



GLOBAL  
YOUTH CULTURE



# GUIDE FOR TALKING TO TEENS

AFRICA REPORT



# Guide for Talking to Teens

## Introduction

After reading the *Global Youth Culture: Africa Report*, you're probably wondering what in the world to do with all of that information! We've made it easy for you to...

- See how teen's attitudes and behaviors compare to teens around the world.
- Use this guide to engage with your teen on issues they are encountering in their world.
- Apply timeless biblical truths to the timely topics teens are currently trying to navigate.

The Global Youth Culture (GYC) research study serves as a window into what teens are experiencing globally. Life is moving fast and countries in Africa have been experiencing a dramatic cultural shift among young people in the last few years as urbanization and digital connectivity continue to rise. Parents are busier and typically spend less time with their children. The pace of life has evolved quickly, yet the Church has been slow to respond and grow with the times. Those tasked with guiding teens safely into young adulthood find themselves struggling to define and comprehend these emerging issues.

As cultures shift, African teens are faced with unprecedented challenges including more confusion about their identity and culture particularly in the area of their sexuality, and they are asking many questions related to marriage and morality. Sadly, teens are then looking to social media platforms for these answers which can create a never-ending cycle of confusion. Although teenagers in Africa are open to going to church, they are not necessarily trusting in religious leaders' input and are more trusting of their peers' and friends' input. At the same time, they still value the family structure, as well as the input and influence of their family.

We pray this guide will ignite conversations within families about some of the areas teenagers are currently struggling with that have been highlighted within the *GYC Africa Report*. Ultimately, our desire is for this parent guide to help families guide teens to confidently walk in their purpose, as they navigate current struggles both offline and on digital platforms. As it was once said, "If we don't teach our children to follow Christ, the world will teach them not to."

**Each section in this guide explores major topics teens face along with questions for you and teens to dive in together. Let's get started!**

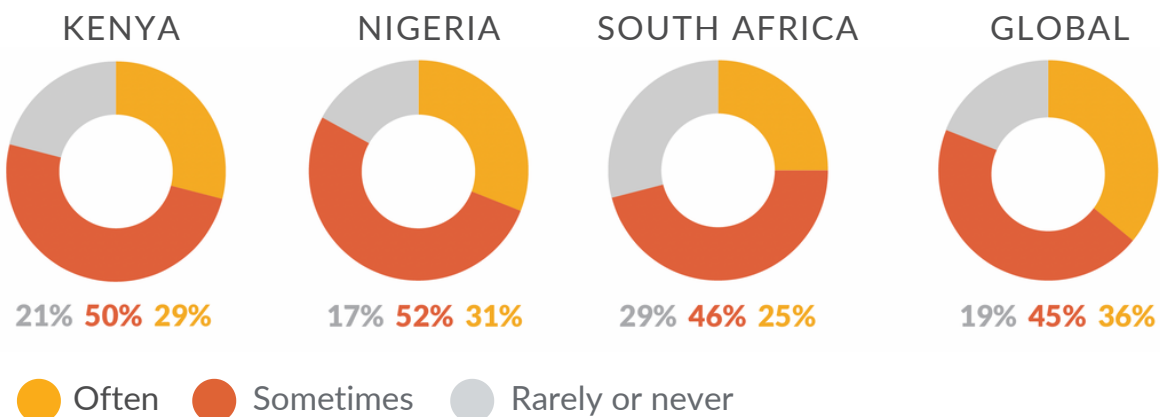
# Influences and Guiding Voices

We gathered practical insight into teens' closeness to their parents by asking about the frequency of important conversations. Almost 8 in 10 teens in Africa (78%) say they talk to their parents about issues that really matter to them sometimes or often, which aligns with the global average. However, South African teens are less likely to be having these conversations frequently.

Teens tell us they turn to family more often than any other source for guidance on some of life's most important topics such as what is right and wrong. Teens in South Africa are more likely than teens around the world to say they lean on family for guidance on morality. Religious leaders or texts are a distant second.

