

CHALLENGE

CHALLENGE 2020 PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE



RESTLESS: LONGING AND BELONGING

A universal piece of the human experience is to long for more. This longing seems built-in; it's part of what it means to be alive. But where does the longing come from? And what can truly satisfy us?

Perhaps now more than ever, students have the world at their fingertips. They have access to more information, more entertainment, more of the world than ever before. And yet, it doesn't seem to fill the void. Amid that longing, they face increased pressure to perform, while social media makes it nearly impossible to avoid comparison. Add all of it up, and the weight of expectations can be crushing.

The good news is that Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, New International Version). It is in Christ alone that our restless hearts find rest, and in His Church that our longing turns to belonging.

During the Challenge 2020 livestream, we pointed students to the power of the gospel—the only thing that can fill the void and provide true rest. Now, in the power of the Spirit, these students are being sent on the mission of inviting their friends into this transformational rest found in Jesus.

TALKING WITH YOUR STUDENT

Your student has only a few years before they launch into independence. As a parent, you are shifting from a role of authority to a role of influence. Now more than ever, you need to be available for them as they process through their own sense of identity, belonging and purpose. Even though the conversations may be challenging, your student needs you to show up and help him or her process this journey. Coach them toward spiritual conversations and equip them to establish their own faith in Jesus Christ and follow him with their life.

This guide is designed to help you meet your student where they are now, giving you conversation starters coming out of Challenge 2020.

When having conversations with your teenager, here are a few tips to consider:

- **Normalize spiritual conversations.** Create a safe place for your student to voice their concerns or questions regarding spiritual topics. Take initiative but also allow these conversations to happen naturally. That means you may be caught off guard when your teenager brings up questions about God and life. Even if you are surprised, react in a way that lets your teenager feel safe and encourage them to continue coming to you to discuss these important topics.
- **Don't give them the impression that you have all the answers.** Doubt is not the enemy of faith—*unprocessed* doubt is! Create safe environments for your student to ask questions. Tell them you will seek the answers together!
- **Let them see your own journey of faith.** Trusting Jesus is a constant journey and should permeate all of life. The best thing you can do as a parent is pull back the curtain and let your student see you process through life's rhythms and seasons. Let them witness your faith as you navigate your own doubts and fears. Students desperately want their own authentic faith, so the more you share yours with them, the more help you'll give them on their own journey of faith.
- **They are their own person.** Your student is on his or her own journey, in his or her own time. They will make mistakes and choices you wouldn't make, and they may disappoint you. When that happens, your response is key. Avoid shame and silence. Your student needs you to talk to them, reassure them and, most importantly, forgive them. They need to know your love for them is never dependent on their performance, or on what they do or don't do. Just like God's love for you, it is purely because of who they are!

CHALLENGE 2020 LIVESTREAM MESSAGES

To view these messages, visit the [Challenge website](#) or the [Challenge YouTube playlist](#).

MESSAGE 1: "THE PROBLEM OF RESTLESS HEARTS," KEMPTON TURNER

FRAMING THE ISSUE: *The Restlessness of the Human Heart.* A universal part of the human experience is to long for more. This longing seems intrinsic to what it means to be alive. But where does the longing come from? And what can truly satisfy this longing? Is the gospel of Jesus Christ *really* the answer to the desires of the heart? Is Jesus *really* enough?

Perhaps now more than ever, students have the world at their fingertips. They have more access to information than any previous generation. And yet, it seems as if many students feel they have everything and nothing at the same time. Or, as Marie Antoinette put it, "Nothing tastes." Jesus is the solution to the thirst of their soul—and no social media standing, academic achievement or sports success can fill the void.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Ecclesiastes 3:11; 1 Peter 3:18

Conversation starters:

- Why were we born saying, "Make me happy"?
- Kempton walked through Ecclesiastes 2, looking at things we pursue to fill the emptiness we feel inside of us. What were some of those things?



- Do you see fellow teenagers going after those pursuits? What are some examples you have seen recently?
- Which of those pursuits are most present in your life?
- Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “God has placed eternity in our hearts...” What does that mean?
 - Help them see that we received this God-shaped void that only God can fill!
- Remember Floppy the Fish? What did Floppy really need?
 - Floppy was made to be put back in the ocean...somebody outside of him needed to put him back where he was created to thrive.

MESSAGE 2: PROBLEM #1—“I CAN’T SOLVE THE PROBLEM,” JUSTIN WEVERS

I CAN’T SOLVE THE PROBLEM: *Good Works Aren’t Good Enough.* Where do we look for help? How do we get rid of the restlessness? The answer is not from within. No matter our effort, skills, relationships, popularity or position, we don’t have what it takes to fill the void. We ourselves are not good enough, and our good works aren’t good enough either. Not to mention, looking inward for salvation is ultimately an exhausting endeavor.

