

Yeah,
really excited about helping parents.

However,
here's the one challenge that we
see in terms of helping parents.

A lot of times they don't
know there's a problem
until it's become a big problem.

and we want to actually help
families avoid some of
these problems that come
from the misuse of

technology and so one of
the ways that we do that is
by also partnering with

churches because churches

let me just tell you if you

don't know this they're

very aware that these

problems exist because they've had a lot of families affected by the misuse of technology and so being able to give them resources that they can hand to the families in their ministry so that they can say listen if you get in on this early, you're going to prevent issues down the road.

Or if you're already struggling with it, here's kind of a map that you can follow with how you can really begin to approach this intentionally as a family.

Absolutely.

Yes.

Yeah.

It is so much pre-preparation versus, you know, when we know the issue's happening or, you know, there's some fallout that then it goes, you know, into other arenas.

We, yeah, I mean, you can, you can lock down technology, but it doesn't take care of

the problem and all of the...

The back part that you have
to deal with mental health wise.

Yeah.

And more so.

So that's absolutely.

And we're learning.

And I know we'll talk about
some of that stuff later,
but we're learning more and
more about those side effects.

We've got more data than ever.

And so my hope is,
is that as we talk about
some of that today,
parents are going to
understand that there is
some urgency here to make
sure that we're approaching
this in a way that's
healthy for our families.

Yeah, absolutely.

If you're watching live,
and I see that we have some viewers on,
just know that if you're
struggling with technology
with your student,
pop some questions into the comments.

Let us know what's on your mind.

Um,

we'd love to be able to have David
address those, um, as we're live.

Um,

and you can definitely do that
anonymously if you, you would prefer.

Um, um, and just, just let us know, um,
what we can do to help you.

That's why we,

we go live because we know that, um,
sometimes you aren't able

to access people, um,

speaking at different, um,

venues or in other ways,

life is just busy.

But hey,

this is conversation happening now.

I have a question.

So So definitely let us know

how we we can help.

But But yes, so my,

I guess the first question

good to start out with how

can parents use their faith

to help guide their kids

and making responsible

decisions about using technology?

Yeah, absolutely.

So one of the challenges that I had early on in talking about this topic was I could do a really good job of getting parents scared about the dangers of technology that were out there, but I couldn't do a good job of telling them what to do.

And so that's one of the things that we've worked on at digitalparenting.com.

And so, and part of the reason I founded digitalparenting.com was because I wanted to give parents that resource.

And one of the things we see, and again, I believe that if you're listening to this and you're not a Christian, you can still absolutely get benefit from the seven essential steps of digital parenting that we cover in the book.

But really a lot of that foundation does go back to the Bible because we help

parents have conversations
with their children about
the reality of what they'll
face when they're online.

That's a big part of what we do.

So one of the things we
always tell parents is
there's nothing wrong with
great tools or great
devices that help us
monitor those things.

Those are all good if
they're existing within an
overall approach.

But at the core of this,
we need to be discipling our children.

We need to help them know
the temptations that they'll face.

We need to help them know
what the healthy choices
are in those moments.

And we do that.
through having both Bible
studies and discussion
guides that go along with
our seven essential steps
of digital parenting so
that parents can sit down
and prepare their kids for

some of the decisions that
they're going to have to make.

But the great thing is
before they actually have to make them,
which is one of the reasons
we always talk to parents
about starting early.

Yeah.

And you think you have so
much control over your kids.

I have three adult children.

Yeah.

I know I don't have any
control over my kids.

It just becomes evident as they get older.

And so they do.

They are the one making the choice.

You can influence that so much with kids.

you know,

just different things that you do,

conversations that you have

like David's talking about.

But at some point they will
make that determining decision.

And and so preparing them

for that and knowing that

those decisions will be in

front of them is so

important because you just
it will pop out in some
place and somewhere
sometime that you are least expecting it.

And and you need to be you
need to be proactive about that.

So, yeah, I think, you know,
a lot of parents ask, you know,
what about screen time?

What what's healthy?

What's not?

Is there I mean,

is there a cut and dried rule?

How how do you go about figuring that out?

Yeah, absolutely.

We include recommendations in the book,

but I'm going to talk about

it even at a more basic

level before we get into this,

because I want parents to

understand what's at stake here.

Because I think at times we

look at this and it's more of a, well,

yeah, a lot of screen time is bad.

You know,

we're working on it and just have

that kind of approach,

which really doesn't have

any urgency.

What I want parents to understand is that we do have a lot more data than we've ever had before.

And we can even see if we look and this comes from an article in JAMA Pediatrics from September of twenty twenty three.

We can see here that increased screen time in early childhood.

So again, we're talking at one year old here is negatively associated with poor performance on developmental screeners by the times they get to ages two and three.

So one of the things we can see is that there is this connection that exists between the screen time and our children's brain.

