

TOUGH TOPICS



MAINSTREAM STATS AND QUOTES
ON 25 OF SOME OF LIFE'S TOUGHEST
TOPICS TEENS STRUGGLE WITH TODAY,
AND THE BIBLE'S RESPONSE TO THEM.

THE BIBLE

The word "bible" is from the Greek "ta biblia", which means "the scrolls" or "the books" and was written by God through over 40 human authors of different backgrounds, professions and ethnicities, over the span of about 1,500 years, in three languages, on three continents, totaling 66 books in multiple genres with hundreds of topics, but the one theme that God loves us and through Jesus Christ offers eternal life and forgiveness of sins, that whosoever would believe in Him would be saved from sin and death and called to live their destiny on earth and in the eternal paradise of heaven with God forever.

TOUGH TOPICS INFO

The extended lists of bible verses and mainstream stats and quotes related to each topic can be found online at www.zealccf.com/toughtopics

PREFACE

We are not replacing these discussions for medical help. We strongly encourage anyone with a medical diagnosis to seek professional help and guidance.

The stats and quotes used are pulled from a diversity of sources; most of them less than 10 years old. We do not claim these stats and quotes are absolute truth and do not believe every topic discussed is inherently bad. The purpose of each first paragraph is to reveal stats and quotes from mainstream sources about the growing struggles teens may have regarding each topic. The purpose of each second paragraph is to reveal God's perspective by seeing what the Bible says regarding each topic and how we can receive help and guidance in our life's purpose through a relationship with Jesus. The purpose of this booklet as a whole is to bring to light the growing struggles teens are facing regarding topics that are tough to talk about. Our desire is for everyone to realize their purpose in life through a relationship with Jesus Christ and guidance from the Bible.

RESOURCES

Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Domestic Abuse Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Self-Harm Crisis Hotline: 741741

COUNSELING:

<https://ysb.net/what-we-do/youth-focused-family-counseling/>

<https://www.adolescenthealth.org/Resources/Clinical-Care-Resources/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Resources-For-Adolesc.aspx>

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/lifechallenges/promos/counseling-services-and-referrals>

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/get-help.shtml>

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IDENTITY

Identity is defined by Psychology Today as the knowledge of who we are¹. 63% of teens say they "know who they are" while 37% do not fully know their identity yet³. Teens may search for identity in status, work, race, ethnicity, education, family, opinions of others, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, friends, money, power, talent, etc. Technology and social media may prove finding identity even more confusing and difficult, giving us more possible versions of "self" than ever before⁴ to constantly edit⁵, and an endless supply of people to compare ourselves with⁴. We may risk a vicious cycle⁸ of seeking constant online approval, causing unhealthy online dependency or a misconception that online identity equals real life⁴.

The Bible says our identity is found in God because we're created in His image (Gen. 1:27). Before we were born, He knew us (Jer. 1:5) and had plans written for us (Ps. 139:16). Jesus said we find our true life if we give ours to him (Luke 9:23-25), making us children of God (John 1:12) with a new life (2 Cor. 5:17) and relationship with Him (1 Cor. 6:17) through identity in Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28) and citizenship in our home, heaven (Phil. 3:20).

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SUICIDE

Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one's own death. It's the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-24¹⁷⁸. Rates of ages 10-19 increased 56% between 2007-2016¹³. 1 in 6 high schoolers seriously considered in the past year; over 1 in 12 attempted⁹. 4 of 5 teens who attempted gave clear warning signs¹⁷⁸. Teens on electronics 5 hours a day are 71% more likely to have suicide risk factors than 1 hour a day¹². Reasons for suicide include anxiety, depression, abuse, bullying, stress, rejection, failure, relationship problems with family/friends, etc.

