



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

**P**eople of all ages—parents, grandparents, volunteers, teachers—come together because they care about this technology-saturated generation. Knowing we’re not alone with our questions and concerns is a huge comfort. Beyond that, parents and their teens may use these discussion questions to help jumpstart some teachable moments about technology.

## CHAPTER 1 • TECHNOLOGY AND OUR DEEPEST HUMAN NEEDS

1. Over the years of your life, which new technology has sparked the most dramatic lifestyle change for you? What has been your favorite new technological tool?
2. How do you see the speed of technology changes affecting your family’s life? Do you think your children are aware of these effects? How can you tell?

## SCREENS AND TEENS

3. Every family experiences pressures. Are any of your family's current sources of pressure potentially linked to technology use? Are they pressuring parents, teens, or both? Do any immediate solutions spring to mind?
4. In what ways do you see digital tools enhancing your family life? How is it a particular blessing to you or to your teens?
5. Have you or your teens increased your dependence on technology so much that you turn to it to meet most of your needs? How is this dependence/trust/attention similar to worship? What is a more rightful place for technology, in your opinion?
6. Does being cut off from access to technology feel like a threat to your security?
7. How does your online/digital use define you as a person? Is your sense of self online different from your identity in the flesh-and-bone world? Do you think social media has affected your view of your identity?
8. Where would you say you feel most at home, comforted, and securely belonging? Do you feel more connected with your online interactions or out and about with people? Does home provide healthy belonging for you? What about your church family?
9. Where have you, as a parent, identified your purpose in life? Do you think your teens are aware of their purpose? What's the evidence? Whether they have or haven't yet discovered their purpose, how has technology been relevant?

10. Do the “perfect” posts you see on social media ever threaten your own belief in your competency? For you, does the best-foot-forward nature of social media posts feed perfectionism or make you feel like giving up?

## **CHAPTER 2 • TRUTHS ABOUT TODAY’S TEENS**

1. Do you think you have belief-based relationships or relationship-based beliefs? What about your teens? If there’s a difference in your approaches to your values, how do they play out in your decisions or in those of your teen?
2. When have you encountered teens who were passionate about changing the world? Has exposure through technology ever sparked your interest in a cause or led you to world-changing aspirations? Can you share some details?
3. Do you see the creative, innovative, entrepreneurial spirit in your teens or in their peers? How has this gift led to blessings for your family or others? Can you see any downside to this kind of innovative thinking? What would that be?
4. Do you ever feel stressed or overwhelmed after spending time with the tools of technology? Which tools? Are there other factors? Do you see signs in your teens that their tech use contributes to their stress? How might you be able to talk with them about the connections?
5. How can technology lead to fatigue? When have you noticed tech-related tiredness affecting your family members? What success have you had in dealing with the problem? Have you

- already found ways to bring any of this up with your teens?  
How did that go?
6. More and more young people are experiencing depression or anxiety issues. If you have ever struggled with depression, to what coping behaviors did you default? Do you see your teens turning to digital tools to cope with stress or distress?
  7. What differences do you see between the challenges kids face today and the ones you faced when you were a teen? What gives you hope about the future? Do you think your teens experience a similar hope? Why or why not?

### CHAPTER 3 • LESS AND MORE

1. Sherry Turkle wrote, “Technology doesn’t just do things for us. It does things to us, changing not just what we do but who we are.” What changes have you seen in yourself that might be explained by technology? Have you seen similar changes in your teenagers?
2. What would be a good method for your family to use for determining how to incorporate face-to-face connecting zones and face-to-face connecting days? Could you set a time for doing this?
3. Have you ever given yourself a media-free time out? How did you feel during your time without screen access? Was the experiment valuable for you?
4. Do you catch yourself living through the lens—that is, taking so many photos with your phone or camera that you

## Discussion Guide

- actually missed aspects of what was going on around you? Does perfectionism play into your photo-taking or your photo-sharing?
5. Do you think you were self-centered during some part of your own teen years? What might be some contributing factors to the self-focus you see in your teens?
  6. Where do you incorporate quiet during the average day, or during the average week? What do you think about when you're surrounded by quiet? How might you find more ways to fit times of silence into your family's week?
  7. Does your family have good memories of times when you read together? What were the favorite stories? Do you still share in reading together or listening to audiobooks?
  8. How can boredom be positive?
  9. What ways has your family continued to find ways to play together?
  10. When have you felt most thankful? Do you see your teenagers discovering the gratitude attitude, or is this an area of challenge for your family? What practices have you found that reinforce your feelings of thankfulness?