## PARENT CONVERSATIONS

*I talk to my parents/guardians about issues that really matter to me*



*Where I go most often for information or guidance on...*

RIGHT AND  
WRONG

- 1 FAMILY 48%
- 2 RELIGIOUS LEADERS 16%
- 3 FRIENDS/PEERS 12%

GENDER &  
SEXUALITY

- 1 SOCIAL MEDIA 28%
- 2 FRIENDS/PEERS 22%
- 3 FAMILY 21%

MEANING  
OF LIFE

- 1 FAMILY 38%
- 2 SOCIAL MEDIA 20%
- 3 FRIENDS/PEERS 13%



# Discussion Questions

**Family is the number one place teens turn to for questions about right and wrong or the meaning of life.**

- How has the world's view of family changed over the years? How has your view changed?
- When you have big questions, who is the first person you think to ask?

**The last place teens—even Christians—seek guidance is from church or the Bible. This is the same globally.**

- What keeps you from seeking answers in the Bible?
- What do you think, or how do you feel about the institution of the Church and Church leaders today?
- Why do you think this is happening not just in Africa, but all over the world?

*Consider incorporating a short family devotion, or Bible reading time during the week. It could be as simple as reading a few verses after dinner and asking each family member what stood out to them.*

**Friends and the internet are the first places teens go to for information or guidance about gender, sexuality, and sexual issues.**

- How do you know if information is credible?
- When was the last time you thought deeply about something? What was it, and where did you land?
- Have you ever disagreed with someone else's viewpoint? What's your thought process when that happens?

Make a list of every topic you and your teen can think of that impacts their daily life—family, school, dating, temptations, friends, addiction, lying, integrity...just keep growing that list until you can't think of another thing! Now pray for each one, and make a note of a trusted place or person they can go for help or guidance in each. Some may have multiple places, like "God's Word, Pastor Terry, and Coach." Regularly go through the list and ask them if they've had questions and if they've gone to the best person/place to find answers.



What would be most likely to change your mind about a religious belief?

- 1 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES SUCH AS AN ANSWER TO PRAYER **48%**
- 2 MY OWN INVESTIGATION ONLINE OR IN BOOKS **23%**
- 3 TEACHINGS FROM RELIGIOUS LEADERS **16%**
- 4 A CONVERSATION WITH MY PARENTS **10%**
- 5 A CONVERSATION WITH FRIENDS **4%**

- What are some things about your faith you've ever doubted, questioned, or wondered?
- Do you know anyone who follows a different religion than their parents or grandparents?

## Looking to the Future

**Nearly half of teens in Africa say their top career priority is enjoying what they do for work.** Helping others was also a popular answer with fewer teens saying that how much a job pays would be their primary concern. Girls were more likely than boys to say that enjoying their work would be a priority.

**Teens in Africa are some of the most ambitious of their global generation with a strong desire to be entrepreneurs.** Boys were slightly more entrepreneurial than females, but still 9 in 10 girls said they would like to start a business or own a company in the future.

What a beautiful opportunity to speak destiny over your child! Affirm that they were created in God's image and with a divine purpose. If your teen is still struggling to see why they've been put on this earth, begin naming their positive traits out loud and as often as possible, "God gave you a huge amount of creativity!" You can write them a note or text it, too: "I know you hear others using foul language. I'm thankful that you are brave enough to be different and choose to use words that honor God."



# Biblical Truth:

## God is all that we need, now and forever.

God is powerful, full of glory, and helps us in times of need. When you have doubts, questions about life, or need comfort, talk to God. Remember, He cares for you and has a special plan for your life that only you can fulfill. His Spirit will guide you into God's purpose for your life as you grow in trust and faith.

- *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." Psalm 32:8 (NIV)*
- *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV)*