The Bible says suicide is sin (Ex. 20:13). Many Bible characters wanted to die (Elijah, Moses, Job, Jonah). It's ok to have a battle in your mind for doing what's right/wrong (Rom. 7:15-25), but help comes from God, who watches over our life (Ps. 121). For those struggling, Jesus offers forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9) and a new life (Rom. 6:23) of love, joy and peace (Gal. 5:22) for everyone (2 Tim. 1:4) to live their destiny (Ps. 139:16) as children of God (John 1:12), sealed forever (Rom. 8:38-39) with promised life by God's Spirit inside of us (Eph. 1:13).

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SELF-HARM

157,000 ages 10-24 are treated in the ER for self-inflicted injuries every year⁹. Those who self-harm range from 13-24%¹⁵. 90% begin during their teen or pre-adolescent years¹⁶, 50% starting around age 14 and carry on into their 20's¹⁶. Types include cutting, banging, burning, piercing and more¹⁸. Causes come from overwhelming/numb emotion, stress, uncontrollable situations, etc.¹⁸ Reasons include coping, punishment, having control, etc.¹⁸ Symptoms include feeling helpless, hopeless, worthless and/or shameful, having relationship problems, emotional instability, etc.¹⁸

The Bible has stories of people who cut themselves regarding false-god-worship (1 Kings 18:28), mourning for dead (Deut. 14:1) or demons (Mark 5:2-5), but God wants us to honor our body (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and offer it to Him (Rom. 12:1). We're specifically made (Ps. 139:11-16) in His image (Gen. 1:27) to follow the plan He made for us (Eph. 2:10). For those struggling, Jesus can relate to pain (Heb. 4:14-16), was physically harmed for the forgiveness of our sins (1 Pet. 2:24) and offers rest (Matt. 11:28-30) and strength (Phil. 4:13) to live in victory (1 Cor. 10:13) and a life of peace by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:6).

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ANXIETY

Google defines anxiety as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease. It is the leading mental health issue among American youths²¹. 32% of teens will meet criteria for an anxiety disorder²¹, but 80% of them won't get treatment¹⁹. The typical age for anxiety to seriously develop is 13²³. Types include separation, phobia, social, panic, or general anxiety. Causes include shy personalities, physical differences, social media, traumatic experiences, abuse, influence of family with anxiety and more. It can lead to depression, suicide, self-harm, drugs and more. It can negatively affect work, relationships, sleep, and more.

The Bible says we can be free of anxiety if we give it to God (1 Pet. 5:7), ask for His help (Phil. 4:6) and trust Him, especially when things don't make sense (Prov. 3:5-6). We need to train our minds to think of good things (Phil. 4:8) and our thoughts to obey what Jesus says (2 Cor. 10:5). God promises His Spirit will help us through the difficulty (Rom. 8:26-28) one day at a time (Matt. 6:34). For those who struggle with anxiety, Jesus promises us peace (John 14:27) and rest (Matt. 11:28-30) so we're able to live the life he has prepared for us (1 Cor. 2:9).

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DEPRESSION

Depression is a medical illness that negatively affects the way you feel, think and act²⁹. 20% of teens experience it, but only 30% are treated²⁸. It can come from screen & social media time, abuse, academic pressure, trauma, relationships, low self-esteem, etc. and can lead to bad diet, self-harm, suicide, isolation, bad school grades, substance abuse and more.

The Bible has characters who showed signs of depression (ex: Moses, David, Job). We live in a broken world (Rom. 1:18-32) and we're allowed to have these feelings and even question God (Ps. 13:1-2). But we should cry out to God (Ps. 72:12-14) and submit our struggles to Him for His comfort (Ps. 9:9) and strength (Isa. 40:31), even in the darkest times (Ps. 23:1-4). For those struggling with depression, Jesus promises rest (Matt. 11:28-30) and peace (John 14:27). As a Christian, we are able to give thanks at all times (1 Thess. 5:18) and receive encouragement from our Christian family (1 Thess. 5:11) every day (Heb. 3:13).