And to be honest, our brains too.

And so one of the things we can see here is that if we're really going outside of these bounds, especially as our children are developing,

that there's a consequence.

We can see consequences in terms of some of the data around potentially connections with ADHD, for example, with excessive screen time.

Not saying that's every situation of ADHD, but there are cases.

The Cleveland Clinic's been doing some great research on that.

And in addition, we can see that it's also changing the way that our kids can focus.

And so especially if you're listening to this and you're a Christian parent, here's what I want you to understand.

Screen time is a spiritual issue.

Here's why I say that.

If we think about how our children will be able to encounter the Bible and pray and commune with God, it's through times that require focus.

And if we're giving our children by giving them excess screen time too early, if we're giving them that, partly what they're losing is the ability to have some

of that focus for an
extended period of time.

So it does definitely become
a spiritual issue.

The other thing I'll mention here,
this is just kind of a
thing that as we talk with parents,
we realize that a lot of
parents aren't thinking about.

And that is when we look at
data around screen time,
it's actually talking about
all screen time.

sometimes categories of
screen time that we kind of
just kind of push under the
rug like oh they're doing
that for school so we're
not going to consider that time right

And you might say, well, hey,
my kid's doing this online
program as a part of our
homeschooling efforts.

I don't know if you understood.

I mean, again,
we homeschool all three of
our kids here as well.

Here's what you do with that though.

And that's why we give two
different numbers in the book.

I won't go into all the details,
but we give parents a
framework for helping to evaluate that.

It's just,
you need to understand that if
your kid's spending five
hours a day potentially in
front of a screen by doing schoolwork,
then we need to balance
that out by providing some
times that are completely
screen time free
once school's over.

And by helping to think
through the activities, giving our kids,
also giving them ideas and
options for how they can spend that time,
we're going to be combating
some of those side effects
that come with having too
much screen time.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I'm, I'm glad you,
you mentioned those things.

Cause yeah, a lot of,

I think we disassociate learning with,

in that screen time,
but also in other ways I've
had parents even approach and say, well,
my child goes to ABA therapy for,
you know, seven hours,
then how do we get in school?
And I'm like, seven hours is school,
you know?
And so it's a, a,
a change in perspective because we,
there,
we have to lump it all into kind of
that same category,
but then filter it through, you know,
just how, well,
how much concentration are they, you know,
adding and,
and other things and what's
needed outside of that.
Um, but, but yeah,
lots of good points there.
I, um, I see so many kids in my studio, um,
cause I, I, I coach.
And so I've,
I've just seen the lack of like the,
cross-body movement in kids
because they're so stuck in
front of devices and other

things and getting them out

to be able to play and to use, like,

one hand and the opposite leg.

I mean, some kids can't even do it.

And so...

yeah,

there's a technology has played a

huge role in that.

Um, and, and it's, um,

it's hard because as parents, we're,

we're kind of strapped for

time and for a lot of other things.

And technology is,

is kind of an easy way to say, Oh,

you know, just,

just watch this while I'm doing that.

And, um, and, and I'm,

I'm guilty as a parent too.

I might, you know,

we didn't have that data

back when my kids were young.

Well,

And this is one of the things too,

I know it might sound like, oh,

this is a hard thing to implement.

One of the things I want

everyone listening to understand is,

I'm calling for everyone to

have empathy one for

another here on this.

We're not coming at this

from a judgmental perspective.

Even when I've had previous

generations that are talking to me about,

oh, parents these days,

they just hand their kids a device.

And one of the things I would say is,

I think that generation

would have to every parent in that.

Exactly right.

Just given the reality of how life is,

it becomes a big temptation.

However,

what I would like to see parents

do is to come alongside and

encourage each other in this area.

One of the things, though,

that I was really surprised

about early on was when we

were talking with families

and they were implementing

some of our recommendations,

they certainly got some

pushback from their kids,

but they also got a ton of

pushback from other parents.

And so I want to just flip

this kind of flip the script on that.

And let's talk about how we
can encourage one another
here in these areas where
we're we're working to make
great decisions with our
kids about how they use technology.

Absolutely.

Yes.

Because there's so many good uses for it,
too.

And we've seen so much of a
shift since COVID happened
for education happening online,
which is amazing because
you can access educators now worldwide.

And so there's so many
positives that that we
can't just focus on the negative.

And and definitely it's
becoming a necessary thing.

But as it's becoming a necessary thing,
it gives us unique
challenges because there's
people realizing our kids are online,
like online predators,
cyberbullying and other harmful content.

And so how can parents
establish safeguards while

encouraging open
communication with their kids?

Yeah, it's a great question.

So when we look at the seven
essential steps of digital
parenting and we're when we
actually get into steps four and five.

So step four is all about, again,
protecting our kids from predators.

Step five is all about
respecting themselves and
respecting others about online behavior.

And let's talk about step four.

