Dangers of the internet

Technology, Internet

The Internet can be a place to learn, to express yourself, or to Just have fun. But, the Internet can also be a very dangerous place. As teenagers we tend to Ignore the warnings our parents give us, and act as though nothing bad will ever happen to us. But, the truth of the matter Is that bad things happen to ordinary people- especially when we look for it. In the May 22. 2002, issue of the New York Times, reporter Corey Kilgannon wrote: By day, she was Christina Long, a thirteen-year-old altar girl and a co-captain of the cheer leading team at St.

Peter Roman Catholic School in Danbury, Conn. , where the rincipal said she was a " good student and well behaved. " But In the evenings, the authorities say, she logged onto the Internet using the screen name LongTooHot4u and the slogan, " I will do anything at least once. " In her bedroom, the police say, she used her computer to troll chat rooms and meet adult men for sex, her marital status listed as, " i might be single i might not be. " Early Monday, Christina's body was found in a steep ravine off a country road in Greenwich.

She had been strangled, the authorities say, by a twenty-five-year- old Greenwich man she had met in one of those chat rooms. The man, Saul Dos Reis, had had several sexual encounters with Christina, authorltles say, before killing her Friday night and dumping her body. l While you may think that something Ilke that will never happen to you, It very well could. If you choose to interact with people you have never met face to face before, then what makes you exempt from anything like that ever happening to you? How do you know that the seemingly nice people at the other computer terminal are who they say they are?

What gives you enough confidence in their character to give them one ounce of your attention, let alone a significant investment of your time and motional energies? Can you be sure they aren't actually mass murderers, serial rapists, or child pornographers? 2 The fact is, you can't know- therefore, it is always best to make sure that you don't place yourself in those situations. While meeting guys over the Internet may seem like safe excitement, don't be fooled. Cyber relationships can be as far from real life as the fairy tales you read as a child. The popularity of Internet chat rooms has grown tremendously throughout the years. John Eldredge wrote of this new fascination with cyberspace In his book The Journey of Desire: evel because the mystique can be maintained much longer. Internet love doesn't ever have bad breath, you don't get an STD from a terminal, and no one ever has to know. 3 In an Internet relationship you only see the good things the other person wants you to see through e-mails and instant messages. In real relationships with people, you see the whole package- the good, the bad, and the ugly. The Internet allows you to be whoever you want to be online, and while that may seem 'fun' or 'cool' at the time, all that it is helping you do is become a dishonest person. Although not all Internet encounters end badly, it is usually healthier and safer to interact with people you have met in person before. In Every Young Woman's Battle, Shannon Ethridge says," While writing my book, I asked 120 young women if they had ever been lured into an unhealthy relationship on the Internet, and to tell me about their experience. I was hoping to get at least four or five responses.

I was shocked to receive ten times that amount. While I couldn't include all the responses I received, Amber's response represents what many of your

peers told me about their experiences of surfing the Net to meet a guy. When Amber was thirteen she became depressed but found the Internet to be a welcome escape. She told us," I discovered that I could make up my own identity and no one knew about my past or cared how I looked. " Amber began to spend so much time meeting guys on the Internet that her parents expressed concern about what she was doing on the computer for so long.

She lied about what she was doing and started going online when her parents wouldn't know. She had this to say: One Saturday while my parents were away I spent eight hours straight talking on the Internet! I continually met more and more people an talked on the phone with some of hem as well. Over time, real people became less appealing to me and all I wanted to do was talk to my Internet friends. They seemed much more interesting to me and pretending to be someone else was more exciting than being by myself. I got so involved with this one guy I met on the Internet that we decided to become boyfriend and girlfriend.

I went to visit my cousins in California and since he lived nearby, we decided to meet each other. We set up a time and a place, and my cousin and I Just waited and waited. He never showed up. I think this was probably by the grace of God, since he could ave been a murderer or a rapist. I really had no way of knowing anything about his character. Amber now recognizes Just how dangerous a game she was playing by pretending to be someone she wasn't and by agreeing to meet a stranger in person. " In order to get untangled from the World Wide Web, Shannon Ethridge has also created a few knows about or has access to.

You may not think that anyone else has a right to know about your cyberactivities or communications, but where there are no secrets, there are no lies. Don't give into the temptation of creating a double life for yourself like Christina did. She paid too high a price for those secrets in the long run. Avoid cyberconversations with anyone you have never met face to face. Stick to real relationships with real people so you can see the bigger picture of who those people really are and how they interact with others. Hit the ignore button if a previous cyberbuddy continues to invade your space using instant Messenger or e-mail.