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SELF-IMAGE & EATING DISORDERS

80% of women and 34% of men don't like how they look³⁴. At age 13, 53% of girls are unhappy with their bodies, growing to 78% by age 17³⁴. 98% of girls feel pressured to look a certain way³⁵. Self-image can lead to depression, anxiety and eating disorders³⁴, such as Anorexia/Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating. 95% of people with eating disorders are ages 12-25³⁷. 50% of girls and 30% boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking, vomiting and laxatives³⁴. Anorexia is the deadliest of all mental illnesses³⁸.

The Bible says God created us wonderfully (Ps. 139:13-14) and knows the number of hairs on our head (Luke 12:7). True beauty is in our hearts (1 Sam. 16:7) if we honor God (Prov. 31:30) with our eating (1 Cor. 10:31) and bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). For those struggling, Jesus said life is more than food and the body more than clothes (Luke 12:22-23) and offers new life (2 Cor. 5:17) in peace (Phil. 4:6-7), strength (Phil 4:13) and freedom (Gal 5:1), not shame (Ps. 34:4-5), as we're renewed daily (2 Cor. 4:16) until perfection in Heaven (1 Cor. 15:53).

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ABUSE

Abuse is defined by Google as treating a person with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly. It's said one in three young people will be in an abusive or unhealthy relationship⁴². Types of abuse include verbal, physical, sexual, dating, emotional, psychological and/or digital. 25% of high school girls have been abused physically or sexually⁴². One in five teens admits to being emotionally abused in the past year⁴⁵. Abuse can lead to things like alcoholism, eating disorders, promiscuity, thoughts of suicide, and violent behavior⁴³. Most abuse involves friends, family members and/or relationship partners.

The Bible says in all these relationships people should act in love, peacefulness, consideration and respect. God promises His justice to those who don't live accordingly (Ps. 140:12), and restoration and healing to the abused (Zeph. 1:9). For anyone who has been through or is going through any abuse: God listens to the cries of the afflicted (Ps. 10:17), is a refuge for the oppressed (Ps. 9:9) and promises rest through Jesus to those who are weary and burdened (Matt. 11:28).

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CELL PHONES

More people own a cell phone than a toothbrush⁵¹. On average per day, we have them 16 hours, check them 150 times⁵³, touch them 2,617 times and spend 5 hours browsing⁵⁴. 68% of us have them next to us while we sleep⁵³. 50% of young people admit cell phone addiction⁵⁴. Negative effects of cell phone use include anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression, distraction from work and relationships, lack of sleep, car crashes and more.

The Bible mentions a story where people's hearts were in the wrong place because of idols they put "before their faces." God commanded them to turn away and focus back on Him (Ezek. 14:3-6). We're told to be careful with what our eyes see (Ps .101:3 & Matt. 6:22), and never let anything distract us from our relationship with God (Mark 9:43-47), especially things made by humans (Ps. 115:4). For those who may struggle with their cell phone use, the Bible encourages face to face relationship (2 John 12) and tells us to live wisely, making the most of our time (Eph. 5:15-16). We're not to copy what everyone else does (Rom. 12:2) but glorify God in all we do (1 Cor. 10:31) and put Him first (Deut. 6:5).

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SOCIAL MEDIA

On average, 76% of teens use social media⁵² on 5 different accounts for 116 minutes a day⁵⁶. Almost 50% of the world population uses it⁵⁶. Platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and more. It's often described as more addictive than cigarettes & alcohol⁴⁰. 81% of teens feel social media has a positive effect on their lives⁵⁶. With great benefits of connection for businesses and people, many dangers of our use of it include loneliness⁵⁸, anxiety, depression, predatorial activity, unrealistic expectations, poor sleep⁴⁰, stress, isolation⁴¹, jealousy⁶⁰ and decline in mental⁴⁰ & physical⁶¹ health, self-esteem⁴¹, happiness⁶⁰ and face-to-face interaction⁶¹.