## Notes

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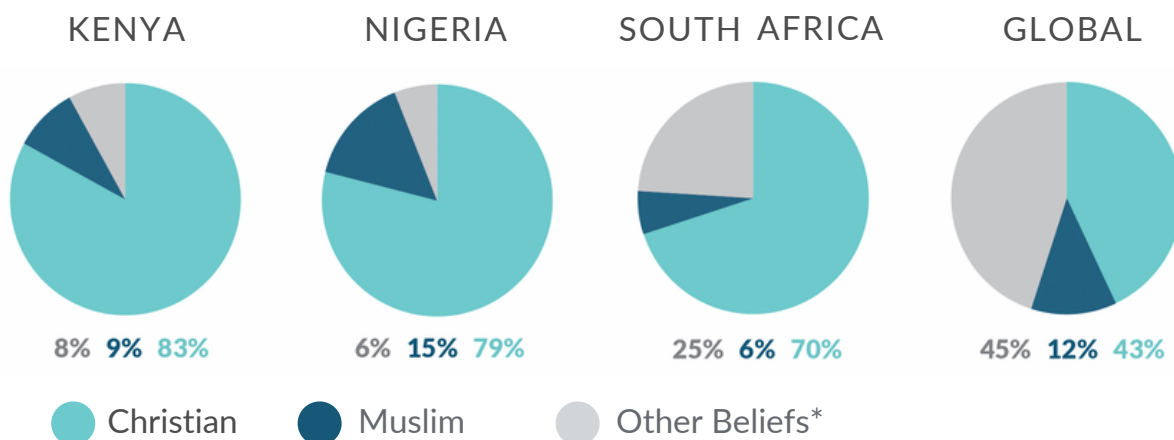
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# Religious Attitudes and Behaviors

78% of the African teens surveyed identified as Christian—the highest of any region globally. Most committed their lives to Christ at an average age of 13. However, **only 28% could be considered Committed Christians based on our definition shown below.**

## RELIGIOUS IDENTITY



\*Includes respondents who identified as “other religion” or “no religion”

## 6 TRAITS OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS

- Believe God exists and they can have a personal relationship with Him
- Pray at least weekly
- Read Scripture on their own at least weekly



- Believe Jesus is the Son of God
- Believe that forgiveness of sins is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ
- Believe the Bible is the Word of God



## Discussion Questions

- Who do you know that follows another religion?
- Which one do they practice? How do you know?
- How can you start a conversation with someone who has different religious beliefs than you?
- What difficulties have you experienced sharing your faith or beliefs with someone from a different religion?
- How do other people know what you believe?
- Do you ever discuss religion or spirituality with others your age?
- How can you share about your faith this week?
- Most teens who do not attend church say they would be open to coming if someone invited them. Can you think of any friends you could invite to church this week?

Take this opportunity to pray with your teen. They need to know they aren't battling the magnetic pull of culture all on their own. David's words to his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:20 provide an excellent template we can pray and speak over their lives:

- *"David also said to Solomon his son, 'Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished'"* 1 Chronicles 28:20 (NIV).

**Christian teens in Africa reported praying and attending church regularly. However, fewer than half are reading their Bibles at least weekly.** It's important for teens to create the space and set aside time for daily Scripture engagement.



**Fewer than half of Christian teens in Africa (45%) read their Bible at least weekly**

Invite your teen to try a new reading plan. It can kick start their devotional time or help them dive deeper into the Word. Here are a few recommendations:

- LUMO The Miracles of Jesus from The Gospel Of Mark
- The Bible Project



# Biblical Truth:

## The Bible is the living Word of God.

The Bible is the living Word of God. It's active, powerful, and guides us into knowing Truth. God can speak to you through the Bible in new, fresh ways every time you read it.

- *“Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.”*  
Deuteronomy 5:33 (NIV)
- *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

## Notes

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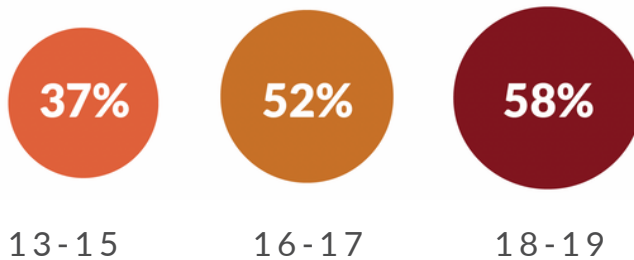
# Personal Experiences and Struggles



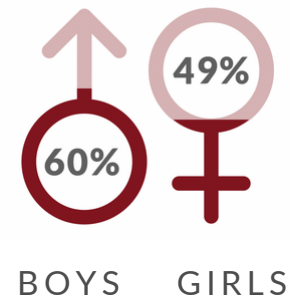
## Pornography

Teens in Africa are among some of the most likely in the world to say they have recently seen pornography. South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria all rank in the top 6 countries globally to report this.

