

Real. Present. God. Created to Connect

Leader Notes

by Kayla Brock

a study to help navigate social media, technology, connecting with those around us, and connecting with God.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

Today's world is driven by technology. Everyday new apps are created and new technology is being thrown in front of us with youth and children being some of the first to receive it. Youth in our current culture don't know of a time without technology. They are growing up in a world where social media drives their lives, they can get a date without ever meeting someone in person, and they can have groceries delivered to their house without setting foot in a grocery store.

As leaders, it is our job to teach youth how wonderful technology is, the dangers of it, and also the importance of disconnecting. In this 4 session study, you and your youth will have the chance to discuss some difficult realities together as well as some wonderful ways to use technology to connect with others in a Godly manner. You'll see how technology allows us to create someone who we are not. We can fall into the trap of living a story someone else writes for us rather than living the story God created for us. You'll discuss how technology puts the world at our fingertips and how incredible that is, but also how that can lead to temptations and sin. You'll have the resources to walk through hard conversations such as gossip, online dating, pornography, and many more. But thank goodness for Jesus!

As leaders we know the importance of disconnecting from technology and connecting with God. Through this study, you can lead youth through a time of disconnecting from their phones and connecting with God. This study will also help you discuss and encourage youth to use their social media as a tool to connect with others and connect them with Jesus.

This study is great for a topical Sunday morning bible study hour, retreats, youth nights, small groups, and even a mission trip study. You'll dig into scripture, have hands-on ways to connect the lesson, and always end with a challenge and prayer!

Leader's notes are in red throughout.

SESSION 1: #UNFILTERED

Goals: Help youth dig into the heart of social media and help them unfilter their filtered social media lives.

Objectives: Youth will...

- Do an activity to help them begin to dig into their lives and process what matters most to them
- Process together how we can create different lives on social media
- Dig into scripture together and relate the story to their lives
- Be challenged to live the following week (and beyond) unfiltered
- Be reminded that our God is real

Supplies Needed

Paper, pens/pencils, something to color with (optional), two books: for this study I will talk about The Chronicles of Narnia and the children's book Everyone Poops. But any two books will work; just make sure to have two books with you, one with a major plot line and character and the other should be a more simple children's book.

Game

Social Media and technology play such a big role in our lives. Everyday, lots of new apps are being created that all help to advance technology and give us insight into the technological world. Today we will spend some time creating our own apps.

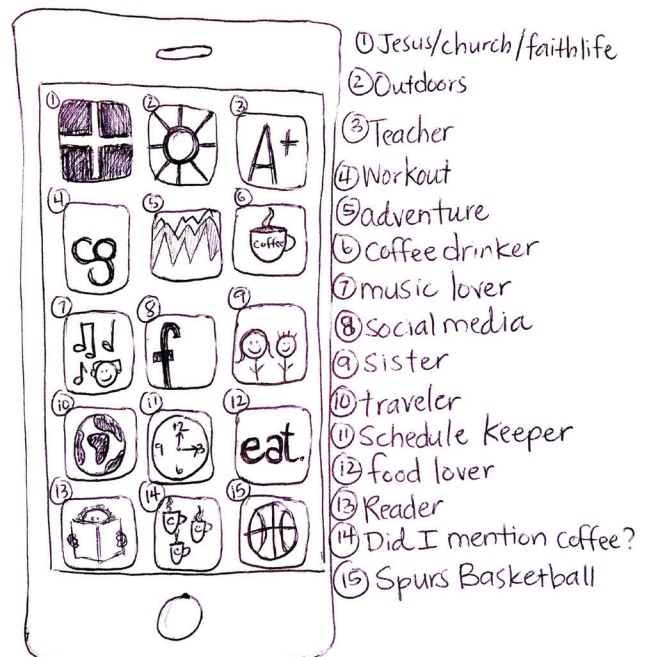
Think of all the apps on your phone. They all have a purpose and an individual identity. You and the friend next to you do not have all of the same apps. You have the apps you need and want and they have the ones they need and want. Some may overlap, but you each have your personalities shown through what you've downloaded.

You will be given a piece of paper and some pens (pencils, markers, etc.). Your task is to create up to 15 apps on your phone that show who you are. Do you play sports? Maybe have an app with your sport. Do you play an instrument or are you in theater? Are you a brother or a sister? Do you have a job? Think of the things that make you who you are and make an app for them.

Pass out the pens and paper. An example of some ideas are to the right. It might be helpful to make an example about your life ahead of time to show as well.

If you are willing, share with your group some of your apps. Explain how they define you if they need some extra explanation.

We all know that apps can take up a lot of room on our phones. It gets extra annoying when you get the message that you are almost out of storage space and need to clean up your phone—or even worse, delete some of your apps. When you start going through your storage space,



your phone will tell you which apps take up the most space on your phone. Look again at your page with your life apps.

Which apps on your phone take up the most space in your life? Which characteristics on there really define who you are and play a big role in your identity? Share with the group if you are willing.

Now that we have identified which apps take up the most time, let's look to see if they have a positive or negative influence. Maybe you have tried to hide apps on your phone from your friends and family because deep down you know they are not the best influence. But you also have apps on your phone that you are not ashamed of—maybe the Bible is one of those that has a positive influence and you make sure it is front and center on your phone screen. Look at the apps that you have drawn to define you.

Which ones are positives and which ones are negative? Share with the group if willing.

Digging Deeper

When we really get to the heart of social media and technology, so many of us love it because we get to create and choose who we want to be. Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, Tinder, and all the other social media platforms we use daily allow us to create ourselves either in the true form or in a way we imagine ourselves.

Q: What are some ways we are able to create who we want to be?

A: Look for answers in the area like filters on pictures that allow us to alter our looks, descriptions on posts that allow us to show only the positives of our lives and create a false reality that our lives are perfect, or sometimes even create a whole new image of ourselves all together.

