## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

# TEEN IDENTITY



Connecting Parents, Teens & Jesus in a Disconnected World

# **AXIS PARENT GUIDES SERIES**

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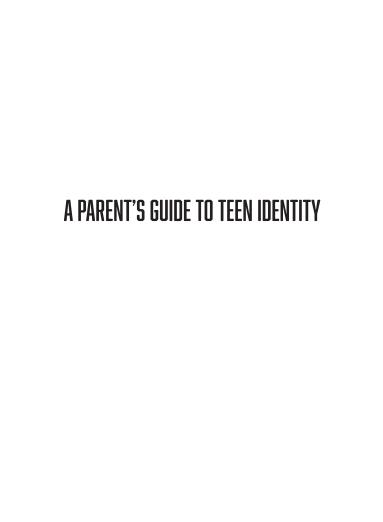
A Parent's Guide to Teen Identity

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A Parent's Guide to Teen Identity

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The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God....

Therefore I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in Him....

Therefore there is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God.

If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him.

THOMAS MERTON, NEW SEEDS
OF CONTEMPLATION

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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.

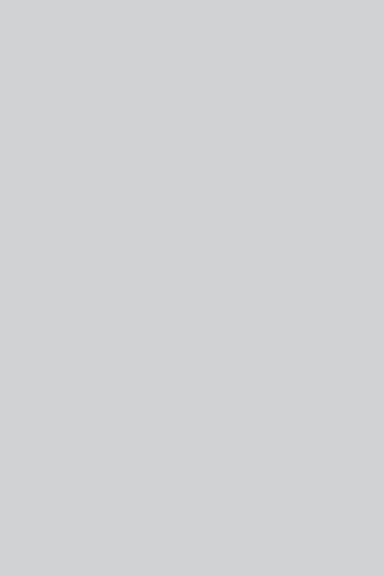
This parent's guide is designed to help start a conversation. Our goal is to give you enough knowledge that you're able to ask your teen informed questions about their world. For each guide, we spend weeks reading, researching, and interviewing parents and teens in order to distill everything you need 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?" 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

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



# WHY IS IDENTITY SUCH A BIG DEAL?

### A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TEEN IDENTITY

IN THE HEART OF EVERY PERSON is a deep-rooted question: "Who am I, and how do I fit into the world around me?" In other words, what makes me "me"? Am I the roles that I play (friend, sibling, athlete)? Am I a set of characteristics (quiet, bubbly, confident)? Am I my thoughts, emotions, body, soul, actions . . . a summation of these things?

The question of identity shows up in which brands teens choose to wear, in how they manage their appearance with friends, in their desire to get good grades or try out for sports or musicals, and in what they think about themselves and others while scrolling through social media.<sup>1</sup>

It can be difficult to navigate our teens' search for identity with healthy language, perspective, and grace. The Christian story for the world has a stunning message

### AXIS

about who we are. Our challenge is to contextualize that story in the modern world, the world of popular culture.

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