PORNOGRAPHY  
USAGE BY AGE



PORNOGRAPHY  
USAGE BY GENDER



The digital age brings more accessibility to pornography. Since nearly half of teens are struggling with this, it can't be a topic that's swept under the rug. Let's invite teens to bring their struggles out into the open so they can begin to make better choices.

## Discussion Questions

- Have you accidentally seen photos, videos, or other content you wish you hadn't seen?
- Where do they pop up on your devices?
- Do you, or anyone you know, ever search for photos, videos, or other content you know you shouldn't?
- If you happened to see pornographic images or videos, how did you feel?
- What can I do to help guard your heart and mind against these images, thoughts, and temptations?
- Why do you think it is not good for us to view pornography?
- What do you think the effects of viewing pornographic images and videos have on your mind and heart?



## Sexual Activity

Rates of sexual activity for unmarried teens in Africa are some of the highest in our global study. **Nearly 1 in 5 teens under the age of 16 reported recent sexual activity.** Boys are more sexually active than girls and Christian teens were even seen to be slightly more sexually active than other teens. Committed Christians are not making vastly different choices in this area.

**Around half of Nigerian teens and almost 3 in 5 Kenyan teens say pre-marital sex is okay or say they are unsure.**



**45%** of unmarried teens have been **sexually active** in the past three months, with African countries being in the top 4 globally to report this.

## Discussion Questions

- Have you had sexual feelings?
- Do you know of others having sex?
- Have you done anything physically with someone else that crossed a line?
- Are there safeguards I can put in place to help you keep your heart and body sexually pure?
- Why do you think it is not good to engage in sex before marriage?
- What do you think are some effects on your mind and heart if you choose to have sex before marriage?





## Same-Sex Attraction

**Nearly 1 in 5 teens in Africa (18%) say they have recently experienced same-sex attraction.**

Same-sex attraction appears to cluster with other experiences. Many teens who have recently experienced same-sex attraction also report experiencing gender identity confusion, suicidal thoughts, and depression.

Those who report experiencing same-sex attraction are much more likely to go to social media or the Internet for counsel (38%) rather than in-person relationships with friends (23%) or family (18%). Currently, teens don't often turn to religious leaders and texts for guidance about this topic.

### GENDER & SEXUALITY

*Where do you go most often for information or guidance about gender, sexuality, or other sexual issues?*

- |                            |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 SOCIAL MEDIA <b>28%</b>  | 4 TEACHERS/COUNSELORS <b>16%</b>    |
| 2 FRIENDS/PEERS <b>22%</b> | 5 RELIGIOUS LEADERS/TEXTS <b>7%</b> |
| 3 FAMILY <b>21%</b>        | 6 OFFLINE MEDIA <b>6%</b>           |

## Discussion Questions

- What do you believe about gender? What is confusing to you?
- Have you ever felt attracted toward someone your same gender?
- Do you know of others who have changed their gender identity or have same-sex attractions?

Work with your teen to understand what the Bible says about sexuality. Pray together regularly and talk often about ways to implement a “theology of sexuality” in their daily lives.

