

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate
Spiritual Emphasis Week, September 27-29, 2016
Social Media: The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful
Discussion Guide
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Thank you for the privilege of serving Rockway in September. This discussion guide is focused on prompting a few next steps for parents and teens as they navigate the opportunities and challenges of social media. Given what I heard from students and parents during SEW, finding a way to begin talking about the realities of social media and its impact in our lives is really the starting point for many families.

Here are several conversation topics to consider.

1) What are some of our most significant pressure points in relation to social media?

The following items is a list compiled by Rockway teachers in conversation with students. These are elements that students identified as pressure points or questions they had. Use one or two of these items **to listen to each other** and to identify where we feel pressure. Which items are most important, which are least important?

___ Sense of self/self-worth “Measuring your self-worth in ‘likes’ on Instagram...and becoming self-absorbed, self-centred”

___ Addictive/habitual behaviours “checking app even with a few seconds between classes”

___ Cyberstalking/bullying “it’s hard to find the line, what comes before extreme cases?”

___ Worldview, developing opinions/perspectives on issues “Buzzfeed portrays extreme sides of anything...people gang up on others when they’re not politically correct about everything”

___ Social isolation “get left out if you’re not part of a group chat”

___ Other _____

2) Acknowledge our vulnerability to exchange face to face interaction with digital platforms. A very significant realization for me as I prepared for my time at Rockway was that I am as vulnerable to social media/technology use as my teen and young adult children are. Creating a conversation that recognizes that we’re in this together builds trust. Exploring our vulnerabilities together feels very different and more attractive.

3) What does it mean to “have a life”? The question came up during a grade 7/8 discussion and it prompted some amazing insights between students. Creating space to consider what kind of relationships we’d like to experience and what we value, begins to open up perspectives on social media use.

4) What are elements of social media that we want to celebrate? Recognizing where and how social media plays a positive role in our lives, allows us to focus on those kinds of uses and avoid less thoughtful and habitual use.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Reading Tips: Boyd offers a succinct overview of current social media trends among teens and provides a more optimistic view of its positive role in giving teens a voice who otherwise may not have one. Crouch develops a theology of communications for those interested in engaging biblical/theological reflection. Schultze's *Habits* addresses questions of character formation and describes values that are truly life-giving. Turkle's *Reclaiming Conversation* is a call to action written specifically for parents and provides lots of ideas and anecdotes about how we can live well in a digital age. It draws on the research she has done as a social psychologist, assessing the impact of technology on adolescent development (*Alone Together* is the academic presentation of her research).

Boyd, Danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Print.

Crouch, A. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.

Print.

Schultze, Quentin. *Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000. Web. 4 Aug. 2009.

---. *Habits of the High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004. Print.

Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2008. Print.

Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011. Print.

---. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press HC, 2015. Print.