

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK: A new danger on the Internet

*By William Perkins
Editor*

As if modern-day parents don't have enough on their plates, a new form of abusive behavior aimed at children has cropped up. The threats to our vulnerable young people never seem to end.

The odd practice of "digital kidnapping" children is burgeoning in popularity on the Internet. Meredith Steele of Maine, the mother of three children, recently discovered her family was being victimized.

"I had no concept of digital safety at all and I had allowed people to follow my personal Instagram which was covered in photos of my family," she said in a video posted to YouTube.



Meredith Steele

She was alerted by a friend that she

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"People are creating virtual fantasies," said Len Edwards, director of the Commission of Missing and Exploited Children in Memphis. "It may be just an obsessive act on their part but

it can be manipulated to become dangerous.

“This could turn into a real child abduction or even child pornography. They can take those pictures and they can take them and manipulate them, and shadow them and put clothes on them and take clothes off of them,” said Edwards.

There are also reports of pedophiles collecting innocent, non-pornographic social media photos of children shot by family and friends (and children themselves with their cell phones) at such unthreatening locations as birthday parties, swimming pools, water parks, school events, gyms, and even around the child’s own home.

Unfortunately, churches are not off limits to child exploitation, either. It should horrify every one of us that secret files kept at the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee office in Nashville and recently made public reveal multiple incidents of child abuse in Mississippi Baptist Convention churches.

As Christians, and as Mississippi Baptists specifically, we must not – *we cannot* – fail to protect children. In every facet of modern life, Satan roams the earth seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). That’s certainly true of our children.

To fail our children is to turn them over to the Evil One for his perverse purposes by destroying their self-image for a lifetime.

There are ways to combat this scourge. A good start will be to attend one of the two Church Safety for Minors Workshops sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and presented by one of the most respected law firms in this regard in the country.

The first workshop will be Feb. 6 at North Greenwood Church, Greenwood. To register, [click here](#). The second workshop will be at West Heights Church, Pontotoc, on Feb. 7. To register,

[click here.](#)

For more information on the workshops, contact Angie Boydston in the MBCB Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries Department at aboystun@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3294.