The Bible says what we feed our eyes feeds our souls (Matt. 6:22-23) and it supports face-to-face connection (2 John 12, Heb. 10:25). We'll all be judged by our words (Matt. 12:36-37), so we should speak slowly (James 1:19), only to build others up (1 Thess. 5:11). A Christian should live their life to please God and not people (Matt. 6:1). Jesus told us to live for heavenly things, not earthly (Matt. 6:19-21). Through Him, we can live holy lives (1 Pet. 1:15) to build others up with peace (Rom. 14:19).

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LGBTQ

LGBTQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. These terms (and others) describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. 7% of the US are LGBTQ youth⁶³. One third have been verbally harassed⁶⁷ or cyberbullied, and some physically or sexually assaulted⁷⁰, all from peers, the internet, religious leaders, family and/or others. Acceptance is rare^{67,68}. Over 70% reported feeling worthless/hopeless/depressed, and over 90% reported trouble sleeping⁶⁹. One in three attempt suicide at least once a year⁷⁰.

The Bible says God designed our identity being made in His image (Gen. 1:27), and romantic relationships for marriage (Heb.13:4) of man and woman (Gen. 2:24-25). Anything outside of that is sin (1 Cor. 6:9-10, 18). Sin is darkness (Eph. 5:1-10) but Jesus is the light (John 8:12) and said the greatest commandment is we love God (Matt. 22:35-40). A Christian should be peaceable, considerate and respectful (1 Pet. 3:15, Titus 3:2), known for loving others (John 13:35), finding identity in Jesus (Gal. 3:28) and freedom (Gal. 5:1) to live out the specific purpose he has for us (Eph. 2:10) as children of God (1 John 3:1).

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PORNOGRAPHY

11 is the average age a child is first exposed⁷⁶. 93% of boys and 62% of girls have watched before age 18, 22% being under 10⁷⁵. A third ages 11-14 and half ages 15-17 watch on a mobile device⁷⁴. 64% ages 13-24 watch weekly⁷⁷. 1 in 5 mobile searches are for it⁷⁴. Porn's industry makes more money annually than the NFL+NBA+MLB⁷⁶. Sites get more traffic monthly than Netflix+Amazon+Twitter⁷⁷.

Masturbation⁸² and sexting⁷⁴ are also related to porn and highly common. Brains react to porn the same as addicts do with alcohol/drugs⁷³. It leads to unrealistic expectations of sex, depression, loneliness, sex-violence, etc. and hinders brain growth and sexual development⁷⁸. Most public schools teach sex/health education from 6th-12th grade^{85,86,87}.

The Bible says God designed sex for marriage between man and woman (Gen. 2:24-25), and it should be honored (Heb. 13:4). Any sexual act outside of that is sin (1 Cor. 6:9-11), including thoughts (Matt. 5:27-30). For those struggling, God offers forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and freedom (Rom. 6:6-7) as He renews our minds (Rom. 12:2) to holy thinking (Phil. 4:8) and a pure life (Ps. 119:9-11).

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BULLYING

Bullying is defined by Google as seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable. One third of American teens are bullied⁷². Young people who are perceived as different from their peers are often at risk for being bullied⁵⁰. Persistent bullying can lead to or worsen feelings of isolation, rejection, despair or depression and anxiety, which can contribute to suicidal behavior⁹⁰ or school shootings⁹³. Types of bullying may include cyber, electronic, physical, sexual, verbal, social, psychological or emotional.

The Bible says this behavior is wrong (Prov. 6:16-19), but we're to love our enemies and pray for bullies (Luke 6:27-28), live at peace with people as much as possible (Rom. 12:18), overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21) and trust God to take care of bullies (2 Thess. 1:6). For those who've been or are being bullied, God defends the weak and oppressed (Psalm 82:3-4) and has a specific purpose for everyone (Eph. 2:10). The Bible says if God is for you, who can be against you (Rom. 8:31)? We are more than conquerors with Jesus (Rom. 8:37), and have a glorious, pain-free future ahead of us that's worth it all (Rom. 8:18, Rev. 21:4).

