



A resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

## TEEN LONELINESS & SMARTPHONE USE

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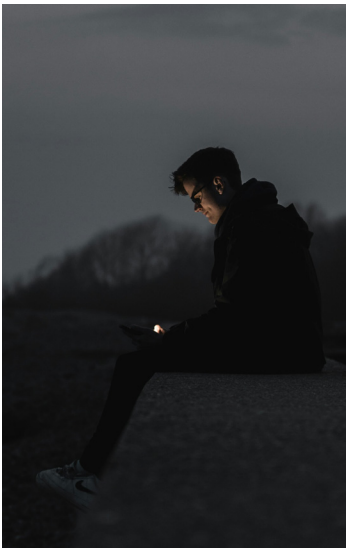
*One of the great promises of the digital revolution was deeper connection—tools that would give us more time for the things and people that matter. Despite living in the most “connected” era in history, today’s teenagers are lonelier than ever. Research consistently shows that excessive smartphone use is a key contributor to the growing epidemic of loneliness and anxiety among youth. Teens may be constantly interacting with screens, but they’re struggling to engage with real people.*



WORLD

### What is Happening?

- Teenagers today are among the loneliest generation on record. Studies show that rates of reported loneliness and feelings of isolation have increased sharply over the past decade—closely correlating with the rise of smartphone and social media use.
- Teens are increasingly uncomfortable in real world situations. Many have not developed the emotional and social skills necessary to navigate interpersonal relationships. This can show up in a difficulty to make eye contact and a tendency to avoid in person conversations.
- The smartphone has become an ever-present escape hatch. When teens find themselves in awkward or uncertain situations, (like being the first to arrive at youth group or standing alone in a crowded room) they instinctively reach for their phones.
- Messaging apps now suggest AI auto-replies that encourage shallow interactions by allowing kids to reply without thinking or feeling—just tap “Sounds good!” or “Sorry, I can’t make it tonight.”
- Even social media is not all that “social” anymore. The digital landscape has drastically shifted: platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have been taken over by “content creators” who are concerned with entertainment and monetization, not community.





## WORD

### What Does God's Word Say?

**The desire to know and to be known is a longing deeply implanted in teenagers by their Creator.** Made in the image of God, all people have been uniquely created for relationship—first with God, then with others. We have an innate desire for friendship, intimacy, and belonging. This reality is expressed by Genesis 2:18, where God saw that the first thing “not good” in creation was for man to be alone. From the very beginning, God made it clear that we are not meant to live in isolation. Community is not optional but essential for our humanity.

**Psalms 139 further underscores this truth by revealing that God knows us completely.** He knows all our sin, our secret thoughts, and everything about us. Though sin does bring separation from God, he is not repelled by us—rather, he draws near to us, redeeming us through his Son and indwelling us by his Spirit (Romans 5:8). By faith in Christ, we are restored to a right relationship with God and can draw near to him like children to their Father (Hebrews 4:14-16).

**As those who have been reconciled to God, we are now called to real, embodied relationships, especially in the church.** The church is not an ordinary gathering of people, it is the body of Christ on earth. The digital world may offer convenience and speed of communication, but it can never substitute for the living, breathing, incarnational life of God's people. In the church, we experience real relationships with one another as we live in obedience to Christ: loving one another (John 13:34-35), bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and serving together (Hebrews 10:24-25). We need one another in the flesh in order to grow as God intends into people who model his sacrificial love, grace, and goodness to the world.





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**WALK**

### Conversation Starters and Questions:

**Talk to your kids and see if technology has impacted their social skills. Help them understand that it is perfectly normal to feel uncomfortable in new and unfamiliar situations.**

#### *Consider asking:*

- Do you ever feel pressure to respond a certain way online just to avoid disappointing someone?
- Is it harder to send a text or have a face-to-face conversation? Why do you think that is?
- When was the last time you felt awkward in a social setting? How did you handle it?
- Do you think tech is helping or hurting your friendships?

#### *As a parent, ask yourself:*

- Am I modeling the kind of presence I want my kids to have?
- How can I create space for real, sometimes awkward, but meaningful conversations at home?
- In what ways does our family schedule prioritize embodied relationships, especially with our church?

#### *Further Reading:*

Haidt, Jonathan. "End the Phone-Based Childhood Now." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 6 May 2024, [www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/03/teen-childhood-smartphone-use-mental-health-effects/677722/](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/03/teen-childhood-smartphone-use-mental-health-effects/677722/).

Pew Research Center. (2021, October 12). Teens are lonelier than ever: What do smartphones have to do with it? Institute for Family Studies. Retrieved from <https://ifstudies.org/blog/teens-are-lonelier-than-ever-what-do-smartphones-have-to-do-with-it>.

*"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

*(Hebrews 10:24-25)*



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