There are many accounts in the Bible that show us how many times God's people have changed the way they are to get something they want. Let's open up to one of those accounts now. Grab a Bible and open to Genesis 27. We will be reading verses 1 through 29 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary

Q: Why did Isaac want to go against what God said and bless Esau instead of Jacob?

A: Point them to Genesis 25:23 to help them understand that Isaac was going against what God had already told him—that the older will serve the younger.

Q: When Rebekah heard that Isaac was going to go against God's will, what did she do? Was her deception justified?

A: She decided to work against what Isaac was doing to receive a blessing for Jacob. Because Isaac was working against God's will, her deception is justified. God worked through her to accomplish His will.

Q: What did Jacob have to do in order to receive a blessing from his father?

A: He had to dress, act, smell, talk, be like Esau.

Key Point:
When we really get to the heart of social media and technology, so many of us love it because we get to create and choose who we want to be.

Q: Did Jacob receive the blessing? Was his father proud at the moment? Do you think in a few verses when Esau finds out his blessing was taken that everyone will be happy?

A: Jacob did receive the blessing as God promised in Genesis 25. His father was proud at the moment, but that was because he thought he had given Esau the blessing, not Jacob. In a few verses the chaos erupts as Esau and Isaac learn the truth.

There is a lot we can learn from Jacob, Esau and Isaac. Think about who you might relate to most in this account. Are you:

- Isaac: knowing the Lord's will but acting against it because you like the way you are going
- Rebekah: actively watching someone going against the will of God and trying to process how to get them back on track
- Esau: acting foolishly but living in the glory knowing you are well liked and received
- Jacob: living a humble life, but having to become someone else just in order to receive a blessing

At times, we can all relate to Jacob. There are so many times we compromise who we are in order to gain the approval of someone else. Think for a second about who you desire approval from—a teacher, a coach, a friend, a group, a parent? There is always someone we would love to have the approval of. As you think about that person or those people, what would you do to gain their approval? What lengths would you go to and who would you become just to gain approval from someone that matters to you?

Pull out the two books you brought. I suggest using something like The Chronicles of Narnia or The Lord of the Rings, Twilight, etc. For this study, I will briefly talk about Aslan from The Chronicles of Narnia. But, feel free to plug in the main character from the book you brought with you.

I brought with me two books today. If you haven't read them, I won't ruin anything major for you. I have with me *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the children's book *Everyone Poops*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, who is the major lion-like character? Correct, Aslan is! He is mighty and a prominent character in the book. C.S. Lewis wrote him into this story with a major purpose in mind.

What if Aslan decided that he did not want to be part of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. What if he decided he would rather be the star in the book *Everyone Poops*? Aslan would be living out a lesser story. He wouldn't be living out the purpose for which he was created.

Let's open together to Psalm 139. We will read verses 13-18 together. Go back and read verse 16 again.

"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."

Before you were even conceived—before you were an idea or a thought—God knew your story. He has authored a life for YOU to live. He has a purpose for YOU. He planned the days you have already lived and He knows the days you will live until death. God has written your story for you to live.

Q: Would you rather live out a story written for you by someone you are trying your hardest to please? Or would you rather live out the story that the greatest Author of all times has written for you?

A: God! His plan is the best! Even when it is scary and even when you don't know what His plan is.

Key Point:
Before you were even conceived—before you were an idea or a thought—God knew your story. He has authored a life for YOU to live. He has a purpose for YOU.

You can try your hardest to live a story someone else is trying to write for you. You can try to alter who you are, you can apply filters and make up profiles that are not the full truth of you. But no one can be you like you can. God created you to be who you are and He made you precious and you are loved! So, just be the real you that He created!

Being real can be so difficult. Being real means being vulnerable. Being real means not always being cool. Being real can be hard. And God knows that. Let's see what Scripture says about being real. Open now to John 8. We will read verses 1-11 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: Did the woman these people brought to Jesus sin? If so, what was her sin?

A: She did sin. She was caught in adultery. They only humiliated the woman by bringing her in front of the crowd, though, not the man. But they didn't care about her and her feelings, they were focused on trapping Jesus.

Q: They wanted to punish her for her sin. What were they wanting to do?

A: Stone her. That was their typical punishment. Stone her until she died.

Q: Did Jesus fall for their tricks and traps? What did He do instead?

A: No, Jesus did not fall for them. Instead He was real. He did not waver from who He was. Even in the midst of those who were trying to catch Him in a lie and condemn Him, Jesus was real. He didn't let those around Him push Him from being who He really was. Jesus' response was one of truth and one of calling to repentance and away from sin.

Q: What does this mean for you?

A: Let them give answers as they feel. But ultimately get to the point that Jesus is real. He is always real. In the good, the bad, under pressure, with friends, everywhere—Jesus is real. So, you can be real, too!

Key Point:
Being real can be so difficult. Being real means being vulnerable. Being real means not always being cool. Being real can be hard. And God knows that.

Closing

Throughout this series of studies, we are always going to end with a challenge. Today we learned that technology allows us to create a person who we aren't and that we can easily fall into the trap of living a story someone else is writing for us when we really should be living the story God created for us. Jesus is real and we can be real, too.

As we get ready to leave, I want us to create a hashtag that will help us to remember to live unfiltered lives. It is something we can use this week as we post and it can even be something that can spur conversations with your friends and followers as to what it means. Then, you can share what you learned today!

Work together to create a filter. As the leader, write it down and later in the week remind them about it. Use it yourself, as well, as you encourage your youth and students to live unfiltered lives.

As we work on this hashtag, think about these questions:

- How can you push aside what others think and show your real and true self?
- How can you unfilter your social media life instead of filling it with your filtered life?
- Who can you ask to help keep you accountable?

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Leader Notes

Friends, I want you to engrain these truths on your heart: YOU are fearfully and wonderfully made. YOU have a unique story to live out. Jesus was real. You can be real. You can live #unfiltered.