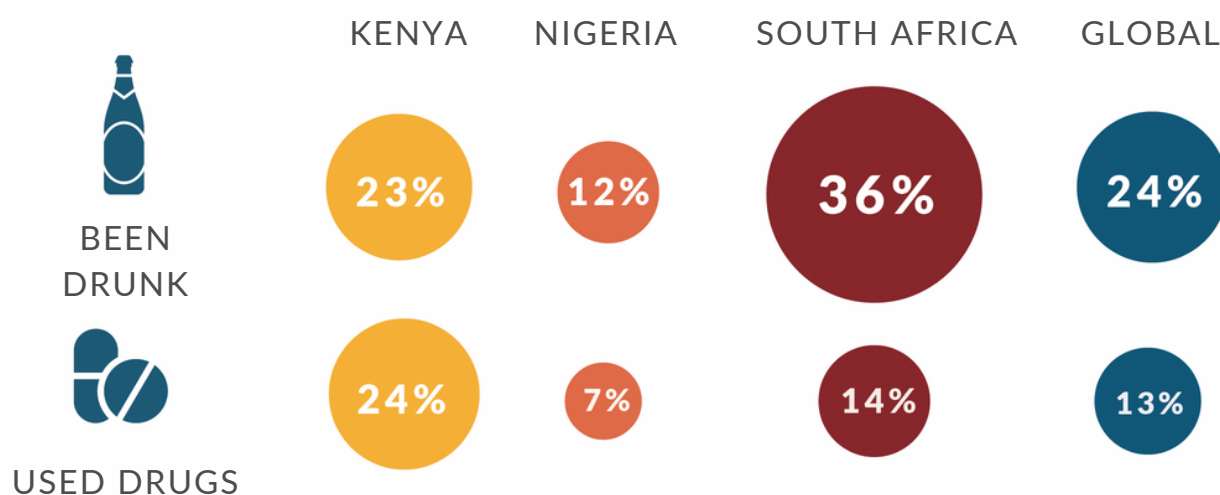


## Alcohol and Drugs

Alarmingly, a significant percentage of teens in Africa have used drugs or had enough alcohol to be drunk. As caring adults, we can have open conversations with them about their struggles and help guide them in a direction to make good and healthy choices for their bodies.

### ALCOHOL AND DRUG USAGE

*Within the past three months I have...*



### Discussion Questions

- What often leads young people to use alcohol or drugs?
- If someone came to you today and asked you how to stop using alcohol or drugs, what would you do? How do you think you can help them?
- What do you think are the effects of alcohol and drugs on a person's life? What do you think the consequences are?



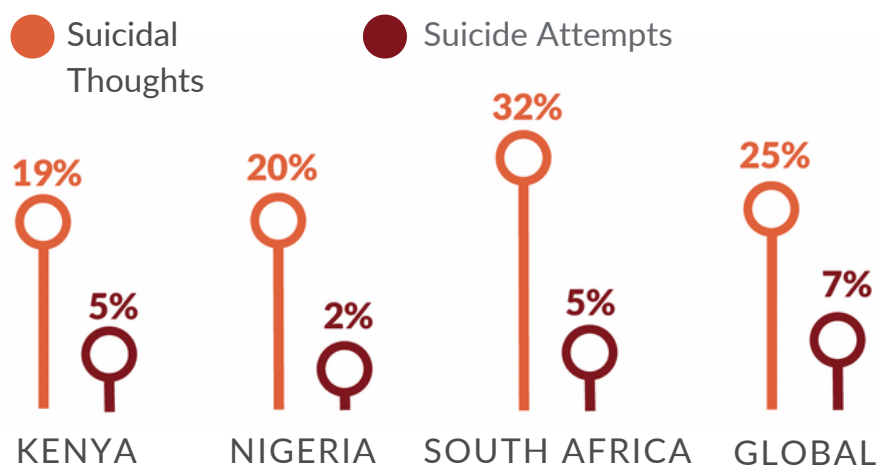
## Mental Health

70% of teens in Africa reported feelings of loneliness; 57% reported high anxiety; and 48% reported depression. South Africa and Nigeria specifically were among the top four countries with the loneliest teens in our global study.\*

*\*Data was collected prior to the pandemic in 2020.*

## SUICIDALITY

*Within the past three months I have experienced...*



**Of the 20 countries in our global study, South Africa ranked in the top 5 for suicidal thoughts. 1 in 3 South African teens have had suicidal thoughts recently.**

Teens who report gender identity confusion were three times as likely to have recently attempted suicide than the average. Other factors that were observed to accompany higher suicide risk included a poor family experience, recreational drug usage, being the victim of online bullying, depression and recently experiencing same-sex attraction.

This statistic is heartbreaking, but as a parent or mentor to the next generation, you can be a part of changing this trend by helping teens process the thoughts and emotions they are feeling. This may be a difficult topic to approach. Maybe you've seen something in the news lately about a related story, or watched a movie recently that addressed suicide. Try to find common ground with your teen first before you bring up the following questions.



## Discussion Questions

- What are some physical things that can cause suicidal thoughts? (This may lead to a great discussion about puberty and hormones, stress management, physical illness, addiction, loneliness, abuse or trauma, so make sure you're ready to tackle this topic.)
- Suicidal thoughts can also be a spiritual battle. No one invites physical or spiritual attacks, but they happen and when they do, do you know where to get the help you need? (Again, be ready to suggest some people, places, programs, and prayers to resource you and your teen.)
- Feeling hopeless is nothing to be ashamed of and is not something to keep to yourself or battle on your own. What is a good way for you to be able to let me know when you are facing these low times in your life?

