

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

LET'S TALK ABOUT...

SOCIAL MEDIA

OCTOBER 11, 2023

Week 2 of a 3-week series
about important conversations

BOTTOM LINE

When it comes to social media:
be wise, don't let it control you,
and use it for good.

SCRIPTURE

*Getting wisdom is the
wisest thing you can do!
And whatever else you do,
develop good judgment.*
- Proverbs 4:7 NLT

*"I have the right to do
anything"—but I will not be
mastered by anything.*
- 1 Corinthians 6:12b NIV

*A tiny spark can set a great
forest on fire.*
- James 3:5b NLT

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students make wise
decisions when it comes
to using social media and
online platforms

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: The level of exposure to social media is vastly different from one middle schooler to another. So, keep that in mind as you lead! Depending on where each student is, this will be either a proactive or reactive conversation. For those already on social media, you're guiding them toward wisdom and self-awareness. And for those who are not yet online, you're planting seeds to help them use it well when they're allowed to do so. Remember, in this phase, so much of the desire to use social media is about fitting in or being included. Even if students aren't aware of it, they're often looking for approval, inclusion, or value in being seen on social media. While we don't want to shame them for these feelings, it will be helpful to guide them in discovering the why behind their desire to be on social media and to help them shift to approaching it with more wisdom along the way.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What rules do your parents/your school/the platform itself have surrounding social media use? Why do you think these rules exist? If you were in charge of social media, what rules would you make for it?
- Do you think God cares about what we do on social media? Why or why not?
- Have any of these things changed for you or someone you know because of social media or any online platform: (Give a "thumbs up" for a positive change or a "thumbs down" for a negative change)
 - * A habit? * A friendship? * Your schoolwork? * The clothes you wear?
 - * The music you listen to? * The words you use? * What you think about yourself?
 - * What you think about somebody else?
- How do you feel when you're on social media or online? How do you feel when you take a break from social media or being online?
- How do you know when someone is controlled by social media or an online platform? In what ways do you think social media or an online platform has control over you—even if you aren't using it currently?
- What is one really kind thing you remember someone saying on social media, YouTube, or gaming platforms? How did that make you feel?
- What is one really hurtful thing you remember someone saying on social media, YouTube, or gaming platforms? How did that make you feel?
- When's the last time you said something kind on social media? When's the last time you said something not so kind on social media that you might not have said face to face?
- What is one way you can build someone up on social media the way you would want to be built up?
- What is one thing you may need to stop doing when it comes to social media?

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Research shows the teenage brain is in a unique stage of development. The limbic system (the area responsible for things like social interaction, fear and threat detection, emotional memories, processing positive stimuli, risk taking, reward and pleasure) is highly active while the frontal lobe (the area responsible for complex decision making, planning for the future, controlling impulses, ability to focus, insight, judgement, etc.) is still developing. As you can imagine, this presents both unique opportunities and challenges when it comes to how we help teens regulate their relationship to media. Empower your teens to see the benefit of remaining in control of when and how they use media.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Name as many social media/online platforms as you can think of.
- On a scale from 1 (easy) to 10 (difficult) how easy it for you to spend time away from all forms of social media? Are some easier than others? Why is that?
- In your opinion what impact does social media have on being a committed follower of Jesus?
- "Social media is powerful because it impacts how we view the world." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? How has social media impacted how you view the world?
- What advice would you give a younger version of yourself when it comes to using social media? Why?
- What are some ways you've seen the power of social media be helpful? What are some ways you've experienced the power of social media as unhelpful or harmful?
- What does it look like to use wisdom when navigating social media?

DO THIS:

Challenge your group to be more intentional with their use of social media. Ask each student in your group to share one small change they want to make to start using more wisdom when it comes to engaging with social media. Commit to checking in with each student this week on how they are doing with their desired change.