Let's talk about predators for a minute,
because I think a lot of parents,
this is where when they're
going through our course,
they can kind of get a
little bit overwhelmed.

Because in reality,
we need to prepare our
children for what they
might encounter here.

And so that's one of the
reasons we heavily rely on
discussion guides,
which are free resources
that come with the book.

They're available online.

But they help talk through
with your child some things
they might encounter.

So imagine,

let's just take two different
scenarios here.

Imagine that your child gets
some sort of a communication device.

And we'll talk more about
those kinds of decisions later.

But imagine they have a phone,
for example.

and they have an authority
figure that can be a

teacher at church maybe it
could be a pastor at church

could be maybe a coach or
if if someone sends them

something inappropriate if
you haven't given a

framework for what they're
supposed to do with that

they're having to just

figure that out on their

own in real time exactly

yeah we can do one of the

greatest things we can do

here for our kids is giving

them red flags that they
can spot and telling them
exactly how you can help
them in those moments
So you can say, hey, if you get this,
you need to come to me right away, right?
And this could be something
that might seem innocuous, right?
We've heard examples of, oh,
this authority figure asked
for a picture of me in my
bathing suit at our beach vacation,
right?
If you teach your kid early that, hey,
that's a red flag,
you need to come to me with that,
then all of a sudden it's
not going any further.
You're able to step in and
provide a level of
protection because they're
not having to figure it out themselves.
The other thing with this is we need to,
again, teach our kids to kind of, again,
be on the lookout for those things,
but we also can help them
by putting common sense
boundaries in place.

There are very few people,
pretty much at this point,
there's only a couple of people,
and they're actually all family,
that are other adults that
have the ability to have
direct conversations with my kids,
for example.

Now, there are communication channels that,
you know,
the youth leaders at our church
that that other families that we have,
there's a lot of lines of
communication that that can
actually reach my children,
but that I can monitor.

But there's right people
that have that unmonitored level.

And so as parents,
we just need to be familiar
with what those channels are,
and how we can provide a
level of safeguard for our
kids in those moments.

Absolutely.

Yes, that's great advice because, yeah,
there's so few
conversations that they
really need to have.

Right.

And I know a lot of kids
that come to my studio, they're like,
what's your Wi-Fi password?

I'm like, well,
if your parents haven't
given you the ability to
have internet on your phone,
it's not coming through me.

Right, yeah.

Um, you know, and, um, you know, it's just,
you got to respect the parent and, um,
and the decisions that they're,
they're trying to hold for their kids.

Um, and they're,
they're doing it for a reason.

And those, and there, there is so much,
you know, you,
you can set and things like that,
but also, um,

Just having those.

I love that about that pre
conversation about, you know,
when things are going to come in,
how to have those
conversations and them not
having the stress of dealing with it,
because a lot of times

they'll put that back on themselves.

What did I do?

Right.

to to bring this about when

really they did nothing.

It was, you know, on their end,

they're they're innocent,

but there's somebody else

that's trying to take advantage of them.

And if you as a parent,

like if you have any

questions on how some of

this could play out, right.

You can go in and look.

There's several different

videos that are available

on YouTube where and

different organizations and

different parents have done

this where they pretended to be just,

for example,

let's say a twelve year old

girl jumping on Instagram.

Right.

You pretend to be thirteen

to get on Instagram.

But either way,

when they get on that platform.

And the amount of time it

takes before there's some
adult who's coming in and
showing predatory behavior.

And it's it happens within
an hour and then it just
continues in different areas.

So you need to understand, like, yeah,
the decisions about like,
do I give my kid access to, you know,
whatever, whatever it is.

Right.

You need to understand the
realities of what they're going to face,
because the truth is,
is most of us would look at.

And again,

I'm just going to take an example here.

Like,

let's say you just have some
dangerous weapon and you leave it on
on the coffee table in your living room,
most other parents would walk and say,
oh my gosh, that's so dangerous.

Your child is about a
hundred times more likely
to be damaged by the phone
that they have in their
hand than by that dangerous weapon.

The problem is that we don't correlate that because we think of it in a certain way. And part of our job here, we're not doing this purposefully to scare parents, but we do want to drive urgency of helping them understand the dangers that do exist.

So giving your kid the decision to get on social media, that has consequences.

Now, it could be that at a certain age, you believe it's appropriate for them and you're going to equip them and guide them.

But we should never just hand them a device or hand them access to something and say, basically say, let you figure out what you want to do with it.

Exactly.

Yeah, it's like taking the old fashioned, you know,

I just remember growing up and my mom saying, okay, when you turn this age,

you can get your ears pierced.

That kind of ends at that, you know, well,
if you have an infection,
it's your own fault.

But

It's not like you're opening
this Pandora's box at that age and saying,
well, whatever you want to do.