### **CHAPTER 4 • LIE #1: I AM THE CENTER OF MY OWN UNIVERSE**

1. If you had to come up with a different name for the center-of-the-universe lie, what would it be?

## SCREENS AND TEENS

2. In general terms, do you think self-at-the-center is a common way to view the world? What evidence do you see in the culture at large that this worldview is in operation? Do you see it at home, too?
3. If you are familiar with the Bible, brainstorm some principles you know from God's Word that refute the lie that each person is the center of his or her own universe.
4. Was there a time when you overprioritized your children? Did you see any negative results for you? For them?
5. How do tech tools broaden awareness of the wider world and its needs? How could overuse of tech tools contribute to a self-at-the-center mentality?
6. What makes personal relationships offline more meaningful to you than your online friendships? Which interpersonal skills can develop only in person-to-person contact?

### **CHAPTER 5 • LIE #2: I DESERVE TO BE HAPPY ALL THE TIME**

1. While you probably would never say the actual words *I deserve to be happy all the time*, when do you see yourself falling into a pattern of thinking or acting this way?
2. Do you see any FOMO (fear of missing out) behaviors associated with technology use at your house?
3. When you have instituted screen-free times for your family, about how long does it take for everyone to calm down, shift their focus, and engage with the family? What good results

- have you seen from screen-free times with your family?
4. As technology has reduced waiting time in so many aspects of everyday life, have you found yourself increasingly impatient? Give an example of when you notice this in yourself.
  5. When have you found it hard to discipline yourself to tackling something difficult or tedious? Do your teens know you experience frustration and weariness when it comes to some of the tasks in your life? When have you seen your teens give up easily? When have they worked hard and found it gratifying?
  6. What nontech activities do the teens and adults in your family enjoy? Brainstorm an additional list right now.
  7. What actions lead to negative disciplinary consequences in your family? Dr. Kathy talks about establishing ground rules and then using language that reinforces the teen's responsibility of choosing: "You chose a good path. You did well." Or, "Your decision led to trouble." What good results could come from emphasizing the teen's ability to choose?
  8. What have been some "growth points" in your teen's life—times when he or she struggled with an issue and really came through it with positive changes? Have you been able to talk with your teen to affirm his or her choices and actions during that time?

### **CHAPTER 6 • LIE #3: I MUST HAVE CHOICES**

1. Would you say that variety has always been everyone's spice of life, or do you think today's multiple available choices feed

## SCREENS AND TEENS

- a bigger demand for options? When have you seen this in action?
2. Have you personally ever been overwhelmed when faced with too many options? When have you seen this happen to your teen?
  3. When have you been able to sort or narrow a range of options for your teen who is faced with a big decision? What other ways have you been able to participate in your teen's decision-making?
  4. If you are familiar with the Bible, can you think of specific principles or verses that promote contentment as opposed to demand for choices? Brainstorm some of these now.
  5. Does your teen show an interest in meeting others' needs? How could you incorporate more opportunities to serve those who are needy, physically or emotionally?
  6. On a scale of one to ten, what's the grumble factor in your household? How do you, as a parent, contribute to the complaining and arguing that take place? What works for you when you feel like complaining? How have you been able to help your kids refrain from arguing and complaining?
  7. Remember the description that called multitasking a "continual, partial attention"? When do you fall into that pattern? Do you see it happening with your teen? When are you most able to concentrate and focus on only one need or idea?
  8. Take a guess. How do you think your teen would answer the question, "What problems would you like to help solve?"



Brainstorm a time this week when you might actually ask your teen this question.

