

Authority under Fire

Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

Why does God command this? God doesn't command us to sleep or eat. He doesn't need to.

Commandments are intended to address our sinful state so we will not do what is wrong: lie, slander, steal, commit adultery or disobey.

God orders children to obey their parents because parents teach children to obey God and his truth.

It is hard for children to obey their parents if parents don't expect it.

This week's news story about a Toronto couple raising a gender-neutral child makes a point. "What we noticed is that parents make so many choices for their children. It's obnoxious." So say parents who are making a huge, and foolish choice for their child.

Parental abuse **or** abandonment of their authority is part of **their** sinful condition. That's obnoxious!

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

Father Knows Best

Sometimes the abandonment of authority happens subtly. Dad hardly noticed that he shared his authority with the script writers of CBS television by allowing his children to watch *Father Knows Best*.

Soon they were watching *All in the Family* with its message that Dad, like Archie Bunker, clearly did not know best. Dad heard something idiotic and might have voiced his disagreement with the script, but the kids heard, "Parents aren't with it. Why even listen to them?" Television brought another authority into the house, shaping the children's world view, and dad and mom allowed it.

Farewell Norman Rockwell

Today's family might be captured in this scene from a recent episode of *Modern Family*. Mom is serving dinner to the family at table where each person is on a device. She says, "O.K. That's it! Everybody, gadgets down, now! Families are supposed to talk." The daughter says, "Mom's insane," and they all return to their screens. Cue the canned laughter. The lesson is clear – parents should not control the use of gadgets.



A modern family of four may sit together in the living room, yet be in four different realities. Dad is watching sports on his computer, mom is checking her flickr photos on her iPad. Their daughter is sending her 197th text of the day on her phone and their son is playing Super Mario on his Xbox with a boy living in Hong Kong.

An iPad, smart-phone, television, mp3 player, Gameboy, or Kindle can hold the modern family captive in an odd sort of unity as each periodically interrupts the others with the latest, funniest, most awesome, or coolest picture, video, joke or news, before they all go back to what they were doing: sucking giga bytes of digital data into their cozy family cocoon.

Sharing Your Shaping

Children's lives are now regularly being shaped, not by the parents, but by whoever is at the other end of their children's gadgets.

In the modern world you probably can't get rid of all the gadgets, but it is still the parents' responsibility to "authorize" their use, knowing that they are giving away authority every time they buy a new gadget.

Parents should know the power



they are giving into the hands of others before they give it. It is hard to take back.

Aiding and Abetting

The third annual [Ipsos](#) study on the media habits of children suggests that media activities now make up more than a quarter of a 6- to-12-year-old's waking life, and in many cases it is because the parents are the ones pushing the technology. They are tossing aside the age guidelines and helping their children "engage maturity." They help their young children get on Facebook, a site that is officially verboten for children under 13. Seven out of ten parents are bringing under-aged children to PG13 movies or buying them R-rated movies.

The facts are not lost on marketers. Since more parents override product warnings, marketers can justify lowering their standards and age limits. In 2002 [Abercrombie Kids](#) came under fire for selling thongs for little girls. The fact is: **mom**s bought them. Why would Abercrombie worry this summer about selling pushup bikini tops for 7-year-old girls.

The marketers may be without much scruple but parents carry a lot of the blame.

I don't care how popular Lil' Wayne is, my son knows I would break both his legs before I would allow him to walk out of the house with his pants falling off his butt. Such a stance doesn't always makes me popular but I'm his father, not his friend. Friends bow to peer pressure. Parents say, "No, and that's the end of it."

The way I see it, my son can go to therapy later if my rules have scarred him. But I have peace knowing he'll be able to afford therapy as an adult because I didn't allow him to wear or do whatever he wanted as a kid.

~ L.Z. Granderson



Is Technology Neutral?

Technology can be used for good or evil, but that is not the same as being neutral.

Even when technology's effect is mixed, which it often is, it is the evil borne by the new technology that catches people off guard, not the good. Internet pornography was, and is, a great example of this.

Other bad results include the impact of having multiple technologies at hand. We give part of our attention to the gadget and part to the people present to us—until the cell phone trumps everything and everyone.

More means of distraction also make it harder to keep focus on the most important things. Ask Google. The company restricts their employees' access to email during work hours so that people actually [work](#).

Or notice how technology flattens authority. Professional book reviews are being replaced by multiple amateur ones, but multiple bad views can't replace one good one. Wisdom is not "the view held by the majority of the people." This is especially relevant to the issue of parental authority. Parents are now up against 700 cable channels, 21 radio stations, 16-screen cinemas, innumerable websites, Facebook and Youtube. But which of the above are committed to raising your children's level of virtue or improving their love of neighbor or God. Even if they were, would they ask you how you would like it done?

Technology affects what we think about. We used to know about our local school board and what they wanted to teach our children.

Now we know about every disaster on the planet instantaneously. Whatever is frightful can be expected to be covered – for 60 seconds. Much of our news diet is snack sized or personally irrelevant.

Visual media also make exhibitionism (behaving in a way that attracts attention) a virtue instead of a vice. YouTube's byline is "broadcast yourself." You are the star of your own show about you!

Read the myth of [Narcissus](#). He only needed Nemesis to provide him with a pool of water! The new medium empowered his sinful inclination. Combined, they killed him.

Technology can be used for good, but don't be fooled into thinking it is therefore neutral.



"Face it mom, you aren't as interesting as the internet."

Sixty-three percent of teens say they know how to hide from their [parents](#) what they do online.

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