

# Immoral Texting!

Written on behalf of the NRC  
Committee Regarding Modern Media

## Many online risks

In our day and age, not only our children and young friends, but also parents and older people are exposed to many risks, one of them being in the digital world. Much has already been written about the dangers of having open internet, about watching videos, and about (online) gaming. In this article we will focus on the great danger of so-called "sexting" which we will call "immoral texting."

## What is immoral texting?

Immoral texting includes receiving or forwarding sexual photos or sexually suggestive messages through text messages, Snapchat, WhatsApp, e-mail, or other means of communication which our smartphones and other computing devices allow us to do today. You might ask: Is this something that happens among our young people? The harsh and shocking reality is that many of you have been or will be exposed to this type of communication. Numbers show that 60% of our youth have experienced a type of grooming. This occurs when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust so they can lure them for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Grooming and luring often happens by means of the digital world. It can be done by a stranger or someone they know, such as a family member, friend, or professional. Groomers can be male or female and can be any age. Many children don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what



has happened is actually abuse!

Also, 60% of our young people have received immoral pictures or text messages, 25% of high school students have made such pictures or videos of themselves, and one in three young people has received a request to send such a picture or video. This type of immoral communication among each other has regrettably become an accepted practice among teens.

One young NRC girl shared the following: "When I was a teenager, I thought this guy was interested in me and since we lived in different locations, we started e-mailing back and forth. When I got a cell phone, e-mailing became texting. We weren't in a relationship, but we were getting to know each other and I was hopeful. Gradually, so I didn't even see it coming, the tone of our conversations changed. He started talking about my body and eventually started requesting that I send pictures. This was before this type of communication became a well-known phenomenon and I didn't know how to respond. I never had discussions about this with my parents or educators, but I had been taught that there were parts of my body that were private which you didn't share. But he knew what to say, and how to convince a naive innocent girl that maybe our parents' ideas were outdated, and that this was normal. He even sent me an explicit picture of himself to show me how easy and normal it was and how this was a two-way street. He wasn't just taking advantage

of me. I started to doubt what I thought I knew, but I was not comfortable with the idea of sending him a picture. I felt like if I did that, I would lose control over who would see it, a picture sent over text or via e-mail was too permanent, and I wasn't going to do that."

### **Dangers and consequences**

Have you ever realized that being involved in these types of activities is really dangerous? Why would people climb sheer cliffs, dangle hundreds of metres above the ground, hanging onto little cracks in the rock wall with their fingers and toes, and expose themselves to other great dangers? Why would you then expose yourself to the danger of abuse in the digital world? Is it curiosity which brings you to it? That's how drug addictions often start as well! But is curiosity a good reason to get involved in immorality in the digital world? Many find out too late that this type of activity is not an innocent one.

For once you touch the send button, your message or picture floats into a digital world where it can go everywhere. You don't own it any longer. It's permanent and you have no control over the privacy of your body anymore. Do you know that even though most youth agree that forwarding these pictures to others is not normal, 75% still forward them to their peers?

So we see a big gap between theory and practice! The story of Hope Witsell is all too often repeated. This 13-year-old girl foolishly sent a picture of her half-naked body to a boy, hoping to gain his attention. Instead, she got the attention of her middle school classmates as well as the high school next door. After incessant bullying by classmates, she hung herself in her bedroom. One girl wrote about what often happens when the picture goes viral. "You'd always get smirks and snide comments, shouts in

the middle of the class or in the cafeteria, even in the hallways walking from place to place. You'd see it all over different social media sites, comments you know couldn't be about anyone else. You wouldn't be able to just leave your problems at school because they would follow you home. It's terrible what one little mistake can do to your life."

This type of activity can compromise your reputation even for a future job position. Did you know that educators and employers can now check online for information about you? What they find online could sway their decision about accepting you into their college or offering you the position.

It can also bring legal consequences. Though laws lag behind technology, many countries are rapidly passing legislation related to these types of activities. It is a criminal offence to have immoral pictures of minors on your cell phone or computer for which you may face criminal charges and a sentence. Moreover, victims are often bullied and forced to send more immoral pictures. This then goes even further in that they might be threatened to keep silent or otherwise, these pictures will be shared and made public. Did you know that about 7% of all online profiles on social media are fake and that people do that on purpose, pretending that they are the same age as other young friends, to lure them and take advantage of them? This can lead to grooming with all its serious consequences.