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LONELINESS

Loneliness is felt in a bedroom alone or a large crowd of people. There's a difference between being alone and being lonely. 48% of people ages 18-22 reported loneliness⁹⁷. 10% ages 16-24 "always or often" are⁹⁸. It may come from anxiety, lack of friends/communication/understanding, etc. many times with family or friends. It compares to the dangers of smoking and obesity, and can negatively affect stress, inflammation, the heart, dementia, sleep and more⁵⁸. The more time teens spend on smartphones¹⁰ and social media⁹⁹, and less in-person, the more common loneliness is. There's as many ways to connect as to be excluded⁵⁹. Someone may have 500 online friends but no one there in a time of need⁵⁸.

The Bible's characters felt lonely (Jesus, David, Jeremiah), but God doesn't want us alone (Gen. 2:18). When friends (Prov. 18:24) or family (Ps. 27:10) fail us, God's with us (Isa. 41:10). For those lonely, God see's you (Ps. 138:6), offering comfort in darkness (Ps. 23:4) and a part to play (Eph. 4:16), coming near to you as you draw near to Him (James 4:8). Jesus promises to be with you to the end (Matt. 28:20) with inseparable love (Rom. 8:38-39).

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RACISM

82% of American teens ages 13-17 believe racial discrimination is a problem for their generation, almost double the percentage in 1966¹⁰⁰. This generation is one of the most racially diverse ever¹⁰⁰, yet racism is still a large problem. People of color face barriers regarding housing, healthcare, employment, and education¹⁰². Racism has caused violence at schools, places of worship, in the justice system, etc.¹⁰³ and brings stress on its victims which diminishes health and can cause anxiety, depression, ADHD, and more¹⁰⁴.

The Bible says humans are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). He shows no favoritism but looks at a person's heart (1 Sam. 16:7), wanting all to believe in Him (Acts 10:34-35). Jesus has made all races equal (Eph. 2:14) to receive forgiveness and identity in Him (Gal. 3:28). Those who discriminate become judges with evil thoughts (James 2:4) but God will judge such people (Col. 3:25). Christians should show no favoritism (James 2:1) but unite as a family of believers (1 Cor. 12:13) to reach all people with the message of Jesus (Matt. 28:19) until all nations, tribes and languages are together in Heaven with Him forever (Rev. 7:9-10).

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STRESS

Stress is defined by Google as a state of mental/emotional strain from adverse or demanding circumstances. Due to the stress students feel, 40% report feeling irritable/angry¹⁰⁸, 36% anxious, 36% fatigued, 31% overwhelmed, 30% depressed, 23% skip meals¹⁰⁶, 26% overeat/eat unhealthily, 35% lay awake at night¹⁰⁸ and 32% get headaches¹¹⁰. 45% are stressed "all the time"¹⁰⁷ and 31% had their stress level increase in the past year¹⁰⁶. Common causes are school, life decisions, financial concerns, relationships and more¹⁰⁸. 44% cope with online resources, 22% by talking to friends and 10% with drugs/drinking¹⁰⁷. 42% aren't sure if they do enough to manage stress and 13% never try¹⁰⁶.

The Bible says we should talk to God about our stress to receive His peace (Phil. 4:6-7). There's a difference between stress and worry (Mark 4:19) or anxiety (Prov. 12:25). Jesus experienced stress (Luke 22:44) and warned us of trouble in life (John 16:33) but offers comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and strength in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10). For those struggling, God offers security (Ps. 61:3) and works all things for the good of those who love and follow Him (Rom. 8:28).

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ALCOHOL

The average age teens first try alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls¹¹⁶. People aged 12–20 drink 11% of all alcohol consumed¹¹². 90% of alcohol consumed by teens involves binge drinking¹¹². One in five teens live with an alcoholic relative¹¹⁷. Every 4 minutes a youth is arrested for an alcohol-related crime¹¹⁸. Alcohol can cause abuse, failing in school, jail, car crashes, suicide, manslaughter, and more.