Remember, you are under no obligation to respond. He'll eventually get the hint or lose interest all together. You're not being rude, but merely protecting yourself. 2 In Romans 7: 21 it says, " When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of What this verse is trying to say is that there are always going to be temptations surrounding us, and Satan is going to continually try to control our thoughts.

Therefore we must make sure that we are focusing on the word of God, and that we allow Him to make our thoughts pure. Philippians 4: 8 says," Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is dmirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. "(NlV) Controlling our mind is a very difficult thing to do which is why whenever we get onto websites that contain pornography or other sinful things, we need to realize that those are going to

hinder us and that it is not worth the instant gratification that looking at those picture may seem to bring. Sean Covey, author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, embodies this concept so well. He says, " One of the more subtle but dangerous addictions is pornography, and it's available everywhere. Pornography may taste sweet for the moment, but it will gradually dull your inner voice called you conscience, until it's smothered. " 4 Shannon Ethridge also says, " It is so disturbing to me how pornography can suddenly land right in front of your eyes, even without looking for it. Kaylie had no idea that she was about to view a pornographic message when she opened an e-mail with the subject line: " Girls Who Just Want to Have Fun! She thought it was a cartoon or a message from a friend. When she saw it was pornography, she thought it was funny and showed it to a classmate in computer lab. Her classmate then told her about some porn Web sites where she could see similar images. Before she knew it, Kaylie says she was hooked. 2 This is why we need to be extremely cautious of what Web sites we visit, what e-mails we receive, and who we choose to interact with on the internet because, we do not want to end up trapped in that Junk, with no way out.

Now that I have explained some of the dangers of the Internet, I am going to introduce some ways to avoid getting entangled in the Web. In order to become a person of sexual and emotional integrity, Shannon Ethridge recommends that you take the following steps: . Think about all of the Web sites that you frequent. 2. Ask yourself the following questions about each item on your list. Would I feel in this? Do I feel the need to keep this a secret

from them? Does this glamorize ideas, values, or situations that oppose my Christian beliefs?

Does this Web site leave me feeling dissatisfied with myself or hungry for unhealthy relationships? If you answer yes to any of these questions, it may be a warning that you are on an unwise path. 3. Finally, go to God in prayer about it and ask some WWJD questions: What would Jesus do? What would Jesus spend His time watching? What would Jesus listen to? What would Jesus spend time reading? Again, one of the primary ways to guard your thoughts is by limiting the access of inappropriate fantasies and images of sexual misconduct to your mind.

Closely monitor your reading, viewing, and listening habits. It may seem difficult at first, but it will eventually become second nature. 2 Another way to avoid getting entrapped by the Web is to develop an intentional filtering system, and to set limits for yourself while online. If you don't make your decisions based on an intentional filtering system, you'll end up following the crowd- atching, listening, and communicating like everyone else. But remember- you are not Just like everyone else.

You are God's set-apart masterpiece, and He wants you to stay pure and empty for Him to fill. Limits give us a sense of safety and, oddly, are a vital part of our freedom. More and more research is proving that computers have the deadly potential to be addictive. That is- to put you in bondage. Proverbs 25: 16 says, " If you find honey, eat Just enough" (NIV) Maybe you'd get it better if it said, " If you find chocolate, eat Just enough. " Have you ever

overeaten to the point of making ourself sick? Too much of even a good thing will make you sick!

We need limits for every area of our lives, including our media habits, or we risk being harmed or getting " sick" in our souls and our relationships. Those boundaries need to be established based on the principle of God's Word and His best for you. If you set limits you must be intentional about them, so ask a trusted adult in your life if he or she will hold you accountable to those boundaries. You also need to spend some serious time with God, and in His word in order to remove yourself from whatever ou are tempted by online. All of these solutions, if you are willing to do the work that comes along with it, can help you avoid the temptation to become what Satan wants you to become. It is not always easy to overcome temptation, but with God all things are possible, so if you trust in Him, he will help you be the person that He created you to be. I challenge you to take a stand for what you believe in, and the next time you feel like looking at an inappropriate Web site, ask God to give you the strength to beat Satan down and I guarantee you will come out of that battle the winner!