I mean,

I guess some parenting that might happen,
but very few,
very few parents would make
that choice for their child.

And so, yes,
seeing it from that point of view,
it's a completely different thing.

So, you know,
but the problem for us parents is that.

Technology is always changing.

And how can we prepare our

kids for a future where we

don't even know what

they're preparing for,

preparing for or what could

come at them and still

maintain our biblical values in, you know,

in our home, especially,

but also to encourage them

as they're going outside

our home to continue that.

Yeah, absolutely.

And ultimately, again,

this is really a

discipleship conversation rather than a,

you know,

a monitoring and control kind of

situation.

We're really trying to teach

our kids not only what we

believe the right decision

to make in a given moment is,

but we're also trying to

explain to them why.

Right.

Right.

And I've had parents that say, oh, my gosh,

my kid is they're giving me

so much pushback about

implementing these changes.

And then those parents have

actually sat down and given

some of the data and told

some of the stories that

came out of the book.

And their kids are all of a sudden like,

oh,

I didn't realize that that risk was

there.

And in those moments,
you're equipping your child
to also see this particular
risk for what it is.

And so by sharing that kind of information,
not just making a making it
an I told you so or you
have to do it this way
because I said so kind of moment.

But it's truly I'm shaping
this for you so that whatever.

When you're out on your own,
when you leave the home at
whatever age that is,
you have the tools that you
need to make the right decision.

Because at some point, again,
our kids are going to be
out in the world.

And we were talking about
this before the show started.

There's really no scenario
these days unless they
choose to go live in a
Mennonite or Amish
community where they're
going to go to a place

that's totally technology free.

And so we do need to equip our kids for that.

I believe that's a part of our calling to raise our kids for the culture that they're going to be living in.

The other thing I would add to this based on your question is we also need to teach our kids that it's okay to wait and maybe not be the first one on a new platform or the first one to have a new device or the first one to go out and be doing whatever game it is, those kinds of things.

And teaching them that it's good sometimes to step back and say, does this ultimately help me or does this hurt me?

And if we can teach our kids early on to start thinking through that, then they're going to be better equipped when they get out on their own to say, you know what,

I could sit down in college

and binge watch a whole
show on whatever streaming service it is,
but is that going to be the
healthiest thing for me?
Is it going to enable me to
get my work done?
Is it going to prevent me
from reading my Bible?
And by making those decisions early,
they're going to be able to
have those decisions with
themselves in the future.

Yeah, exactly,
because they will be having
those decisions either with themselves,
with God, or with somebody else.

And who is that somebody else?

And what are the prominent
voices in their head?

You know,
those are lots of things to think about.

If you've had a lot of
discussions around this,
those will be the
predominant voices that
they'll be hearing.

It won't be the, oh, yeah,
my parents said something about that,

and then I dismissed them,
and then I've got all this other,
you know,
come back from my friends
that are saying all of this,
that's the predominant voice then.

And so, yes,
you definitely have to keep
the conversation, not just once or twice,
but it has to be an ongoing
within your family.

And I've been very happy
that all my kids hate social media.

And they're always like, mom,
can you look this up on Facebook?
Cause I can't, don't have access,
but unfortunately mom's there.

Um, so, so yes.

And I know we had to talk
about that ahead of time.

It's like, ah, you just, it, it,
it's something you have to
prayerfully take into consideration,
even as an adult, how much do I use?

And, and it does become, you know,
we are setting that example.

Mm-hmm.

And how are we handling it?

Do you have any other advice

for parents as they're just
even considering their own
technology use and what
they may be portraying
versus what they're saying?

Yeah, a hundred percent.

So when we start off with
step one of the seven
essential steps of digital parenting,
it's all about regulating screen time.

And part of the reason we do
that is because every
danger that your kids will
experience online gets
worse with more screen time.

There's more opportunities.
So we have families create
what's called a family
screen time plan that
happens as a part of step one.

And the interesting thing is
that there's two halves to that plan.

The first half your kids will never see.

It's for you to look at your own behavior.

And if you're your parents
have got a spouse,
it's for you and your
spouse to sit down together

and talk about your own digital habits,
talk about things that you
might need to start, stop,
continue or change and
really walk through that and define, hey,
what are the times that
devices are going to not be
seen in our home?

Right.

What are the things we do
together that devices aren't there for?

And when you have that conversation,

then you can move over and

start talking about the

second half of the plan,

which is really talking

about those screen time

limits for your children,

where they are and are not

allowed to use devices,

and a lot of other

questions that we'll walk you through.

