



From My Heart to Yours...Kathy Tweeten, Administrator

"...men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what they should do..."

1 Chronicles 12: 32

As we are all well aware, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf States of the United States with catastrophic and deadly force. All the elements came together to form what some call a "perfect storm". There were many warning signs that preceded Hurricane Katrina's landfall ~ warnings that far too few people heeded. As a result, Katrina created added damage on a cataclysmic scale. In much the same way, another storm is brewing in our own backyard and we ignore the warning signs to our own family's peril. We must be careful to heed the warning signs of this storm. We need to understand the times and to know what we should do.

This "perfect storm" brewing in our backyard is the storm of unmonitored technology access and entertainment choices by our children. Within the past two weeks, I have been inundated with warnings of this storm that I would be remiss not to pass on to you. There are three predominate elements that need your attention as parents:

- **Teen Magazines.** There is a plethora of secular teen magazines on the market. They include such titles as *Teen People*, *Cosmo Girl!*, *Seventeen*, and *Elle Girl*. Many parents are wary of their messages, both blatant and subliminal. However, even a teen magazine from a Christian publisher may not reflect the values that you are teaching in your home. Read what your kids are reading. Be sure the messages that they are getting are consistent with the Word.
- **Blog Sites.** A blog site is an internet website that allows students to create profile pages filled with their interests, hobbies, and other personal details, as well as photographs, video clips and music. Blog sites have been called "on-line diaries". They allow teenagers, and sometimes younger children, to post details of their lives for all to see. The most popular sites are *MySpace.com* (50 million people worldwide, most teenagers or young adults, have joined this online community in the past two years ~ you are suppose to be at least 14 years old, but many younger students have found ways to get on this site), *Facebook.com* (which began for college students in 2004 and was expanded late last year to include high school students), *Xanga.com* (which groups

blogs by high school or middle school students, making it easy to find a teenager's blog), and *Friendster.com*. The most obvious danger, is that of adult stalkers enticing teenagers into face-to-face meetings. The American Prosecutors Research Institute has found that one-fifth of computer users ages 10 to 17 nationwide have reported a sexual solicitation on-line. The additional danger is that of naïve children posting too much, or unwise, personal information that would make it easy for a stranger to locate them. Finally, the language on the sites can be crude or inappropriate and the photographs can be suggestive and lewd.

- **Current Advanced Technology.** There is on the horizon, within months, technology that will allow the distribution of unrestricted digital video content via wireless handheld devices. What does this mean? It means that because there are no safeguards or regulations currently in place to protect children and teens, that video cell phones, PDA's and iPods will soon be a venue for your children to access digital videos, including hard core pornographic material, with total anonymity and without you having any knowledge of it.

This is the warning: Don't abandon your children to their own entertainment choices. Get involved. Ask your children: "What are your favorite... songs/groups... movies/celebrities... websites/video games...books/magazines?" Play the video games your children own and are playing. Listen to the CD's and radio stations your children are listening to. Watch the TV programs and DVD's your children are watching. Read the magazines your children are reading. Visit the websites your children are visiting. See if they have a blog or on-line diary, and if so, read it. Everyone else is.

Then talk to your children. Ask them: "What do these movies/songs/etc. tell us about ourselves?" "What is the underlying message?" "What values, beliefs, actions do they promote?" "How do these line up with a biblical perspective?"

Oh, that we would be men of Issachar.