PRAYER

(use the following, say your own, or invite your youth to pray)

Dear Father in Heaven,

Thank You for Your unending blessings. Thank You for fearfully and wonderfully making each of us to be unique with a special and purposeful story to live out. Help us as we go into this week to remember to live lives that are unfiltered and real. You are real to us, O Father. All the time. Help us to be real, too, not only in Your presence, but in the presence of those around us.

In your Son Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

SESSION 2: #BROKEN

Goals: *Navigate together some of the more tough and difficult realities of social media and technology and hear the beauty of God's grace and forgiveness*

Objectives: *Youth will*

- *Recall what they learned in the previous lessons and dig into their lives and who they are*
- *Dig into scripture to begin to process if/how their sins can define them*
- *See that life is messy and how we can all use technology to sin – pornography, lying, gossip, sexting, bullying, etc.*
- *Through reading and processing scripture together, be challenged to confront sin in their lives and see how our God is real, present, and shines through our brokenness*

Supplies Needed

small flower pots (enough for everyone in the group), paint, paint brushes, cups for water for washing off paint brushes, paper towels, one large UNBROKEN flowerpot pot, one large flower pot that has been broken and glued back together, glowsticks, access to music—either sound system or just your phone, pens/sharpiers to write on a broken piece of pot, cross to set broken pieces at the foot of*

**For this study you will need to already have broken one flower pot and glued it back together. The purpose is to not make it perfect, but to use a substance that will hold the pot together for at least the endurance of this study. I found that using hot glue works great because it dries fast and leaves a tiny gap between each piece that allows light to shine through better at the end.*

Activity

As we talked about in our last study together, God has made us all unique and has gifted us in many different ways. Today, everyone will get a small flower pot that they can paint and decorate. But, it must be decorated in a way that describes who you are or a quality/uniqueness about you. Decorate it in an #unfiltered way!

Hand out flower pots and supplies if you don't already have them set out and ready to go. Give them time to paint. Some will be faster than others, so find a point when you think it is good to transition.

Q: *What are some things you have painted on your flower pots and how does it describe you?*

A: Allow them time to share in a large or small group.

Q: *What can we learn from this activity?*

A: That we all have gifts and talents that are unique to us!

Key Point:
God has made us
all unique and has
gifted us in many
different ways.

Digging Deeper

It is incredible how God has created so many people over the course of time and yet He has not made one single person alike. We all have our differences. Even our fingerprints are unique to us and God hasn't duplicated them yet. How incredible is that? We are going to take some time to read about a lady who had some very special and unique gifts and see how she used them to glorify God.

Open your Bible to Luke 7. We will read verses 36 through 50 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: Why was it a big deal to the Pharisees that this woman came in and did what she did?

A: Because she was a woman of the city. She was a sinner—likely a prostitute. It was seen as inappropriate to them that she approach this man, let her hair down, and wash his feet like she did. She was seen as unclean and it was ceremonially impure for her to touch Jesus.

Q: Why is Jesus' parable about the money lenders important?

A: This parable shows how the person with the greater debt would be more grateful. Jesus is showing the Pharisees why He is not concerned about the actions of this woman.

Q: Who do you identify more with: the Pharisees who are quick to judge or the woman who was full of sin and quick to repent?

A: Answers will vary. Point out that at times we can be like BOTH the Pharisees and the woman.

Q: What were the gifts of this woman?

A: Her gifts were love, repentance, washing Jesus' feet, kissing His feet, and anointing His feet. Her gifts are shown through her actions.

Q: Were her gifts apparent to everyone present?

A: No—the Pharisees immediately saw her sin and didn't see the gifts she brought with her at all.

Q: Did her brokenness and sin define her?

A: Yes. She was known as the woman of the city—a sinner.

As we look at this lady down at the feet of Jesus, we maybe see her as Jesus did because we know the rest of the story. We know how Jesus responded and how we should respond, as well. But think about if you were there that night. Think about you sitting in the room dining with Jesus. This lady walks in that you know for a fact works the streets and sells her body. Maybe your first thought is, "Wow, my sins aren't as bad as hers so I deserve to be here." Or maybe you think about how undeserving she is to be there. Most likely, your first thought would be about what she does and what she does not deserve.

Has your sin ever defined you? Have you ever felt so deep in sin that you didn't see a way out? Because we are a fallen people, we all find ourselves entangled in sin. We all keep secrets. We all have those sins that we wouldn't dare to tell anyone, not even our best friends. Because we are human, we have a tendency to make our outside lives look so clean and perfect.

Key Point: Because we are a fallen people, we all find ourselves entangled in sin.

As you begin to talk about this next session, you will want the big flower pot nearby to hold and use as a reference. Eventually, you will drop the flower pot, shattering it, so begin to place yourself where the pieces won't hit someone and you have a good place for it to shatter.

We filter our lives to look good to everyone else so we don't have to share the nastiness going on in the inside of our secrets. We are similar to this flower pot. We show our gifts and talents on the outside and create our lives to look like we are without blemish. Notice how each of your pots look. They are all almost perfect and now they have your mark on them. They are beautiful and unique and I bet you didn't paint one of your sins or flaws on your flower pot, did you?

Think about last week and how we talked about how easy it is for us to filter out lives. It has gotten so easy for us to hide our sin or to think we are not sinning as long as we don't get caught. Little by little we give in to the lie that our lives can look perfect and we can have these dirty little secrets that no one knows about. No one but us. Until, all of a sudden, we slip, hit the bottom, drop, and we realize our lives aren't as beautiful as we play them up to be.

Drop the flower pot and let it scatter and let the pieces sit. Pause for a moment to let the shock set in.

Instead, we are all broken and messy.