But one of the things we

know is that your kids are

going to develop a lot of

the habits they see in you,

irrespective of what you say.

and so we want to equip

parents to wisely use

devices and trust me I'm
you know there's been times
like I'm thinking back to
last week um again I'm
helping run
digitalparenting.com obviously
and we had a couple things
come up at the last minute
and so I'm sitting there at
dinner trying to send a
message back to to one of
the people that works at
digitalparenting.com on
slack and and then it hit
me like oh gosh I don't
want to be passing on
to my kids and so you know
make an effort to stop and
put the device away and
those kinds of things but I
have the same temptations
that you all face and I
know there's a lot of jobs
and a lot of other events
or organizations that you
can be a part of that
really want to grab at your
time through your phone or

through other devices and
so it just is a conscious you know
purposeful decision to say,
I'm going to model what my
kids need to develop.

And and I'm also really conscious of that,
too,
because my kids are learning to drive
right now.

So in November, twin boys that are.

Yes.

Oh,
that's so scary when you see people on
their phones driving.

Absolutely.

And so it's just, you know, it's been,
it's been a focus in my mind to just,
you know,
try to keep that phone as far away from,
you know,
being involved in the driving
process because I never
want them to think that that's okay.

So these are all,
these are all areas where
we can really give our kids
an example that they can follow.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And I have learned, too, in that process,
because, you know,
with wearing two different companies,
my phone is is always going off.

And I've just learned to tell people that,
you know, they're like,
why can't I get a hold of you?

Well,
this is why this is why my phone is
not there.

And then they start to respect that time.

But if you leave that door open,
people will step all over you.

Um, and so you,
you have to set the boundaries,
but people will respect
that once they realize your
reasoning behind it,
or even if they don't, um,
they just know that it's
not worth trying to contact her then.

Um, and, and they'll just,
they'll fit in the spaces
that you have available.

And I think we forget that because we,
technology has made us so
available all the time.

And it's not only ruining

our just family lives,
it's ruining our spiritual lives,
it's ruining our lives in
general because we're not
getting the rest we need
and just the downtime that
we need as well.

And like you said,
it's setting our kids up to
do the exact same thing
because they're going to copy us.

Absolutely.

So, yeah.

So, you know,
there is that age when kids
become teenagers and mom
and dad know nothing about

Um, how, how do you navigate that, um,
as a parent when still there's, I mean,
you have set boundaries, um, and that,
but you want to give your
kids some more freedom.

Um, do you have any, um, wisdom or advice?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Here's one of the things
that I would just say up front is,
you know,
every situation is different and

every child is different.

And again, we started off with twin boys.

I also have a daughter and I

can even tell you that my

twin boys are very different in terms of,

you know,

how they approach different things.

And so this is a decision that as a parent,

again, you'll you'll have to make.

But one of the things I

think that's so critical to

understand here is

If you say, OK,

I want my child to be able

to effectively use

technology in a responsible way,

that means at some point

you're going to introduce

them to different things,

whether it's having a device,

being on different platforms.

The thing I would want to

remind parents here is

it's not equal to do it at

um twelve versus seventeen

okay there are some things

that we know are extremely

dangerous as we continue to

get more data in and so in areas where we have data and we know that things are dangerous this is where I would advise you as a parent it's ultimately your decision but I would advise you to continue to wait and delay even if your child is going to end up being radically kind of counter-cultural to the rest of the people in their grade that they have interactions with. So the biggest example of this that I can talk about is social media, specifically for girls that are preteens and early teens. We have so much data that's coming out on the negative effects of social media on this age group, enough so that we're not just saying this is correlated. There's a lot of areas where we can actually go in and say social media is actually causing this. When we look at that ten to

fourteen age range,
the increase in having a
major depressive episode,
when we look at the
increase of actually having
to be checked into the
hospital for some aspect of self-harm,
we're seeing in some cases
this increase by one
hundred and eighty nine
percent when we look at the
pre- two thousand and ten time period.

And that was really when we
started to see phones
placed in the hands of
everyone in middle school
and high school.

And so when we look at this
and I hear parents say, well,
I think my kid is, you know,
she's mature enough to be
on Instagram and all of her friends are.

What I want to explain to
you is going back to that
thing we said about the
dangerous weapon and the risks here.

We need to understand what
we're potentially risking in this.

And that could be the mental health,
you know, of your daughter,
of my daughter.

And so in those moments,
we need to make decisions based on that.

Now,

I did mention that every situation is
different.

If your child is already
having struggles with
anxiety or depression,
then your response might be different.

If you're seeing someone for
professional help in those areas,

I would invite them to be
able to speak into some of
those decisions that you're
making for your child.

I have seen, for example,
another area where I would
say to include other
professional opinions.

If you do have a child that
potentially has different
types of disabilities,
this can be another good
opportunity because I have
seen some where an online
community is something

that's extremely beneficial for...

Right.

Exactly.

And so that's an area where, again,

you're going to have to

look at each situation

differently and determine

what the answer is.

But here's here's one of the

things I would encourage

parents to say is sometimes

the answer isn't just yes or no.