## **CHAPTER 7 • LIE #4: I AM MY OWN AUTHORITY**

1. If you were going to rename this authority lie, what would you call it?
2. Despite your best efforts, when have you been a Friend Parent, an Absent Parent, or an Inconsistent Parent? When have you found the best balance of consistent and gentle authoritative parenting? What goes right when you're consistent in exercising loving authority?
3. You have probably noticed authority figures being ridiculed on television or at the movies. When have your kids noticed and mentioned this trend? Have you ever seen behaviors in your family that mimic that disrespect for parents and other authorities? How have you been able to help your kids show respect for parents and teachers?
4. If you are familiar with the Bible, brainstorm truths you know from God's Word that talk about how people should relate to authority. When have you seen some of these positive principles at work?
5. What kinds of authority figures are currently part of your teen's life? Do these people handle their position wisely and well? How do your teens relate to their use of power, whether it's good or bad?
6. When do you find it easiest to submit to authority—God's

authority, a boss's authority, a teacher's authority, the church leadership? What do leaders do to make it easier for you to submit to their authority over you?

**CHAPTER 8 • LIE #5: INFORMATION  
IS ALL I NEED SO I DON'T NEED TEACHERS**

1. How would you define *information*? Does that definition differ from the definition for *knowledge* or the definition of *wisdom*?
2. Who have been your most influential teachers over the course of your life? What made their teaching so meaningful for you?
3. When has your teen's intuitive understanding of tech tools been a blessing for your family? Were you able to articulate your thanks to your teen for sharing that expertise?
4. What is good about self-sufficiency? Are there areas in which we should encourage teens to be self-sufficient? How does self-sufficiency relate to living in community? In what ways should we encourage teens to develop dependence on others?
5. When have you, as an adult, had to accept critique and be teachable? What was painful about that experience? What blessings came from that time?
6. If you are familiar with the Bible, what concepts have you encountered in God's Word that seemed paradoxical? How have you been able to grow in your faith despite these complexities?

7. When have you been able to help your teens sort and sift a load of information that's before them? Did your teen welcome your assistance? When have you been able to help your teen make connections between apparently disconnected bits of information or seemingly unrelated ideas? Was your teen able to understand the synthesis of ideas when you explained your insight?

### **CHAPTER 9 • THE ULTIMATE CONNECTIVITY**

1. Who are the people with whom you share your deepest connection? When have you felt strongly connected to your teen? Do you think your teen felt the connection at the same time?
2. Why is it worth putting in a lot of effort to build a deep, meaningful connection with your teen? What would you miss if this connection gets broken or damaged?
3. How have you been able to improve your connection with your teen using the tools of technology? How do you see the tech tools and other relationship skills working together?
4. Questions are a definite asset when it comes to sparking conversation between parents and teens. But have you ever felt overwhelmed by questions coming at you? Have you ever slid into interrogation mode when addressing your teen? Why are questions delivered in a barrage so much less effective than gentle questioning mixed with other comments and interaction?

5. When and where have your best conversations with your teen taken place? Have you ever tried to re-create some of those conditions in order to initiate another deep interaction with your son or daughter? How did that work?
6. How might conversations with Mom and Dad help to meet the five deep human needs of security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence?
7. Now that you've reached the end of this book, have you identified ways your teens need more guidance in their technology use? What made you aware of this? What changes do you hope to implement at home?
8. Which categories of questions did you think would be most effective with your particular teen—maybe the Four Cs or the Five Ls? Which of these might be the best category to begin to discuss with your teen—social media, relationships, stewardship, or spiritual growth? How might you get your teens on board for a time of talking through some of the questions included in this chapter, a few at a time?
9. As you've explored some of these technology-related issues, your own worldview and its implications have come under the microscope, to some degree. Have you surprised yourself by discovering any discrepancies between your stated beliefs and your actual practices? Are you able to talk with your teens about your own pursuit of integrity between your behaviors and your heart?

## Discussion Guide

10. If you could narrow it down to one growth point, what would be your most useful takeaway from spending time in the teaching of this book? Are you hopeful about the changes you plan for your family?

How can we help you? Visit us at [www.ScreensAndTeens.com](http://www.ScreensAndTeens.com) for more information, more tools, and a place to share ideas with other parents of teens.