The Bible is clear about alcohol: drinking alcohol is not a sin, but being drunk is, and our decisions involving alcohol can be sinful. Firstly, we have to obey the law regarding alcohol (Rom. 13:1). Even when of legal age, we must be wise with alcohol (Prov. 20:1), respectful of those around us regarding it (2 Cor. 6:3), and careful where and with whom we spend our time (1 Cor. 15:33). The Bible tells us to be filled with God's Spirit instead of being drunk (Eph. 5:18) and to honor God in everything (1 Cor. 10:31) because our bodies belong to Him (1 Cor. 6:19-20). For those who struggle, God gives us the strength to say no when and where we should (Titus 2:11-12) and renews our minds to know what His will for our life is (Rom. 12:2).

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GOSSIP

Gossip is defined by Google as casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true. It mostly happens to the socially vulnerable because of their race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, or other reasons. It can lead to abuse and/or bullying and cause depression, self-harm, decline in self-confidence, suicide, eating disorders, anxiety and more¹²¹. It is easily and negatively enhanced now more than ever through texting, social media and/or other online forms. According to psychologist Marion Underwood (PhD), gossip negatively affects both the giver and the receiver¹¹⁹.

The Bible says gossip is a sin (Rom. 1:29-32) that hurts people deeply (Prov. 18:6-8) and separates close friends (Prov. 16:28). The tongue is powerful (Prov. 18:21) and small but able to do big damage (James 3:5-8). We shouldn't slander (Lev. 19:16) or lie about others (Ex. 23:1, Ps. 34:13) but only talk to build others up (Eph. 4:29). True Christians should be very careful with their words (James 1:26) and only speak what's pleasing to God (Ps. 19:14).

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ANGER

Anger is defined by Google as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility. Everyone deals with it, but 1 in 12 teens has an anger disorder¹²⁴. 2 of 3 teens reported violent lifetime anger attacks¹²⁶, and the same number have experienced an anger attack toward others¹²⁵. The mean age for IED (an anger disorder) is 12 years old¹²⁶. So how do we deal with anger?

The Bible is clear: anger is not a sin but can quickly lead us to sin. God/Jesus gets angry (2 Kings 17:18, Mark 3:5), and we can be angry about the right things, but can't sin from that anger (Eph. 4:26). We're told to be slow to anger (James 1:19), patient and gentle (Prov. 16:32, 15:1), not to take revenge (Rom. 12:17-21) to treat others as we'd want to be treated (Luke 6:31), to check ourselves (James 4:1) and to not be friends with people who are always angry (Prov. 22:24-25). For those struggling with anger, Jesus gives supernatural peace (John 14:27, Phil. 4:7) so we can be led not by emotions, but by God's Spirit and peace (Gal. 5:16, Col. 3:15).

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DRUGS

Every day 15,000 teens use drugs for the first time¹¹⁸, and 50% misuse them at least once¹³¹. These include benzos, bath salts, meth, over the counters, prescriptions, marijuana, etc. All negatively affect IQ, memory, mental illness', cancer, lungs, the immune system, the heart, etc. Many teens use marijuana, where THC is nearly 5 times stronger than it was 20 years ago¹¹³, and E-cigarette use increased 900% in 2015¹³⁷, with 17%-37% of teens between grades 8-12 using, usually by vaping¹³², which includes harmful ingredients like aerosol, formaldehyde, acrolein, led, diacetyl, etc. One JUUL pod's nicotine equals a pack of cigarettes¹⁴⁰.