Wait is a very valid answer

to your children in many of

these circumstances.

especially when it comes to

social media and even the

surgeon general of the

united states has come out

and said that thirteen is

too early for social media

that parents would benefit

from waiting until sixteen

or later to give their kids

social media and we're

starting to see this push

through there's laws we've

had laws now in utah we're

seeing laws being discussed
in australia and a lot of
other areas that would
potentially ban kids from getting on
specific apps before certain ages.
So we will eventually see
some of the laws catch up
to the dangers that exist,
but technology is always
going to move faster than those laws.

And so as a parent,
just getting yourself
updated on what the data
says and making a wise
decision is going to be now
an essential part of all of
our jobs as parents in.

Absolutely.

Yeah, so true.

And that's it's astounding.
just the information that's, you know,
coming in.

And I think my husband and I
had some conversations, you know,
if we'd only known, you know, it's,
and a lot of it was, you know,
just related to video games.

And yet here,
my oldest made it through

college writing because of
video games and,
because it helps him to focus.
And so he, as a, as a parent, I get in,
it's an individual basis and you,
you do have to have those conversations.
Cause I, you know,
I was getting so upset with
this child about, you know,
his screen time.
And in the end, he's like, mom,
I get my brain just can't, you know,
I can't think until I have
just a little bit of quiet time.
And that's that's what that does for me.
And I'm like, OK,
so as long as you're getting good grades,
let's do a trial basis, you know.
And so.
So, yeah,
you just you just don't even know how.
That'll affect them
positively or negatively.
And so, yes,
having the conversation is
where you start and the
relationship and having a
good relationship where that comes from.

It isn't just a top down.

We're forcing this upon you.

And another part of that,

when we talk again about discussions,

so we have a discussion

guide to go through with

your children when it comes

to social media,

at whatever point you bring them on,

because we know that

there's a lot of emotions

that can get tied to using social media.

And this is another area

where we can help prepare our kids,

because imagine the first

time you ever saw someone

else on social media and

you were jealous of something,

or the first time you saw

somebody and somebody give

an opinion you didn't agree

with and it made you angry.

Helping your kids understand

that these emotions can

just happen when you're

using social media so that

they know how to spot that and go, oh,

this is not a healthy interaction for me.

I'm being jealous of

something this other person has.

I'm looking at the
highlights of their life
and it's making me feel
worse about my own life.

But I know that they're not
sharing everything.

If you can talk your child
through those things so
they can spot those
emotions ahead of time,
they're going to be far ahead,
to be honest,
of most every teenager
that's on social media.

And this is just,
it's going to be an essential tool.

So we also have parents book
kind of these recurring
conversations with their kids about
hey you know what feelings
did you have when you were
going through social media
you don't have to sit there
and quiz them on every
single thing they looked at
but you can you can help
them have a point of

discussion so they can
better understand some of
the feelings and emotions
that are coming in when
they're interacting

That'd be a great dinner conversation.

You know, like what, what,
what came up today that, you know,
had red flags for you?

How did you respond to it?

You know,
and that just teaches other kids
at the table as well,
helps you be part of the conversation.

That's our family.

We just, you know,
that was our decompression
time was around the dinner table.

And I know a lot of,
a lot of people don't have
family dinners anymore.

I really do encourage it.

Yeah.

Yeah.

you get a lot done in a half
an hour meal or more.

So sometimes they sit longer
and you appreciate that.

Absolutely.

Um, yeah, for sure.

So, um,

So what, as far as advice, um,

for parents listening and, you know,

watching, would,

would you give us like some first steps,

um, if they feel like I, okay, I'm,

I'm convicted.

I definitely need to be

doing something different.

Um, how do you even start evaluating, um,

just where, where we're at and, um,

the changes that need to happen.

I think it can be very

overwhelming because you're like,

oh my goodness.

Um,

I see a lot of red flags and now I'm

feeling guilty.

And like we said before, don't do that.

Um, but, but yet, you know,

we're convicted and when you're convicted,

you just feel like, okay,

I need to repent not only to God,

but to my children.

And, um, and where do I start?

Yeah, first of all, I would tell parents,

take a deep breath.

You can know that you're
called to be a parent in
twenty twenty four.

And I firmly believe God's
going to provide you what
you need to do that.

And I also would say,
don't try to solve this
problem in a day or a week.

Start with yourself as a parent.

Look at your own habits,
whether you use our
resources or other resources you find.

Be able to just sit down and
look at what some solid
recommendations are in areas.

But the other thing I would
say is don't let other
people make decisions for your family.

So if you're in a situation
where people are pushing
you to make technology
decisions for your child
that you don't think are in
their best interest,
do not let them make those decisions.

Take ownership of that as a
parent and be able to make
wise decisions based, again,

on where you think your child is at.

And again, if you start with small things,
that's part of the reason why for us,
step one is regulating screen time.

You can read that chapter
and fully implement that in
your home within a week.