You see, as we start looking deeper at the story of the lady with her sin, we begin to realize we really are more like her than anyone else in the story. We are the ones who should be on the ground before Jesus washing His feet with our tears. We are the ones who are repenting, wearing the weight of our sin, and coming to the feet of Jesus asking for forgiveness. Even while we really are her, we find ourselves acting like the Pharisees—putting off our sin and judging others' sins.

The world has allowed us to have access to anything we want at our fingertips with our phones. It allows us to look up topics or participate in activities we never thought possible. Take some time to think about the sins you are caught up in. Do people know or is it a secret you hold? Are you caught in pornography? Do you sext your significant other? Do you use someone else's Netflix to watch shows you shouldn't watch so mom and dad don't know? Do you gossip or lie or share stories about others that aren't true to make yourself look better?

None of these sins and the sins you are thinking about are greater than another. They are all sin and God sees them all the same. Brokenness fills all of our lives. As you think about the brokenness in your life and how you have sinned, grab a piece of this broken pot and write your sins on it. It is anonymous. No one will know who wrote it. When you are done, come place it at the foot of the cross and spend some time in reflection, asking God to help you and forgive you.

Play some music and allow youth to really reflect and write their sins on the broken pot. Toward the end of their time of silence and reflection, read Isaiah 53:2-6 to them which is below and then bring them back together as a group.

*“For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has borne our griefs*

Key Point:
We are the ones who should be on the ground before Jesus washing His feet with our tears. We are the ones who are repenting, wearing the weight of our sin, and coming to the feet of Jesus asking for forgiveness.

*and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.”*

The heaviness in the room is real. The weight you feel is real. The sins you brought before God are all real. If you need someone to walk through this with you, come talk to me and let's find someone together who can hear you for who you are and for who God created you to be and who can help keep you accountable. Brokenness is not a joke. Pornography, sexting, gossip, lies, cyber bullying—it is all real and all hurts.

But, our God is real and He is present. He knows all the pain we feel.

Let's open our Bibles to Psalm 118. We are going to read verses 1 through 18 together.

Q: What do these verses say about God's presence and dedication to us?

A: He is always there. He is by our side (v. 5). Let them give answers as well of how God spoke to them through these verses.

Q: What words stick out as helpful for when we need help?

A: Let them give answers of what they heard as helpful for them

Q: How do we know God is on our side?

A: Answers may vary, but encourage them to highlight or underline what helps them remember that God is with us always. He is present.

The world will condemn us every single time. The world will point out our sin. The world will tell us how unworthy we are and how we ultimately deserve death. In reality—the world is right. We do deserve death.

BUT THANK GOODNESS FOR JESUS!

Bring out the pot you glued together beforehand and the glow stick. As you are talking, break the glow stick so it shines bright and place it under the upside down flower pot. The light should shine through the cracks—you may need to turn the lights off to get the full effect.

Thank goodness we have a God who has called us out of the dark and into the light. Thank goodness we have a God who uses our brokenness to share His glory.

Notice how the broken pot by itself is ugly and unattractive. You probably wouldn't pick this pot to plant your flowers in. But, turn it upside down and put a light under it and the light shines through the brokenness, creating something unique and beautiful.

That is like us. We are all broken in different and unique ways. But God steps in and takes us, and says He will turn our brokenness into beauty. God will shine through our brokenness! Don't be afraid to face your sin and let God shine through. He will use it to bring beauty and glory to Him!

Key Point:
The world will tell us how unworthy we are and how we ultimately deserve death. In reality—the world is right. We do deserve death. **BUT THANK GOODNESS FOR JESUS!**

Closing

CHALLENGE

This week, I want you to take a step toward pulling the band-aid off of the sin that is embedded deep in you. If you need to talk to someone, find someone to talk to. I have resources and people to help you and even I can help you and talk to you. If you need to delete some apps on your phone or make sure it is put away late at night to help take away those temptations, then do that. I am here to help you and so are the other adults in your life. Let's work together to face those sins deep down in us. It doesn't mean we will be perfect, but it does mean we are bringing it to the light so God can help heal.

Everyone take a notecard and a pen. We are going to write something from Psalm 118 on our notecards that can help us remember that God is present even in our brokenness. Read it and find something that stands out to you. Then, this week, place the card somewhere you will see it daily as a reminder that Jesus is better.

PRAYER

(use the following, say your own, or invite your youth to pray)

Dear Jesus, You are amazing, and you know the deepest parts of us. You know the sins we hold deep down inside. You know our thoughts and our struggles. Our fears and sins don't scare You. You are a big and mighty Savior who desires to know us deeply. You bore our sin on the cross. Help us to face the sins we hold deep down inside. Help us to confess those sins to someone who can keep us accountable, but most importantly, help us to confess those sins to You. As we struggle and as pain fills us while walking through this, remind us of Your real presence with us always. Thank You for being an amazing Lord who came to die for us and know our real pain, too. And thank You that You rose again so we can overcome these sins and live forever with You, both now and forever! In Your name we pray, Amen.

SESSION 3: #CONNECTINGUP

Goals: Youth will be challenged to learn the importance of disconnecting from technology and connecting with God

Objectives:

Youth will

- Take an interactive quiz and learn facts about the birth of technology and modern uses of technology that will help them process their personal time spent on technology
- Process how their phones have impacted their ability to effectively communicate face to face and the importance of disconnecting through conversation and digging into scripture.
- Be encouraged to spend a certain amount of time disconnected from technology and connected with God. They will be given prompts to help them through their time.
- Be challenged to take a technology assessment throughout the next week

Supplies Needed (optional):

Access to internet, sound, and screen to play a game on Kahoot! If you do not have access, the opening quiz is included in the text below, music (optional), spiritual discipline prompts printed or written for youth to see and use, pens and paper for journaling

Activity

To begin, you may use the quiz outlined in the text below or follow the link to gain access through Kahoot!

Link: <https://create.kahoot.it/share/connectingup/292c89dd-5371-4b39-a11d-54a8eaeede0>

Quiz (* shows the answer, if printing, be sure to remove the * before passing it out).