Take this opportunity to speak life over your teen. They need to hear the truth that they have a hope and a future to help combat any voices telling them otherwise. If your teen indicates they are experiencing thoughts of self harm, professional counseling could also be a great next step.

## Biblical Truth:

**God is all that we need, now and forever.**

We are called to live in the light instead of the darkness. Even though it can be difficult, God is always with us and never forsakes us. When we struggle, His grace offers us restoration. If we seek Him, the Holy Spirit will empower us to withstand all spiritual attacks. God has also given us the gift of community and desires for us to live in unity with other believers—supporting one another and pointing one another to the Truth.

- *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."* Psalm 46:1 (NIV)
- *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."* Ephesians 6:12-13 (NIV)
- *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."* Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

# Digital Connectedness

Finance expert Dave Ramsey says, “You must gain control over your money or the lack of it will forever control you.” The same goes for technology. We must set safeguards in our lives to ensure it is working for us and not against us.



Teens we surveyed in Africa are spending an average of 7 hours and 50 minutes online daily, which is slightly more than the global average.

African teens surveyed lead the way globally in the amount of time spent chatting online, exceeding the global average by more than an hour.

Our global study found that **1 in 6 teens say they have recently been the victim of online bullying**, with some African countries reporting higher rates of this.

Teens have mixed emotions about social media with most saying it contributes to their life satisfaction but many also reporting it sometimes or often makes them feel sad, anxious, or depressed.

*\*Note that these results do not reflect all teens in Africa, especially in more rural areas not represented by our sample of internet-connected teens*

## Discussion Questions

- Does spending more time online make you feel better or worse about yourself?
- What does their average time online say about African teens?
- How does technology benefit us? How can it harm us?
- How can technology distract us from building healthy relationships?
- Do you wish you spent more or less time online?
- Do you know anyone who is trying to fill a void or escape pain by spending time online?

Work with your teen to brainstorm a list of ways, a group of people, or activities that help them balance time online with in-person connection.



# Biblical Truth:

## God desires to have a personal relationship with us.

His love, compassion, and concern for our lives led to sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins. He wants you to spend eternity with Him, but also wants to have a deep relationship with you on Earth. Praying, worshipping, fasting, reading the Bible, and loving others are just a few ways to stay connected with God. But just like every human relationship is different, everyone finds different ways to experience a relationship with God. Explore options and find what helps you feel most connected to Him.

- *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)*
- *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)*

## Notes

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# Identity and Relationships



## Gender Identity

**The teens surveyed in Africa were among the top 4 countries globally with the most traditional viewpoint on gender identity.** However, girls were observed to have a less traditional view of gender than boys do. More girls believe gender is primarily based on a person's feelings or desires. Girls are also twice as likely as boys to say it is acceptable for someone to change their body to become a different gender. Finally, girls are more likely than boys to say they have recently experienced gender identity confusion.

### Discussion Questions

- Where are people you know getting their information about gender?
- How are gender topics being portrayed online?
- What does the Bible have to say on this topic?
- What do you believe about gender? Why?



## Marriage

**When asked if they believe marriage should be a lifelong commitment, teens in Africa responded with a strong yes**—much more so than teens around the world. African countries were among the top four globally to hold this viewpoint.

**When asked if marriage should be exclusively between a man and a woman, African teens were less certain.** Teens in Nigeria and Kenya still said a strong yes, but teens in South Africa largely disagreed. Girls have a slightly different view than boys on some of these questions. While girls and boys agree that marriage should be for life, girls are much more likely than boys to say that marriage does not need to be heterosexual.

### Discussion Questions

- What do your friends think about marriage?
- Where are you feeling pressure to change your thinking on topics like this?

Take this opportunity to start praying with your teen for their future spouse. This is a powerful witness and exercise to do with your child. If you have been, tell them how long you have been praying for their future spouse, and let them know they are now old enough to join in bringing current relationships and future commitments before the Lord to ask for His guidance.



## Friendships

Encouragingly, teens indicated they have strong friendships in their lives. 81% of teens surveyed in Africa responded that they have close friends that know them well.