Students face what may feel like nonstop pressure to pretend or perform. Social media has made it more difficult to avoid comparison. And they are ever-increasing in their awareness of the ways they don’t measure up. They can’t go home to get away from it because their phones keep them connected to the pressure. Whether trying to impress others or trying to impress God, they all fall short and restlessness abounds. But the solution is not found within themselves.

Scripture: Mark 10:17-22

Conversation starters:

- Have you ever heard things such as, “Be true to yourself,” “Follow your dreams,” “You do you,” or “You’re perfect the way you are”? Where do these ideas come from?
- I hear teenagers today really struggle with loneliness and anxiety. Do you think that is true? Have you ever struggled with these things?
- Do you think loneliness and anxiety come from the pressure to achieve or become a certain type of person? Why or why not?
- One of the most tempting lies we can believe is that we aren’t that bad. Who have you compared yourself to in order to feel better about yourself? (“At least I’m not as ‘bad’ as they are.”)
- But then we struggle with feeling like we aren’t good enough. Who is someone that you have compared yourself to and don’t feel like you are as ‘good’ as they are?



MESSAGE 3: PROBLEM #2— “THE WORLD CAN’T SOLVE THE PROBLEM,” STEPHEN LOVE

THE WORLD CAN’T SOLVE THE PROBLEM: *Idols and More Idols.* Even though nothing in the world can fill the God-shaped hole in our hearts, it doesn’t stop us from looking. And just as we must realize the answer isn’t inside ourselves, we also must avoid the trap of looking to the world around us for the solution. This is where Jesus steps in. He’s the true and better Savior who won’t let us down. He’s the true and better sacrifice who died for our sins. He’s the narrow Way. He atones for our sins on the cross; nothing else can satisfy God, and no one else will satisfy us.

Many students—realizing the answer isn’t in trying harder—form and serve idols in the hopes they’ll provide what their hearts long for: acceptance, rest and lasting joy. But idols, as always, only enslave them more. Fueled by longing, they cling to counterfeit gods and find them lacking. But God, in his mercy, provides freedom and salvation. He’s the one true God, the one true Way and the one true Life.

Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17

Conversation starters:

- Why is the answer for restlessness not found in the world?
- In the passage, what does John mention that people use to try to answer to the restlessness in them? What is an example for each one?
- If you could change one thing in your life this past year—knowing what you know now—what would you change? What would you have done differently?
- Do you agree you only have room in your heart for one ultimate love—one thing you can love above everything else? Why or why not?
- What do you think God has in mind in creating you to only find rest in Him?

MESSAGE 4: “THE GOSPEL ANSWER,” VAŠEK ANDRŠ

THE ANSWER: *Jesus is the Perfect Solution.* In Romans 7, Paul asks, “Who will save me from this body of death?” That question echoes throughout human history. The answer, of course, is Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. Jesus has saved us from the penalty of our sin; He is saving us from the power of sin; and He will save us from the presence of sin. But as for now, we still wrestle with the flesh.

Our restlessness is solved by finding rest in Christ. This process is part of the already/not yet tension we often find in Scripture. In one sense, He already has offered us rest through His death on the cross. In another sense, we look forward with righteous longing for the complete rest we find in eternity. Until then, we fight against sin by the power of the Spirit and trust that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ (Romans 8:1, NIV).

Scripture: Romans 7-8

Conversation starters:

- Vašek said he didn’t grow up around Christians and had a certain perception about what Christians were like. What do you sense from other teenagers about how they view Christians? What do you think



- it's like to grow up in a place where no one else around you believes in Jesus?
- Vašek said he thinks even most Christians believe that God exists somewhere up in the clouds and that God exists to help us be better people. Do you think a lot of people believe this?
 - This helps your student start to unpack what they think Christianity is all about.
 - Look at your phone. Do you agree that it was created? How much did the phone cost? What do you do with your phone? What does your phone mean to you?
 - Help them process that if something is created, it has value, purpose and meaning.
 - Do you agree that we were created? Why or why not?
 - Connect them back to the phone that we have value, purpose, and meaning—from the One who created us!
 - Christianity is the story that God did something because everything else doesn't work! How does God bring rest from condemnation, sin, self-fulfillment and even death?
 - How does your faith in Christianity affect your life?

JUST REMEMBER...

During teenage years, students process through their own sense of identity, belonging and purpose. Encourage their questions and affirm their sound decision-making. Keep the lines of communication open by asking questions that help them clarify their values. Your role as a coach is to encourage and affirm their growth in their journey to establish their own faith in Jesus Christ and follow Him with their life. You can't transform their hearts, but you can plant and water the good news of Jesus in their lives. We hope this helps you do that.