1. If cyberphobia is the fear of computers and technophobia is the fear of technology, what is nomophobia?
 - a. No more fear
 - b. The fear of having no fear
 - c. The fear of being without a phone*
 - d. The fear or Momo
2. The first laptop was created and released to the public in ¹
 - a. 1955
 - b. 1999
 - c. 1982*
 - d. 2000
3. When was email invented? ²
 - a. 1955
 - b. 1999
 - c. 1982*
 - d. 2000

Key Point:
Telling people about the good news of Jesus is something that flows from the realization that the Christian Gospel is good news for me—and for everyone.

4. What video game system was introduced to the world in September of 1996? ³
 - a. XBOX
 - b. Nintendo 64*
 - c. Gameboy
 - d. PlayStation Original
5. When was Google officially created? ⁴
 - a. 1998*
 - b. 1952
 - c. 1907
 - d. 2002
6. What is the average number of apps on a teenager's phone? ⁵
 - a. 10-20
 - b. 40-60
 - c. 60-90*
 - d. 100-120
7. How did Spam Mail get its name? ⁶
 - a. From a Monty Python skit*
 - b. Spam paid to have it officially named that
 - c. Because it stands for Spies Planning Against Man
 - d. Spam is more fun to say than Junk
8. Surgeons who grew up playing video games make 37% fewer mistakes ⁶
 - a. true*
 - b. False
9. What was Snapchat's original name when it first launched in 2011? ⁶
 - a. Snapchat
 - b. Ghost friends
 - c. Picaboo*
 - d. Photosends
10. What is the average amount of screentime per day for a teenager (ages 13-19)? ⁷
 - a. 9 hours*
 - b. 10 minutes
 - c. 5.5 hours
 - d. 13 hours

PROCESSING TIME

Take some time to use the questions below or ask your own questions to get your youth talking about technology, it's uses, and how it is beneficial. Answers not provided on most because they are discussion starters and guides. Answers will vary within the group.

Q: What question surprised you the most? Which surprised you the least?

Q: How many apps do you have on your phone?

Q: How many hours a day do you spend on your phone? Could be fun to make them look up! If they have an iPhone, go to settings and then to screentime to compare. It will even show them where they spend their time! According to Common Sense Media, teens spend an average of 9 hours a day on their phones.

Q: What is the app you use the most on your phone?

Q: What is your favorite thing about your phone? What do you love about technology?

Additional Resource: Christian music artist, Lecrae, has a moving story of how God has called him that can be viewed on the website: I Am Second (<https://www.iamsecond.com/seconds/lecræ/>).

Q: What are some of the good things about technology—phones, computers, etc.?

A: We can look things up immediately, google is a word, constant connection to people who live far (or near—how many of you are texting someone in this very room?!), etc.

Technology is great. It allows us to do far more than what our grandparents and even parents could ever imagine doing when they were our age. And the advances keep on coming. It is an exciting time in our world to watch as technology transforms before us.

But, with all of the great things that come with and from technology, have we ever stopped and looked at the negative things technology can lead to?

Q: What are some of the negative side effects of technology?

A: Give them time to discuss and share ideas, then transition with the next questions to get the conversation on a direct path.

Q: What do you do when you have time alone? Like walking from class or sitting at a stoplight or even before bed at night?

A: For most people, because of technology, we do allow ourselves to have times of solitude. At night before bed, we spend time looking at our phones getting the last little bit seen and the last few likes posted before bed. At stoplights or walking across campus or walking home, etc.—all are spent looking at our phones instead of time spent in solitude with ourselves and God.

Q: What do you do when you find yourself in an awkward or uncomfortable situation? Like let's say you are the first one in the classroom or you don't know anyone—what do you do?

A: Most of us pull out our phones and try to look busy—even if we are just scrolling through Instagram and not even paying attention to what we are scrolling past. We fill every silent moment we are presented with. We do not allow ourselves a time of silence or an awkward moment where we actually have to talk to someone face to face that we may not want to. How many times have you put your headphones in not to listen to anything, but just to avoid conversation with people? I know I am guilty! We avoid the awkward by pulling out our phones

Q: Have you ever thought about how well you really know your friends or yourselves outside of what they post online or through text?

A: Our portals into little worlds have blocked us from really seeing each other and really knowing each other and ourselves. Often, we don't take time to really know our friends and ourselves outside of social media and our online lives. Because of this, it is impacting how we communicate and feel emotions like empathy, sympathy, joy, etc.

Q: What do you do when you feel alone? What do you do when you feel anxious? What do you do when you feel ashamed? What is your very first and immediate reaction?

A: For most people—it is not to turn to someone and talk to them face to face. Most of us will turn to our phones. Maybe we will text or snap or get on Tinder to find someone to connect with.

So many of us are guilty of letting our phones—our little portals into different worlds—run our lives. We look to our phones in times of joy. We want to document what is in front of us with a snap or Boomerang. We find ourselves turning to our phones when we are feeling deep sorrow or anxiety or loneliness. Invasion and distraction by technology can lead us to isolation. The connection we find ourselves searching for on our phones doesn't always fill the void we are trying to fill. That is because the connection we need is a real and deep connection—which is hard to get over the phone.

Digging Deeper

We are created to need connection and community with people and with God!

Let's open to the very beginning of creation—Genesis 1. We are not going to read every day of creation, but let's recap together.

Day 1: day and night/light and darkness

Day 2: water and sky

Day 3: moon, stars, and sun

Day 4: fish and birds

Day 5: other animals of the land

And we will now start reading with day 6. Open to Genesis 1. We will read verses 26-27.

Q: What does it mean that God made man in “our image”? Who is “our”?

A: We were made in the image of God. But, as we know, God is three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, one God. Our God is a God of community. If God was community, we need community too!

Now let's open to Mark 1. We will read verse 35 together.