And if you do that,
you have already greatly
reduced the amount of risks
that your child will face
on a daily basis.

So that's a great first step.

We try to make it easy.

Then as you have time,
you can jump into the following steps,
begin to implement those
concepts in your home.

but know that the moment
you've completed step one
you've made huge progress
over where you were before

so that's something to
celebrate that really

really is the other thing

is this is going to be

easier if you're with other
parents or other families

that are following the same process

Yeah.

So I would encourage you get

a book club together,

go through the digital

parenting guidebook, talk through it,

be able to kind of potentially at points,

maybe either lean on each

other's shoulders or maybe

cry on each other's

shoulders in some way.

But that's going to help you

be able to implement this

in your hometown.

Don't feel like you've got

to go out and do this on your own.

If you know other parents

that are having similar challenges,

go through this together

because there is a feeling

at times like you're kind

of on an island and you're

the only one doing this and

then you'll get pushback

from other parents and just

almost seems overwhelming.

So I would just encourage you again,

get started.

Don't feel like you have to

solve it all at once and
get with other people that
see the world the same way
you do and go through the
material together.

And I think you'll be amazed
because you'll turn around
a month or two down the road and be like,
we've improved in a lot of
these areas that were concerning me.

Yeah, yeah.

So on the other side,
there's families who are
already dealing with
devastating effects of the
digital content that their
kids have consumed or been affected by.

What advice do you have for
those families?

I think a lot of times we
feel like it's too far gone.

There's nothing we can do.

The first thing I would say to parents,
because I hear that often,
the first thing I would tell parents,
as long as there are kids
that are still at your home,
they're still under your roof,

you absolutely have the
ability to influence them.

And that's our calling in
those moments to help them
through those challenges
that they're facing.

It is never too late.

And part of the reason I can
say that is because I know
I serve a God that is able
in those moments to work
miracles in their lives.

So with that being said, don't lose heart.

There might be difficult
conversations that need to be had.

And the other thing I'll say
here is when I've had
parents that have come to
me after some really,
really damaging things have
happened in their homes
because of technology.

This is where there may need
to be professional help involved.

There are times when, you know,

I know we like to throw
around the term addicted, for example.

People are addicted to screen time,
addicted to video games,

addicted to social media.

there are times when that is

actually clinically true.

There is a true addiction.

And in those moments,

you would benefit from

being able to have professional help.

Now, as I say this,

we're in a moment right now

in America where there is a

huge shortage of mental

health professionals.

And so trying to get into some of these

get into some of these

practices is very difficult.

But you can have a first

conversation with your

primary care doctor.

They're becoming in a lot of

ways kind of the frontline

help with some of these challenges.

And so talk to them about

what you're seeing.

We also include in the book,

there's something called

the Problematic Media Use Measure,

which was created separately.

We didn't create it.

It was created...
by a group of researchers
from several different universities.
And while it's designed for
younger children,
it can be helpful for you
to analyze even if your kids are older.

And what you can do is you
can sit down and answer
these twenty five questions
and then you can take that
to that either mental
health professional primary
care providers.

That's what I'm seeing.

And they can begin to give
you some guidance on what
needs to happen.

It might be something as simple as,
you know,
you show that to them and they say,
listen,

I don't know that this is really
an addiction.

I think you just need to
work on maybe reining
things in over a period of
time so that you can get to a point.

Or maybe they need to go

through more of what we
would call like a media fast,
a screen time fast.

You go away as a family and
you don't take devices.

Right.

There are moments when it's like, no,
there's serious side
effects that happen when
you try something like that.

And that's where a mental
health professional is
going to be really helpful
at helping you walk through
that and trying to get your
child to a healthy place.

Yeah,

it's the third set of eyes into the
discussion.

So a neutral party that can
really help if you're
feeling stuck or overwhelmed,
or it just becomes a
constant battle that you
just don't know how to...
win over anymore.

Um, and yeah, great advice.

So, so yes, there,

I heard about when you were
talking about a technology fast,
I heard about a family that, you know,
let their kids have their
devices and they didn't let them know.

I mean,

they used them and used them and
then all their batteries
went dead and they said, well,
where do we plug them in?

And they had nowhere to plug them in.

So lack of electricity can
also limit your technology use.

One of the other things I
would just throw out there
for parents to consider is
signing your kids up for
groups or activities where
devices aren't allowed.

So I'll give you an example of that.

My boys are a part of a
trail life troop here in Cleveland,
Tennessee,
and we just had a camp out a
couple of weekends ago.

And so you got to see, you know,
thirty eleven to eighteen
year old boys just out running in a field,
no phones,

no devices for the whole weekend.

And it was great to see.

But that's an event where

they know when they come to

meetings and when they go

to these camp outs and other activities,

phones aren't going to be there.

And that's part of the

reason that parents sign up for those.

Right.

So that's just something else to consider.