The Bible doesn't explicitly mention drugs, but tells us to be sober (1 Peter 1:13, 4:7, 5:8), to primarily allow God to influence our mind (Rom. 12:2), to obey the law (Titus 3:1) and be wise choosing friends (1 Cor. 15:33). We can't live for both God and drugs (Matt 6:24). Just because something is "ok" doesn't mean it's "good" (1 Cor. 6:12). For those struggling with drugs, God helps us have self-control (2 Tim. 1:7) and the ability to say no (Titus 2:11-12), so we can glorify Him in everything we do (1 Cor. 10:31) and live in freedom with Jesus (Gal. 5:1).

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DEATH

Statistics show 10 out of 10 people die (you're welcome... for blowing your mind). Death is what all humans will face, but rarely talk about. The death rate for people ages 10-19 has shot up 12% between 2013 and 2016, and suicide up 56% from 2007-2016¹³. The top three causes of death among people ages 15-24 are accidents, suicide and homicide¹⁴³. Why do people die? How do we deal with it? What happens after?

The Bible says because we all sin, we all die (Rom. 5:12). God conquered death through Jesus dying (Heb. 2:14-15) as a perfect human (2 Cor. 5:21) and raising to life (1 Cor. 15:4). Now Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life after death (John 11:25) if we believe in Him (John 3:16) and live for Him (Matt. 16:24-25). We live and die once in this life (Heb. 9:27), with no reincarnation (Ps. 78:39), but a move to the next life either in eternal punishment and suffering (Hell) or life and blessing (Heaven) (Matt. 25:46), determined by our belief if the God of the Bible really is God and Savior through Jesus. Anyone who believes gets forgiveness of sins (Rom. 10:9) and eternal life in heaven (Rev. 21:4).

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FAILURE

Failure is defined by Google as a lack of success, or the action or state of not functioning. Many teens experience atychiphobia (the fear of failure) every day¹⁴⁷. Failure may bring natural feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness or worthlessness, but it's a necessary experience for creativity, learning, growth, strength and wisdom. In a world obsessed with teaching young people the correct way to do things, we're at risk focusing too much on 'not getting things wrong' rather than on really understanding or exploring ideas¹⁴⁸. So, how do we accept and deal with failure?

The Bible says that, in front of God, everyone's a failure because everyone sins (Rom. 3:23, James 3:2). We can call out (Phil. 4:6) and confess our failure to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and a new life (2 Cor. 5:17) based not on our works, but God's love (Eph. 2:8-10). Jesus warned us of trouble in this world, but He has overcome it (John 16:33). We can rejoice in failure (James 1:2-4) because God can use it for our good (Rom. 8:28). He can be our strength (Phil. 4:13) to get back up (Prov. 24:16) and help us let go of the past and move forward in Him (Phil. 3:13-14).

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PAIN & SUFFERING

Many have been puzzled by the suffering we see in our world¹⁵⁴. Pain affects more people in the U.S. than diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined¹⁶². They encompass all negatives of our world and life, whether emotional, physical, psychological, biological, local, global, etc. leaving us looking for answers.

The Bible says in the beginning God created everything (Gen. 1:1) in perfection, until humans disobeyed Him and received the curse of sin (Gen. 3:6-19), bringing pain, suffering and death (which God doesn't like, Ezek. 18:32) to humans and the world (Rom. 8:21-25). Bible characters dealt with it (David, Job, Paul) and sometimes doubted God (Ps. 77:6-13, Job 30:20). Even Jesus, the only perfect person (2 Cor. 5:21), was murdered on a cross (Acts 5:30). Through His death (John 3:16) He can help us (Heb. 2:18) joyfully persevere (Jam. 1:2-4) as He works everything for our good (Rom. 8:28). God gives us the ability to trust Him with things we can't answer (Deut. 29:29) or don't understand (Prov. 3:5), and people to walk through life with (Gal. 6:2) as we look towards a future (Rom. 8:18) where He takes away the curse (Rev. 22:3) and all pain and suffering (Rev. 21:4).

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FORGIVENESS

Google says to forgive is to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake.