Q: Look at the section titles before and after this one. What are some of those titles?

A: Jesus drives out an evil spirit, Jesus heals many, Jesus heals leprosy.

Q: What do you notice about these titles? Was Jesus a man who just sat around a lot?

A: No. Jesus was a busy man. He was healing and preaching and teaching and constantly needed and constantly on the move.

Q: Why is Mark 1:35 important? What can we learn from Jesus in this verse?

A: Even in the busy, Jesus still withdrew to spend time with His Father. Jesus needed time to communicate and spend time with His Dad.

Jesus needed time to get away. He was a busy and popular man. Many people would pull Him in many different directions. But, Jesus knew He needed time away with His father and He made sure He got it.

We, like Jesus, need time with our heavenly Father, too. We are a people created to need connection—a three-dimensional connection that can't be met by our phones or online lives. We have a need that can't be distracted by Candy Crush or Facebook or Instagram. We have a need that can only be met by our Maker!

We are going to walk through some Scripture together that is a beautiful representation of how God chases us and desires connection with us. Open to Hosea 1. Let's read verses 1-11 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: How many kids did they have and what were their names and meanings?

A: Jezreel - God scatters; Lo-Ruhamah - reversal of the love that God had earlier shown Israel; Lo-Ammi - no longer God's people, a break in the covenant.

Q: What group of people is this book a parallel with?

A: Israel

Read Hosea 2:1-8 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: What did Gomer do?

A: She was unfaithful to Hosea. She committed adultery.

Q: Why did she leave?

A: She yearned for it. She wanted to chase the ways of the world rather than stay with Hosea. She worshipped the false and found joy and meaning in that which wasn't true.

Q: What is this saying about the people of Israel?

A: They are worshipping false idols and putting their love and trust in Baal. They have turned their backs against God and are seeking meaning in adulterous and wild living.

Read Hosea 2:9-15 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: What is Gomer doing?

A: She is seeing the true blessing she had in Hosea. She is being punished and exposed for what wasn't true and being shown what really is true.

Q: What is Hosea doing?

A: Hosea is patiently chasing her and pursuing her.

Q: Why does Hosea keep chasing her?

A: He saw her for her true worth. Hosea sees her how God sees her and he remains faithful to her even when she doesn't.

Q: What does this say about God and His people?

A: God's people continually turn from Him. They worship Baal, find their joy in the ways of the world, and remain unfaithful to God. But God continually pursues and sees His people for who they really are. His love is never ending—even when they don't deserve it.

Read Hosea 2:16-23 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: What does this say about God and His people?

A: God buys His people back and makes a new covenant with them. He takes away the past and sets us up for a secure future with Him. God turns back and no longer says Lo-Ammi, but instead wraps us in his arms and says you are mine.

Read Hosea 3:1-5 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: What did Hosea do?

A: He went, bought Gomer back, and took her as his wife again.

Q: Why/How could he be so faithful even when Gomer was so unfaithful?

A: Answers may vary, but ultimately because that is what God does with us. He sees us for who we really are and continually pursues us because of love.

Q: What does this say about God and His people?

A: May be a repeat, but this is worth repeating! God's people rebel and will always rebel. God pursues and will always pursue because He is a God of love and grace!

Q: What does this say about us?

A: We are Gomer—constantly pushing away from God, chasing the ways of the world rather than pursuing God.

Gomer was a woman caught in the crossline between Baal worship and Yahweh worship. In her time, it was a custom for women to engage in ritual sex with the priests of Baal to ensure fertility in their marriages. This made matters complicated, because rather than trusting Yahweh - the God that had gone before them and shown over and over again his undying love for them - women were putting their trust in a pagan ritual. What women found, including Gomer, is that the rituals and performing what the world wanted didn't meet her real heart need. It took more of her than what it gave. But Hosea wanted her. He knew he could show her how incredible Yahweh was. He wanted to show her to love God had for her that couldn't be found in rituals of Baal and he did everything to show her his love.

We have chased thrills and distractions and worldly rituals ourselves. We have put our faith and hope in social media and apps and in the filtered lives we live on our phones. We have filled our time to be spent with God with time on our phone. WE have avoided real connections with people for fabricated connections online.

We have a God who can fill us with REAL joy! You can have a relationship with the ONE who made you and who can meet your deepest needs that no thousands of followers can meet! And, He deeply desires that relationship with you!

Open to Psalm 46. We are going to read it all together.

Q: What stood out to you as we read? What verse or phrases hit home?

So much in life we enter into the intensity and stay there. But like discussed earlier, Jesus so often entered into the intensity and retreated to the privacy. We need that, too.

Q: What two words does Psalm 46 use to teach us how to retreat into the privacy?

A: Be Still

While we use the word retreat, God isn't telling us that to know Him we must retreat away and be by ourselves. Being still means to simply stop looking to ourselves and know God is. It is waking up in the morning and knowing God is there. It is driving to school and knowing God is. It is dealing with hard friendship and divorcing parents and sickness and tests and celebrations and joy and in

all of it knowing God is. God is who He says He is. He is the answer we need. He is the One who can fill the void. He is the One who fills our void. He is.

Being still can happen in many ways for many different people. But tonight, we are going to practice some spiritual disciplines of time with God alone. Each of you will get a notecard with a different spiritual discipline on it. It could be a new way to pray or journal or read the Bible. I will set a timer for 10 minutes. In those 10 minutes, I want you to spend time with God. I challenge you to try what the card says. For some it may be new and uncomfortable and that is okay. Just give it a try. But for 10 minutes it is you and God. No phones, no technology, no friends. Just you and Jesus.

Below are some different spiritual discipline entries you can print and cut out to give to the youth. Or you can use some you know! Set a timer and jump in yourself as well.