### Discussion Questions

- Do you have close friends?
- Has this always been the case for you?
- What are important characteristics of a friend?
- How are you being a good friend to others?

If your teen shares that they are lonely, ask if there is an activity or group they would consider joining to make new friends. The youth group at your local church would also be a great opportunity to meet new people.



## Family Experience

**8 in 10 teens say that their family experience has been good.** Teens that live in a two-parent home are more likely to report a positive family experience than teens living in one-parent homes. Boys were also more likely than girls to report a positive family experience.

### Discussion Questions

- What have been some of the good and the challenging seasons in our family?
- What would make your family experience better? What can we do about it?

This might be the right time to talk through any pain or problems past or present. Apologize for mistakes; ask forgiveness, and commit to making positive changes, since the time you have left with your teen is limited before they are on their own!

## Notes

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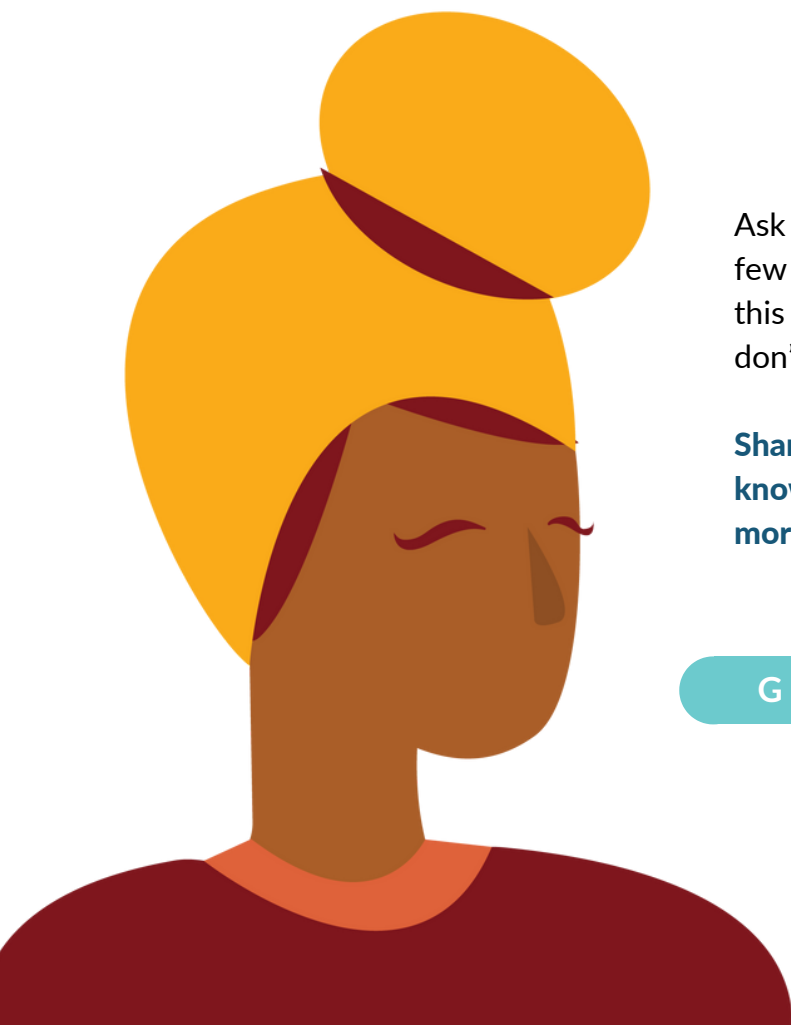


# Biblical Truth:

**Our identity is rooted in Christ and in the fact that we are children of God.**

This identity sets us apart from the world and helps us experience God as our loving Father. In this family, we find joy, peace, and community with other believers.

- *“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” 1 Peter 2:10 (NIV)*
- *“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3.26-27 (NIV)*
- *“You are the children of the Lord your God... for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.” Deuteronomy 14.1-2 (NIV)*



Ask your teen to set some personal goals from a few conversations or topics you discussed from this report. Don't stop praying for your teen, and don't stop talking to them—communication is key!

**Share this resource with another parent you know! Or visit [globalyouthculture.net](https://globalyouthculture.net) to learn more about the research study.**

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