Forgiveness can be one of the most difficult things to give. Unforgiveness can lead to resentment, hostility, anger, hatred, depression and can negatively affect your mental and physical health¹⁶⁶. Giving forgiveness can lead to greater health, self-esteem and happier relationships¹⁶⁶. Forgiveness isn't necessarily to relieve responsible ones from blame, but to free the injured person from carrying ongoing hurt/anger¹⁶⁴. Sometimes it seems impossible to forgive others or ourselves. How are we supposed to receive and give forgiveness?

The Bible says we all need forgiveness because we've sinned (Rom. 3:23), and all sin is ultimately against God (Ps. 51:4). If we confess our sins to God, He'll forgive us (1 John 1:9) through Jesus (Eph. 1:7). Then we're able to forgive both ourselves (Phil. 3:13) and others (Col. 3:13) because God forgave us, paying for it in Jesus (1 Cor. 6:20). If we don't forgive, we won't receive God's forgiveness (Matt. 6:15), but doing so is a freedom we have (Gal. 5:1) as a new person in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

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ROMANCE & DATING

35% of teens have some experience with dating or romantic relationships. 18% are currently in one, 14% considering it serious, 5% not¹⁶⁸. 12% ages 13-14 and 36% ages 15-17 in a relationship have had sex¹⁶⁸. One in four teens dated someone they met online¹⁶⁹. Texting and talking are the two most common ways teens spend time with their partners, 72% texting daily and 39% talking daily. 85% expect to hear from their partner at least once a day, and 11% expect it hourly¹⁶⁹. Phones and social media lead to connecting, meeting and flirting¹⁷², but also break ups, jealousy¹⁷¹, abuse, unrealistic expectations¹⁷⁰, sexting (10% of teens¹⁷²) and more.

The Bible says romantic relationships are designed by God to lead to marriage of man and woman (Gen 2:24) centered on Jesus (Eph. 5:32-33), and sex for marriage (Heb. 13:4) as a good gift (Prov. 5:18-19). We should prioritize God (Deut. 6:5), not rushing romance (Songs. 2:7). Christians should seek relationships with Christians (2 Cor. 6:14-15), respecting parents (Eph. 6:1) and church leaders (Heb. 13:17). Until then, we are to guard our hearts (Prov. 4:23) and treat each other in purity as family (1 Tim. 5:1-2) with God's guidance (Prov. 3:6).

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FAMILY/HOME LIFE

55% of American teens ages 15-17 do not live in intact families¹⁷⁵. 24% of ages 12-17 are born with only their mother, 5% only with their father and 5% with neither¹⁷³. One in three children live in single parent homes¹⁷⁵.

Almost 40% of the US homeless are under 18, 57% of them spending at least one day a month without food¹⁷⁷. Family and home life is often filled with broken relationships and constant problems hard to deal with and understand.

The Bible says God's desire is for family to serve Him together (Josh. 24:15) with love and forgiveness (Eph. 4:32). Fathers aren't supposed to be harsh (Eph. 6:4), nor mothers (Prov. 14:1). Husbands and wives should love one another (Eph. 5:21-28). Children should be a blessing (Ps. 127:3) and obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). No one should bring ruin on their family (Prov. 11:29) but look out for them (1 Tim. 5:8). Our earthly family isn't our only family, though. Jesus calls us to love Him more than our earthly family (Luke 14:26-27) and God is to be our ultimate father (2 Cor. 6:18). As children of a loving God (1 John 3:1), we can now have a family of Christians (the church) who are to always love and support one another through this life (Acts 2:42-47).

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about any of these topics or any other topics about God or life, please reach out to us and ask. If you need to talk, or need prayer for anything, we're here to help get you the answers, love and support that God wants for you.

Text or email us:
info@zealccf.com

Direct message us on Instagram or Facebook:
[@zealccf](#)

For more information or how to contact us:
www.zealccf.com

Other websites for biblical questions:
<https://www.gotquestions.org>
<https://412teens.org>

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