Some spiritual discipline prompts that can be copied and used. All come from the Spiritual Discipline Handbook: Practices That Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun:

- Consider the many names God uses to reveal Himself to us: Almighty, Abba, Beloved, Christ, Creator, Crucified, Deliverer, Glorious, etc. Which of these names identifies where God is in your life now? Talk to God about this revelation of who He is and what that means to you. Write this name down where you will see it. Use this name when you pray to Him.
- Write a letter or song to God expressing your love and honor of Him.
- Contemplate Jesus. Intentionally place yourself in the presence of God. Become quiet. Express to God your intention to rest in His love. Use your imagination; you may want to picture yourself leaning on Jesus' breast as John did or sitting at Jesus' feet as Mary did or kneeling before Jesus as other desperate people before you have. (When thoughts and distractions interrupt, gently return to Jesus. Begin again and again.) What is it like to receive God's gift of a new beginning?
- Find a quiet moment to reflect on your day or week. Open your hands and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the moment for which you are least grateful. What made that moment difficult? Be with your feelings; don't try to change them or make them acceptable. Offer them up to God. Talk to Him about them. Where was God in this moment? You may want to thank God that He is always ready to be with you and talk to you.
- Write down what a perfect day of rest and recreation would look like to you. Is it within the realm of possibility? Plan when you can take this day or a version of it. Schedule it on your calendar.
- Make a list of things you like about yourself. Thank God for making you you.
- Sit quietly in a comfortable position. Breathe slowly and notice any tightness in your body. What is your body saying to you right now? Listen to it. Don't scold it. How would Jesus want you to care for yourself right now?
- Where have you complicated your life with God? Consider what actually brings you into the presence of Christ. Spend time there.
- People who are rushed often feel anxious about their lives. So when you wake up, before your head leaves the pillow, offer God three central concerns of the day. Ask Him to care for these things as you go about your daily tasks. When your worries creep in, return to the moment when you handed God your concerns.
- Read slowly. Read for transformation rather than information. When a word stands out or lights up, stop. Let the word roll around in your heart. Meditate on what you have read.

- When have you learned something from someone who wasn't an authority or an expert? What did you learn? What was it like for you? Write to your "teacher" and express your appreciation.
- Who do you want to be ten, twenty, thirty years from now? What will you have to learn to become that person? Are you teachable in these areas now?
- What is it like for you to receive a handwritten letter from a friend? Write a non-electronic letter to a friend. What surfaces in you while you take time to do this? What is gained and what is lost in electronic communication? What do you think of the trade-offs?
- Which relationships in your life need face time? Plan face-to-face time with several people this week. Do not let this time be interrupted by anything electronic.
- Imagine you are in a safe place, surrounded by the love of God. Ask God to help you see yourself as He sees you. Remember, He sees you absolutely and with love. Using the Ten Commandments as a guide, journal your sins. When you have finished, go through each commandment one at a time, asking God to forgive you and help you to change. Then, burn your list in a symbolic act of what it means to have God remove your sins from you.
- Imagine the kind of person you would like to become in your old age. Then look at your life and assess whether or not the way you live now is preparing you to become this person. Confess where you need to change. Ask God and the community of faith for help.
- Turn to Psalm 32 or Psalm 51. Use the Psalm as a way of bringing your own sins before God. How does God meet you in these confessions of David?

Closing

CHALLENGE

Bring the group back together.

Q: What did you think of your time with God?

Q: Did 10 minutes seem like a long time? Were you comfortable or were you anxious?

Q: What would it be like for you to take some time this week to intentionally unplug from technology and plug into one on one time with God?

For our challenge this week, we are going to take a technology assessment together. I want you to keep track of the amount of time you spend on the computer or your phone—even the time you spend talking on the phone. Then, I also want you to keep track of the uninterrupted time you spend with your family/ friends each day. Uninterrupted means no technology. Just you and them. Then, I also want you to track the time you spend uninterrupted with God. Just you and Him. Next week, we will compare these times.

PRAYER

(use the following, say your own, or invite your youth to pray)

Dear Jesus, You are amazing, and You know the deepest parts of us. You know how often we stray from You and how often we turn to the world to find our joy and fill the void in our heart. And yet, You continually pursue us. You pick us up, hold us tight, and remind us that we are Yours—we are Your beloved children. In a world that is so busy and so quick to turn from You, help us to be still with You this week. Help us to know that You are the Lord of even the busiest and craziest parts of life and that we find our rest and peace in You. You are amazing, and we love You so much. In your name we pray, Amen.

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SESSION 4: #CONNECTINGOUT

Goals: *Youth will learn how technology can be used to strengthen relationships and be used as a tool to tell others about Jesus.*

Objectives: *Youth will*

- *Have a chance to use technology in a fun and interactive way to help them begin to see how technology can be used for strengthening relationships*
- *Dig into scripture and process how technology can be used to share Jesus*
- *Work together to brainstorm ways that tie into Deuteronomy 6*
- *Be challenged to use technology to share Jesus but also encourage connections together.*

Supplies Needed

Copy of the Instagram Selfie Challenge Rules and Tasks, Snacks, a location to put phones away, a prize for the winning team (optional—can be something silly), poster boards/paper, markers/crayons/something to color with

Game

Things to note BEFORE starting with the group: you will want to provide a hashtag that fits your ministry. Make sure everyone knows it and make sure to search it beforehand to see if it is in use or not. Having a hashtag helps you find all of the photos that the youth post easily. This challenge is one that can take place anywhere. You do not need to be in the mall or have them drive to different locations. You can also change up the challenges to fit your ministry context!

Instagram Selfie Challenge! Today everyone is going to participate in a selfie challenge. But, the twist is...you must post your picture on Instagram with the correct hashtag for your photos to be counted! You will be split into groups. Here are some guidelines:

- You have 15 minutes to get as many group selfies as possible. When time is up or when you have completed all of the challenges and posted them on Instagram, return here.
- The challenges are left vague so you can use your imagination, but be appropriate.
- Make sure you post each of them on Instagram right after you take it. If you don't have Instagram, find someone in the group who does.
- For your photos to be counted, they must include the following hashtag: (insert the hashtag you created beforehand) and must include which challenge you are completing.
- Your Instagram must be set on public for this to work.
- Your challenges must include everyone in your group—it cannot be one person taking a selfie of themselves. This is a team selfie challenge!
- Most importantly, have fun!