Here is an example. Two boys aged 14 and 15 received an indecent picture of a girl in their classroom. Once school officials were alerted to the photo, the police became involved. It turned out that the picture of this 13-year-old girl was taken by another fellow student. It didn't matter that the boys never asked for the picture. To the shock of the boys and their families, the authorities were

considering bringing criminal charges against the teens and four other boys who had received the photo. The charge was that they were involved in child pornography. That could mean jail time and having their names placed on a sex offenders' registry. Once a person's name is there, it is not erasable.

### God's will

Does God's Word say anything about these things? Yes, it does! Consider the passage in Proverbs 5:15-21 where Solomon speaks to his son about the beauty of a marriage relationship. Verse 17 reads, *"Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee."* In verse 20, Solomon asked his son, *"And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?"* The relationship between a husband and wife is private and only reserved for marriage life. Therefore, nudity should never be shared with strangers. Don't these verses clearly condemn the practice of communication in which you share the indecent pictures of yourself or others with strangers outside of marriage?

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 Paul wrote about purity in all our thoughts, words, and actions. He warned that anyone involved in all types of unchaste actions, as well as in premarital and extramarital relationships, will feel the consequences of God's avenging wrath. He wrote *"that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified"* (verse 6). When we read about defrauding, we usually think about money, but this context is speaking about matters pertaining to our bodies. We steal from someone else when we look at the nakedness of a person who is not our wife or husband. In other words, we are to reserve our nakedness for our future

marriage partner. Doesn't that condemn the practice of immoral texting? Read about the consequences of Zimri and Cozbi in Numbers 25. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23)!

### Advice

Lastly, protect yourself against the unsought intrusions of these kinds of communications. First of all, bow your knees each and every day and ask the Lord to protect you against sin. Ask Him to *"lead you not into temptation"* (see Matthew 6:13). But dear young friends, don't bring yourself into temptation either! It is in this context that Paul warned his spiritual son Timothy, *"Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"* (2 Timothy 2:22).

But there is more. We are also responsible. Make yourself accountable to your parents. They are your best guardians. Remember that this is for your own safety. Don't look at monitoring programs negatively. They are like the defense forces within a country.

Therefore, download a program that will guard your computer and your phone from receiving any compromising messages or going to any sites that promote this impurity. There are several programs available. Highly recommended is Qustodio ([www.quostodio.com](http://www.quostodio.com)). One parent who recently discovered that her son was involved in immoral texting pointed to [www.teensafe.com](http://www.teensafe.com). Another program is



[www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com). May the Lord protect us from these dangerous sins and its consequences.

Yet the best 'filter' is what David and Solomon wrote about "*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). Is your first question before you do anything, "What is the will of the Most High?" Young Joseph, alone and lonely, was exposed to something far worse when Potiphar's wife tempted him. He was given to respond, "*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Genesis 39:9). Pray that the Lord might give you strength and courage in this sinful world in which we exist. As much as we are in this world, we are warned to not be "of" this world. May we be given the courage to live as a separate people, a peculiar people. Joseph was spared. Joseph had a very difficult life, but he may also experience the Lord's blessing in a very significant way. He was given to spare the lives of his entire family.

## Review

1. Think long-term and consider the consequences of what you do. Where might your message and your picture end up? The Lord sees all things. Is what I am doing sin? What are the consequences of sin? This is a very serious matter.

2. Never take pictures of yourself that are private. Your body is the temple

of the Holy Spirit and is only meant for your future husband or wife and within the marriage relationship.

3. The FBI gives our teenagers simple advice: Never send pictures of yourself which you wouldn't dare to show your grandmother.

4. Before you hit the send button, pause and think about the long-term results. Remember, you have no control where your message or image may travel to. The potential damage can be so disastrous it could ruin your life.

5. Forwarding indecent pictures of someone underage makes you as guilty as the original sender. Failing to alert authorities to it places you at risk of being charged with child pornography.

6. Never open files from people who you don't know. Sometimes it contains a virus by which they can take over your computer and search your hard drive.

7. Immediately report any indecent images you may receive to your parents, your teachers, or even your local law enforcement.

8. Above all, may you ask for the Lord's blessing on all that you do. He will never bless things that go against His Word. He will punish sin, but He will reward the faithful. What greater reward can there be than to go to a place where there is no more sin, no more peer pressure, no more bullying, and no more sickness? May that be our longing and desire.

