

ONLINE EXTREMISM

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Online radicalization is rising in the U.S., especially among teenage boys. Through social media, teens are exposed to extremist views, including racism, misogyny, and radical ideologies. Even seemingly innocuous places like gaming forums and meme pages may contain extremist material, prompting the House Oversight Committee to call the CEOs of Twitch, Steam, and others to testify in September 2025. More and more, online content is leading to real world violence and pathological behaviors.



WORLD



What is Happening?

- Teens are routinely exposed to shocking material online, often without adult awareness or intervention. Many adolescents encounter violent and hateful content daily through YouTube, TikTok, and other platforms. This exposure can happen passively, without them actively seeking it out.
- Social media and YouTube algorithms often promote controversial content, as it drives higher user engagement. Worse, algorithmic black holes pull users into progressively more extreme content, reinforcing radical views over time. “Audience capture” is a phenomenon where creators chase approval and engagement from their followers by espousing more extreme views and behaviors, creating a never-ending spiral to darker and darker places.
- Bad actors hijack these platforms, who spread extremist content and manipulate viewers. A number of recent mass shootings and terrorist attacks have been linked to online radicalization. Manifestos, forum posts, and online comments demonstrate how the internet has a shaping role on real-world violence.
- Lonely and socially isolated teens are more vulnerable to radicalization. Online communities offer a sense of belonging, providing identity, purpose, and mission to lonely teens who lack meaningful in-person connection. Extremist groups promote hatred, racism, and violence, stoking teens’ insecurities and teaching them to give into their worst sinful impulses.



WORD

What Does God's Word Say?

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but are inwardly ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits."

— Matthew 7:15-16

Online extremism is demonic in origin. Jesus warned that Christians would encounter false teachers who appear innocent but are actually of the devil. Contrary to online extremists, Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt 5:44). The Bible condemns hatred, sexism, and racism, teaching that we are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28-29). When teens encounter these things online, it is a reminder that Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph 6:12). Ultimately, we can trust in the one who rescues us from the powers of darkness and calls us to walk in his light (Col 1:13).

As we follow Christ, Christians must learn to recognize and reject false teaching. This requires deepening our knowledge of God's Word and learning to exercise discernment in what we view, engage, and tune into online. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and Paul's words of commendation (Php 4:8-9) are reliable guides for assessing the content we consume. When we are anchored in the truth of God's Word, we will not be carried away by human deceitfulness (Eph 4:14).

While online extremists may offer a sense of belonging, Christians find their true identity in Christ as children of God (Eph 2:19). Believers experience true friendship and joy when we live together as the Body of Christ, loving one another as brothers and sisters. This fellowship is what we were made for, infinitely better than the false community that comes from online extremists.





WALK

Conversation Starters and Questions:

As parents, it's natural to want to shield our children. We may hesitate to speak to them about these difficult issues, hoping to preserve their innocence a little longer.

But the truth is our kids are faced with the reality of evil everyday. While we absolutely need to approach these topics in age-appropriate ways, we must teach them discernment or else they will be unequipped to deal with false teachings. As we move towards our kids with intentionality and faith, we help them learn to walk in truth, trust God, and live courageously as believers in the midst of a broken world.

Some questions to consider:

- Do I know what my child is doing online? We can't afford to be unaware.
- Are the things my child watches, reads, or listens to producing the fruit of the Spirit? (Gal 5:22-23)
- How should Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount shape our response to conflict, fear, or injustice? (Matt 5-7)
- Am I taking the time to talk to my kids about what they are feeling and thinking? Am I pointing them back to the gospel?

Some questions to ask your kids:

- What do you like about that video/influencer? Why are they so popular?
- Where do you see the fruit of the Spirit in what you engage with online?
- How should we as believers respond when we see sin and evil in the world?
- To what group or community do you feel you most belong? Do you feel like you belong at church?

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

(John 16:33)