Selfie Challenges (print off copies or send digitally to your group so they can see the list).

- Selfie in the cold
- Selfie inception
- Artsy selfie
- Selfie kids

- Selfie with a leader
- Selfie Entourage
- Selfie Sermon
- Selfie upside down
- Selfie #basic
- Mirror Selfie
- Nerdy Selfie
- Superhero Selfie
- Exercise Selfie
- Food Selfie
- Do it for the Vine Selfie
- Dance Party Selfie
- Anti-Gravity Selfie
- Bearded Selfie
- Bible Selfie
- Into the Woods Selfie
- Worship Selfie
- Awkward Selfie
- Sitting Selfie
- Selfie Selfie
- Pyramid Selfie
- Selfie with a Fish
- Water Selfie

Ready. Set. SELFIE!

Digging Deeper

Once everyone is done, make sure you have them put their phones away. This Bible study is to be done phoneless! There is a reason for it!

Who remembers our challenge from last week? Our technology assessment! Let's hear some results if you have them—or at least guess some numbers if you don't have them. You were to track the time you spent on your phone, the time you spent unplugged and connected with your family and friends, and the time you spent unplugged and connected with God. Allow time for sharing if they have the details.

Q: What section had the most amount of time?

Q: Which section had the least amount of time?

Q: Why do you think that is?

I am willing to guess that the time you spent with your phone was higher than the times you spent unplugged with people. In a technology-driven world and like we discussed last week, we have a tendency to spend way more time on our phones than with people. So tonight, since we are done with our selfies, we are going to practice being unplugged with each other. Your phones are all away and we will spend the rest of the time together as a family!

Let's spend some time talking about the selfie challenge!

Q: What was your favorite part of the challenge?

Q: What was difficult or hard?

Q: What is something you learned about someone in your group?

Q: Did you meet someone new that you haven't interacted with much?

The purpose of this challenge was to do silly things and grow together as a group. Was that accomplished? I sure hope it was! We will look at all the pictures and do the results at the end. But first, let's jump into Scripture together.

Open up to Deuteronomy 6. We will be reading verses 4-9 together.

Q: Recap in your own words what happened.

A: Allow them to hit on the main points of what happened in their own words. Feel free to help guide them to important parts if necessary.

Q: What does it mean for us to love God with ALL of our heart, soul, and might?

A: God wants us to love him above all else!

Q: What do verses 7-9 say we are supposed to do?

A: Include God in all that we do!

We are going to split back into our groups again. Your group will be given a poster board and something to color and write with. When we look at verses 7-9, it reminds us, like we said, that we should include God in all that we do. We should teach this command diligently to children, talk about it when we sit at our house and when we walk by the way and when we lie down and when we rise. That means we should do this all the time! In your groups, you will think of other ways you can talk about God all the time and illustrate it on your poster board. You will have 10 minutes to brainstorm and create!

Split them up and give them 10 minutes to create. Adjust if you need more or less time. Afterwards, let them show to the group what they made!

Today is all about community TOGETHER and how we are to share Jesus together—both over social media and through life.

Q: How was time spent together during the selfie challenge?

Q: How was Jesus shared through it?

A: From these two questions—yes time spent together and yes Jesus was shared. Even over technology! Because of the silly posts, people can be learning about Jesus or even ask why are you doing this? That then opens doors to talk about Jesus.

Q: How was time spent together with the poster making?

Q: How was Jesus shared through it?

A: Yes time was spent together and yes Jesus shared. We got to learn and grow together as a group!

Q: Did one have a bigger impact on others that we may never know?

A: Over social media, we may never know how our posts impact others. God can use them to make a bigger impact than we realize

Q: Did one provide a more intimate growth together?

A: Yes—our time together growing and digging into Scripture was more intimate. You learned more about someone else than you would have from just social media.

Technology is part of our lives. What did we learn today that shows how Jesus can be shared through technology? That's right! By what we post, how we respond to people, and the way we show ourselves online can reflect our faith. Even though we are sharing Jesus and community, should technology replace real life connection with people? No way! Technology is great and the advances that are being made daily are awesome, but technology can never replace face-to-face interaction with people. We are created to need that interaction!

Closing

With technology so present in life and only getting stronger, it will be so important for us to find ways to set technology down to have real connections with people. It will also be important for us to make sure we are living social media lives that point to Jesus. Not everything you post needs to be about Jesus, but think of ways you can witness to others through social media. Maybe your friend posts about a hard time. Meet them for dinner one night and have a face to face connection with them. Maybe someone posts about a death in the family. Use that as an opportunity to share about the hope we have in Jesus. Your challenge this week and the weeks following are to use your social media as way to connect with others and share Jesus through this. I want to hear stories—or even see them when I am on different social media sites—of how God is using you and your social media to leave footprints of Jesus!

PRAYER

Everyone open to Psalm 33. We are going to read this together as a group. Let this be our prayer as we go out tonight.

Psalm 33

The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous!

Praise befits the upright.

Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre;

make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!

Sing to him a new song;

play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

For the word of the Lord is upright,

and all his work is done in faithfulness.

He loves righteousness and justice;

the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,

and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;

he puts the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord;

let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!

For he spoke, and it came to be;

he commanded, and it stood firm.

*The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
The counsel of the Lord stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!*

*The Lord looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.
The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.*

*Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.*

*Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.
For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.*

Amen! Let this joy carry you through this week and be an ever-present reminder for you as you learn to talk about Jesus always. Remember—the steadfast love of the Lord endures FOREVER! Go and tell!