



I am SO GLAD you are here. First, it would be really awkward to talk about this stuff to an empty room. But more importantly, your presence says something. In fact, as I was prepping for this, I asked myself a simple question: “Why am I doing this?” I mean, when I first said “yes” to God’s calling to be a youth pastor, I didn’t get into it just to hang out in a room full of parents. But, it’s become clearer than ever that this is an essential part of our ministry. So, let’s set the table as to why we are here.

[SLIDE]

### **WHY ARE WE HERE?**

There are five assumptions I am making about what is bringing us together during these three sessions we will be sharing together.

[SLIDE]

1. *You love your kids.*

I believe that your kids are your most prized and valued resource. Don’t get me wrong; I know they absolutely drive you nuts at times (OK, most of the time), but when it gets down to it, you love them deeply.

[SLIDE]

2. *We love your kids.*

We at [\[your ministry name\]](#) join you in those feelings. We believe the next generation is amazing. Sure, they drive us absolutely nuts at times (OK, lots of times), but we adore your kids.

[SLIDE]

3. *We want your kids to encounter Jesus.*

You could define success in parenting in a lot of ways, but I believe for most of us in here, your greatest hope is that your students would be following Jesus five, 10, and 25 years from now. That’s our hope, too.

[SLIDE]

4. *Parenting is tough.*

In fact, I think there is no tougher job in the world. It is absolutely confounding that God would entrust such a task to the collection of people in this room, isn't it?

[SLIDE]

5. *The current world of technology is overwhelming.*

Things are changing and developing rapidly, and it's nothing like when we were kids. I think, for a lot of us, we are experiencing a mix of emotions — from confusion to fear to cluelessness — and ultimately, we just are overwhelmed. And although I don't believe these sessions will get you all the answers, I do hope they will give you some, and in the process, breathe life and hope into you.

**Discuss:** That is why I think we are here, but I want to hear from you ... Why are you here?

[**Author Note:** I took time to allow people to share their thoughts. I added commentary to validate their statements as well as alleviate the level of awkwardness that was present in the room as we got going. I also took notes so I could reference back to moments when we were addressing some things shared (for example, “One of you mentioned you were here to get a better idea on how to set up some accountabilities and controls on your phones. Well, this next section is for you.”)]

**DISCLAIMER:** I am not here to tell you how to parent. I simply hope to give you some information and thoughts that will help you shape how you parent your teens. Now, I may give you my opinion at some points, but I'll try to be clear when that happens.

I personally have four kids. We are leaning into this stuff in our home. We're overwhelmed, and we're far from having all the answers. At the same time, my kids are not teens, so I'm not going to assume I know what you're going through. What I do have is 21 years of working with teenagers and parents, and I've seen some trends that I want to pass on to you.

[**Author Note:** I always give some form of the above disclaimer when sharing with parents. It helps parents understand I'm on their side, and that

they get the final say on how they will parent their kids. You will obviously want to change the last two sentences to fit what is more appropriate to your experience and setting. *Pro Tip:* If you only have a couple years of youth ministry under your belt and/or don't have kids, emphasize how much you don't know 😊. If you have teens, emphasize that you are on the journey with them.]

[SLIDE]

## **PARENT HACKS**

I believe, in a room this size, there are enough collective thoughts and ambitions to make one great parent! On the card provided, write down something your family has discovered as a valuable tool/tip/method when it comes to your family engaging technology. We are going to call these “Parent Hacks.”

What is a hack? It's “any trick, skill, or novelty method that increases productivity and efficiency, in all walks of life.”

Write yours down, and turn them into me at the end of the session. I'll collect these and share them throughout our time together.

[**Leader Note:** I printed off the Parent Hack cards (ParentHacks.pdf, included in this download) on cardstock and placed them on every other chair before the session began.]

Now that we've laid down some groundwork, I'd like to take the rest of this session for us to try to wrap our minds around our current digital reality and then make some time to lean into what the implications are for us.

## **A TECHNOLOGICAL TIMELINE**

I did a Google search of “Technology in the \_\_\_\_'s (70s, 80s, 90s, 2000s),” filling in a decade. Here's what I discovered. I think you'd find the results interesting.

[**Author Note:** I put up the slide with each decade and added commentary on some of the items that were up there, along with some of my personal memories of these things.]

[SLIDE]

- 80s: VCR, Personal Computer, Polaroid, Corded phone, NES

[SLIDE]

- 90s: AOL and dial-up internet, Palm Pilot, flip phone, laptop computer, Discman

[SLIDE]

- Early 00s: Myspace, iPod, Flat screen TV, Xbox, Digital Camera, GPS, texting

For us in here, these are the times when we came of age.

## THE DIGITAL WATERSHED

[SLIDE]

In 2007, there came a significant moment when Steve Jobs introduces the world to the iPhone. It was a sort of digital watershed that many say we will measure cultural time from: life before the iPhone/smartphones, and life after the iPhone/smartphone.

[**Author Note:** If you have the time, it could be fun to show some (around the first 3.5 minutes) of the Keynote session where Jobs actually introduces the iPhone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnrJzXM7a6o>]

Here is what makes this moment in history so significant.

[SLIDE]

All the technology we just covered from the previous three decades is now accessible in that single device. Post-2007, we all began carrying supercomputers around in our pockets. This adequately sums up the fact that we are living in a new digital reality.

## THE PHONE IS LIKE A KNIFE

Let's be clear about something. A smartphone, or any technology, is neither inherently evil nor inherently good.

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It is much like a knife. A knife can be used for some very productive thing: cutting bread, spreading butter, or whittling. It can also be used for some

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