

all-ages

# before you buy

## **Best Use**

As a guide to assess the pros and cons of buying your child a smart phone or other technology device

## **Spiritual Value**

Mobile devices have become the "status symbol" of early adolescence. As a result, younger and younger children think they should have the latest and greatest technology. But it is the parent's job to decide whether they are ready and to establish healthy parameters and guidelines.

## **Advance Preparation**

- Work through the questions on the following page to assess the need, risks and guidelines for giving a child his/her own device.
- Set a time with your child to discuss your decision and your guidelines.

## **What do they need?**

- If you want the child to have a phone so you can reach him/her and for emergencies, a simple phone is the least expensive and least risky option.
- Do you want your child to have full access to the web using a smart phone? If not, a basic calling service with a limit on texting or a pre-paid phone might be best.
- Ask yourself, "What is my child going to gain from owning his or own device?"

## **Are they ready?**

- As a parent, you must determine what is best for your child and if they have the maturity to handle such a device.
- Is your child ready to be responsible for an expensive device? Do they take care of their belongings?
- Does your child respect limits and adhere to rules and boundaries you have put in place in other areas of his/her life?
- Are YOU ready? Can you model healthy habits for your child and commit to taking the time to set boundaries and teach your child about safety and appropriate content?

## **What are the risks?**

- Every device with WIFI capabilities (such as a smart phone or basic iPod Touch) gives the child unrestricted access to the internet.
- Mobile devices are more difficult to monitor/restrict than a computer.
- 24/7 access to texting, web surfing, games, social media, etc. has become a source of continual distraction and often addiction.

## **How can you protect them?**

- Protecting a child from unrestricted access to the web on a mobile device requires the extra expense of a service such as the type available from covenanteyes.com.
- Protecting a child from the possible dangers of technology requires parental engagement and clear guidelines. Consider establishing a contract with your child BEFORE you buy because they are most willing to comply with rules such as "Charge it at night in the parent's room" or "Parents will always know the password and review activity at a moment's notice."