

# youthESource Bible Study

## Navigating the World at Your Fingertips:

### The Murky Waters of Social Media, Smart Phones and Instantly Available Information

by Jason Glaskey

In previous decades teenagers depended on books and teachers to learn new information. They waited eagerly for letters to arrive with the postman, and using a telephone was a rare privilege. Visiting with far-away friends and loved ones required much effort and planning.

In the 21st century, our lives are filled with convenience, speed and awesome advances in technology. Our learning about any topic begins with a simple tap on a touchscreen. Our phones are no longer attached to walls, and are so much more than phones. We can easily communicate with friends and loved ones “face-to-face” on our video screen, whether we’re across the room, across town or across an ocean. This kind of technology is available to almost every American teenager—if not in their pockets, then at their schools or their homes.

#### OPENING ACTIVITY

Take a quick survey of your group. Answer the following questions together, then see how your youth group stacks up against the latest [pewinternet.org](http://pewinternet.org) research data from 2012:

- How many of you are “online,” using Google searches, Wikipedia or other web-based information to learn or discover new information?
  - In 2012, fully 95% of all teens were connecting online.
  - 9 out of 10 teens had regular access to a desktop or laptop computer .
- How many of you have a mobile phone? How many of the phones in the room are smart phones (a phone with advanced computing capability and connectivity)?
  - In 2012, 78% of teens had a mobile phone. 37% of these were smart phones.
- How many of you use texting on your device? How many times do you text every day?
  - In 2012, 63% of teens used texting to communicate.
  - The average number of daily texts among those who texted was 60.
- How many of you use Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) once a day or more? What's your favorite Social Media app?
  - From the 2012 teen study:
    - 94% used Facebook.
    - 26% used Twitter.
    - 11% used Instagram.

So, what does this quick survey show us? God has created people to seek knowledge. He has given us a desire to feel connected to others. Because of how we’re designed and the availability of technology in our daily lives, most of us use media regularly. We like our information and communication fast and often. It's a nearly constant part of our day.

What the survey doesn't address is the “shady” side of the technology that we use every day. Sometimes our phones, laptops and tablets go places they shouldn't go, show us things we shouldn't see and share ideas that we wouldn't or shouldn't share. Navigating the waters of social media, smart phones and instant information is tough. We need to hear and take to heart what God says about it.

## INTO THE LESSON

Read Psalm 139, then discover THREE MAIN POINTS about our loving Creator, Savior and Helper in the questions that follow:

Psalm 139

- 1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
- 5 You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.
- 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
10 even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"  
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.
- 13 For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.
- 15 My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.
- 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!
- 18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand.  
I awake, and I am still with you.
- 19 Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!  
O men of blood, depart from me!
- 20 They speak against you with malicious intent;  
your enemies take your name in vain.
- 21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

22 I hate them with complete hatred;  
I count them my enemies.  
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Point #1: HE KNOWS MY HISTORY AND HABITS.

1. We often do searches on our phones, tablets and other devices to learn new things, but verse 1 says that we are searched by God. What does it mean that God has "searched us" and has "known us"? What's good about that? What's not-so-good about that?
2. Since Adam and Eve in the Garden, folks have been trying to hide things from God, and we're no different. In fact, there are many parts of our online and offline lives that we wouldn't want anyone to know about. As you may know, the viewing history on your device can be hidden or erased, but the God of heaven sees all things (Job 28:24). What do verses 7-12 tell us about what God sees?
3. We all have habits. Habits are behaviors that we repeat again and again because they bring us some kind of benefit or comfort. What kind of online habits do folks your age have? What technology or app do you enjoy using the most? What's the difference between a good and a bad "tech" habit? Share some examples of each.
4. Read Philippians 4:4-8 to see God's list of ideal screen time behavior. How would our "connected" lives be different if everyone lived God's list from Philippians?

Point #2: HE UNDERSTANDS MY DESIRES AND STRUGGLES.

1. Take a look at verses 13-16. Our God is actively and intimately involved in the creation of each person, including you. He has lovingly made us all. What parts of the verses explain about how or why God understands you?
2. Using 140 characters or less with autocorrect to tweet and text, we sometimes share or receive the wrong message. Misunderstandings in life can become hilarious or cause serious problems. In real life, who understands you best? Why is that? Are there people who don't understand you? Why is that?
3. God knows us very well, because He's our Creator. Because of who Jesus is, God connects to us with true human understanding. Read Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-15. How are you comforted, knowing that Jesus understands your joys and sorrows?
4. Because He is God, Jesus also understands the temptations that go along with using today's technology. What are some of the temptations, sins and failures that people encounter as they use the following:
  - a. Text messaging -
  - b. Internet -
  - c. Social Media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc) -
5. Look again at verses 16-18 of the Psalm. God not only sees our past and our "right now," but He sees ALL of our future! Discuss where God might be leading you in the future. (College? Marriage? Career?) Is there evidence of God's guiding hand in your online profile or in your tech habits right now? Does your screen time match up with where you hope to go in your life? Why or why not?

Point #3: HE LEADS ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING.

So, where do we go from here? We know that God "knows our history and habits," and that through Jesus "He understands our desires and struggles." This is both good and bad news for us. Without God, we can easily become bogged down and isolated on the dark side of technology—a place where texting replaces actual conversation; a place where no-limits browsing, streaming and downloading does damage to our mind and

heart; a place where we often type and click without considering how words and images that we share might affect others now, or ourselves in the future.

We need forgiveness for our past, help for right now and a plan for the future. Let's go back to the Psalm, verses 23 and 24.

1. The psalmist prays to The Lord in verse 23 by saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" What does it mean to know someone's heart? What does God know about your heart? What has Jesus done for your heart?
2. The end of Psalm 139 is a request for God to lead us "in the way everlasting." Read and discuss how the following verses tell you about God's everlasting way in Jesus Christ.
  - a. John 14:6
  - b. 1 John 1:5-9
  - c. Ephesians 2:4-5
  - d. Proverbs 3:5-6
  - e. Ephesians 4:32

Close in prayer together, asking God to forgive, renew and strengthen you to navigate the world at your fingertips in Jesus' Name.

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