

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

TEEN FOMO



Connecting Parents, Teens & Jesus
in a Disconnected World

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I believe that in all men's lives at certain periods, and in many men's lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside. . . . Unless you take measures to prevent it, this desire is going to be one of the chief motives of your life.

**C. S. LEWIS,
"THE INNER RING"**

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A LETTER FROM AXIS

Dear Reader,

We're Axis, and since 2007, we've been creating resources to help connect parents, teens, and Jesus in a disconnected world. We're a group of gospel-minded researchers, speakers, and content creators, and we're excited to bring you the best of what we've learned about making meaningful connections with the teens in your life.

This parent's guide is designed to help start a conversation. Our goal is to give you enough knowledge that you're able to ask your teen informed questions about their world. For each guide, we spend weeks reading, researching, and interviewing parents and teens in order to distill everything you need to know about the topic at hand. We encourage you to read the whole thing and then to use the questions we include to get the conversation going with your teen—and then to follow the conversation wherever it leads.

As Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen point out in their book *Difficult Conversations*, “Changes in attitudes and behavior rarely come about because of arguments, facts, and attempts to persuade. How often do *you* change your values and beliefs—or whom you love or what you want in life—based on something someone tells you? And how likely are you to do so when the person who is trying to change you doesn’t seem fully aware of the reasons you see things differently in the first place?”¹ For whatever reason, when we believe that others are trying to understand *our* point of view, our defenses usually go down, and we’re more willing to listen to *their* point of view. The rising generation is no exception.

So we encourage you to ask questions, to listen, and then to share your heart with your teen. As we often say at Axis, discipleship happens where conversation happens.

Sincerely,
Your friends at Axis

¹ Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 137.

**THE ONLY THING
WE HAVE TO
FEAR IS FOMO
ITSELF.**

IMAGINE YOURSELF as a teenager again. Try to remember some of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings you had. Do any of the following scenarios ring a bell?

1. You heard all about the excitement that went down at a party that you weren't invited to.
2. Your friends planned a fun trip, but you couldn't go.
3. You opted not to go to a movie with friends and ended up sitting at home wondering what you were missing.
4. It seemed that *everyone* in school was whispering about something, but you had no idea what it was.
5. Your summer vacation was boring and uneventful, so much so that you sat around envisioning all the

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exciting things everyone else from school was doing.

The desire not to be left out is universal: no one *wants* to miss out on something interesting or important. This desire, which is especially strong during adolescence, stems from a God-given yearning to participate in significant experiences and be in meaningful community. So while it's a natural human tendency to fear being excluded, it's unhealthy when we let this fear control our lives.

Rather than getting easier, it's only gotten harder to resist feeling left out in today's world. The smartphone and social media have (perhaps intentionally) exploited this fear, making it even easier to see each and every little thing that happens without us. It's become such a powerful phenomenon that it's

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been given its own term: FOMO, the “fear of missing out.”

FOMO is the worry that something interesting or exciting will happen without us, causing us to miss not just the experience but also the camaraderie that inevitably blossoms out of sharing it with others. Unfortunately, FOMO is a broken way of dealing with our God-given desires to live purposeful lives and be in community. God did not intend for us to live in a constant state of fear! Reclaiming our own boundaries and helping our kids reclaim theirs is well within our grasp, but it does require diligence, wisdom, and intentionality.

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