Don't feel like you have to

always put all of this on your shoulders.

There might be great

activities you could plug

them into where they can.

where they can actually

learn to be without screens.

And I'll throw another one

in there too on the other

side because one of the

dangers parents always talk

to me about is that I'm

worried that my kids are

going to fall behind in

technology if I try to make

wise decisions here.

But there's also great

activities that can give
your children some exposure.
So one of my sons also just
signed up to be a part of
an FTC robotics team here in Chattanooga.

And so they're going to get
to go in and build a robot
and code it and do all of that.

And he really likes coding
and those things.

And so that's a great opportunity to,
under adult guidance,
be able to have some
exposure to technology,
but without just saying,
here's a computer, you're on your own.

Right.

Exactly.

And using it in ways that
usually they aren't
connected to any type of, you know,
Internet, their standalone computers.

And I don't think kids, you know,
even understand what those are anymore.

That was that was the norm in my day.

But the Internet.

Right.

Exactly.

It doesn't talk to anybody else.

And and so but just to understand that there's so many other uses for technology than just the social aspect, which is it's become the predominant way that we use technology now.

And it never was that way.

It is.

and it's it has destroyed our our personal relationships too right um because we're we're opting for those things versus those in person so I love when you suggest have a book club um meet with people in person and you know and within your church or within your your homeschool co-op or um or just maybe you have a park day with other homeschool families and you're like you having a discussion about technology and they're experiencing the same things or bring that

discussion up if people aren't talking about it, because everybody's got that question and they're they're thinking about the same thing you are.

And so if you don't know what else to talk about, talk about that.

So, well, thank you so much, David.

I would just love for you again to talk about digital parenting dot com, what parents can find there and then also about your book and where they can find that.

Absolutely.

So at digitalparenting.com, we have a lot of resources that exist alongside the printed resources or digital resources we have.

So if you're interested in just getting an introduction into our recommendations and our approach,

I recommend you find the digital parenting guidebook.

You can go to digitalparenting.com and

click on the link to get
the book and it'll take you to Amazon,
but you can also find the
book pretty much anywhere
that you buy books.

So you can

Grab that book.

That's going to be the
foundation that's going to
cover what we call the
seven essential steps of
digital parenting.

And then we have resources
online at our site,
digital parenting dot com
that go along with each of
those steps and also help
give you just some advice on, again,
not just how to be scared of technology,
but also some good things
you can plug your kids into
that enable them to learn
in a way that is going to
be safe and something that
is appropriate for them.

And we also link with
several of our partners
that provide resources.

We're talking about things
like those monitoring tools,
or if you're looking at
getting your child a phone,
we're gonna provide you
links into some trusted
companies that provide
resources that you can take advantage of.

Awesome.

Well, that's great.

And we appreciate that all
being out there because
it's definitely a necessary tool.

And I'm glad that you have
answered that call and are
providing families with
those types of resources because it's,

They need a trustworthy
place to go because there's
just so much information
and to be able to know that
this aligns with my values,
this can actually encourage
more than just regulated
coming down on my kids and
having really that
discussion and wise discipleship,
as you've talked over and over again.

It truly is a discipleship

issue with our children.

And that's what we've been called to.

And we don't safeguard them.

We'd love to,

but that's just not the way it works.

And we've all been given

free choice for a reason.

And we have to help them to

use that free choice in a

God-honoring way.

So appreciate your work.

Yeah, absolutely.

Well,

thank you all for joining us today

here on empowering

homeschool conversations.

Just know that we have a new

group on our private

platform at spedhomeschool.com.

That is just for this show.

So if you want to keep this

conversation going,

have additional questions and comments,

um,

we would be happy to

continue that conversation there.

So you can head over to

spedhomeschool.com and look at groups.

If you are at a navigator level,
you can access that.
If you're not,
you'll have to change your membership.

It's five dollars a month, not too much.

But that gets you access
actually to all of our
groups led by all of the
various consultants that work with us.

So that's a huge benefit.

But

Next week,

we will be talking with Marianne
Sutherland from Homeschooling Dyslexia.

And she's going to be
talking with us about
thinking beyond the book,
creative strategies for
language based learning challenges,
which I know a lot of you
have interest in.

So definitely you can put
your questions ahead of
time again in that same
group or join us live or do both.

We'd appreciate that.

So.

um, yeah, but thanks again, David.

Um, appreciate just all your time and the,

um, the work that your team is doing.

And I just pray blessings, um,
over you guys as you continue to, um,
develop resources.

Cause I know you are just
getting started and, um,
it's pretty exciting that, um,
that you are in this space and, um,
just can't wait to see how
this expands and grows for you.

Awesome.

Well, thank you so much.

And thank you for this
wonderful conversation today.

Absolutely.

Thank you all for joining us
here on Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Take care and God bless.

And I will see you here next week.

Bye, everybody.

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