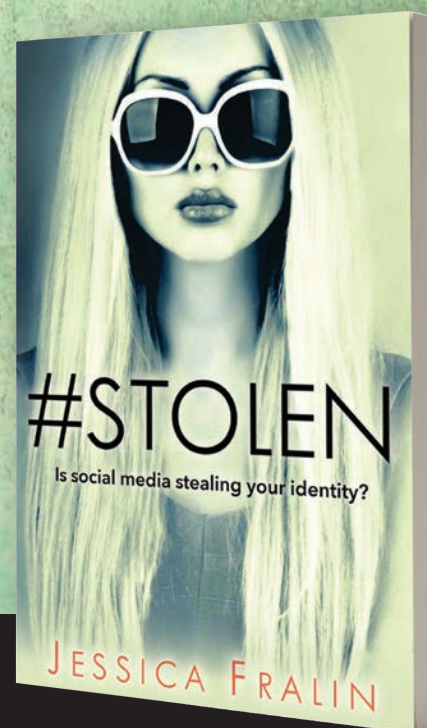


YOUTH GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE

COLLEGE PEER GROUPS





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Introduction

A Note from the Author

Social media has changed our world ... and us. We live in the loudest time in history. The voices are constant and often negative. Every hour of every day, we are exposed to selfies, snap chats, hashtags, feeds, and trending topics. And amid the noise, these online messages are quietly influencing our thoughts and dreams and opinions of ourselves and others.

While the effects of social media could be challenging for anyone, they are particularly dangerous for teens and young adults who are grappling with who they really are, what they want in life, and what their purpose is. "Doing life" at this age is hard enough, and social media makes it even more complicated.

That's why I wrote this book and study guide. I've lost myself in the lure of Twitter and Pinterest and Instagram—and found myself in Christ. And I want to help others do the same. Social media doesn't define you. Unless you let it. There IS a way to enjoy social media without letting it steal your identity. Will you join me in helping teens and young adults discover who they really are in this crazy social media world? Let's create an **#IdentityRevolution** and take back what social media has **#Stolen**.

♥ Jessica



Preparation

Welcome! Whether you are a youth pastor or youth leader, a parent, a college advisor, or just a friend, I hope and pray that the contents of this book and guide will help you help others. And I hope you'll be blessed as well. Before we begin, here are a few helpful tips about leading a group discussion:

- **Keep It Prayerful:** Prayer changes things. Make prayer a part of every meeting and pray in between meetings as well. Pray for each participant, not just for what they are studying in this book but what they are experiencing in life. Pray that God works in their hearts.
- **Keep It Biblical:** While not a Bible study per se, you and your students will be digging into the word to find scriptural encouragement and advice throughout the coming weeks. Encourage your students to keep their Bibles handy. As you discuss how to safeguard your identities from social media pressures, make sure you cling to what God's word calls Truth.
- **Keep It Confidential:** In order for your students to feel comfortable sharing, they need to know that what they say won't be repeated or used against them. Discuss this with your group before you begin.
- **Keep It Respectful:** As with any group setting, you or someone in your group may find that you don't agree with something that is said. Respect the opinions shared and ask your students to do the same. If a disagreement begins, encourage your students to talk through it with a heart for learning and understanding, not defending. Encourage your students to show respect not only in how and what they say but also in what they don't say. Encourage them to listen, wait for their turn to speak, and think before responding. Silence is okay! Even if it's awkward. And when they do speak, encourage them to ask questions, not just communicate statements. They might even try to reword or restate what they just heard: "What I hear you saying is this ... is that correct?" Sometimes asking aids understanding.
- **Keep It Focused:** No matter how much you prepare before the group meeting, it will still be very easy to get sidetracked when talking about social media and social pressures. Students may want to swap "war stories" or chat about what's trending that week. Because of the topic of this study, some of that chatter will be unavoidable, so plan ahead. This guide has reserved a few minutes at the beginning of each session for your students to discuss trending topics. You may also take a few minutes at the end to ask if anyone has any other experiences they'd like to share. Use your best judgment on guiding this time; if it's clear that there's a current events topic that is troubling your teens, you may need to spend more time addressing that.
- **Keep It Loving:** You're not just a leader, you're a friend. Get to know everyone in your group. Don't leave your interaction for just your meeting time. E-mail or call your students throughout the week. Meet them for a coffee, join them at the gym, or take them to dinner. Not only does this develop a loving friendship, it offers a time for more private conversation, if needed. There may be some things people don't want to share in the group but still need to work through on their own time in a space where they are comfortable digging a little deeper and exploring their struggle or why they are struggling. This also allows you to keep group time conversation focused on general advice and not one individual's concern.



Getting Started

This guide gives you a suggested reading plan as well as discussion starters, Scripture references, and even some fun activities. While you'll see these elements repeated throughout this study guide, every week is a bit different and there's no set "pattern." Read through the session outline ahead of time to make sure you have the necessary supplies, but feel free to add your own ideas and activities into the mix as well. This guide is a guideline; it's not set in stone. While you want it to be educational, you also want it to be fun! Here's a quick explanation of some of the elements you will find:

- **From the Book:** Sometimes quotations from the book are worked into discussions and activities—you'll see text italicized in this guide. In the "From the Book" callouts, I offer additional quotes pulled from the chapters you are studying. You can decide how best to use them (or not use them). They can be a reference for yourself, or you can read them out loud in the group to summarize the point of the discussion or theme for the week.
- **Discussion Questions:** Whenever I offer discussion questions in this guide, I offer them only as suggested conversation points. Sometimes they will include the questions found in the chapters you have read for that week. Sometimes they will be entirely different. Sometimes there will be more in the book that aren't addressed here. Use whatever you think will create the best discussion within your group.
- **Truth and Takeaway:** You will find these at the end of each session. The truth may be a quotation from the book, a summary sentence recapping what you've learned, or a short paragraph to help the message soak in. The takeaway is typically a short sentence that students can think about throughout the week.
- **Leader Follow-Up:** I encourage you to check in with your students during the week, so at the end of each session, I'll give you ideas of what you can do to connect with your students between your group meetings. I may offer multiple suggestions. You don't need to do all of them; they are only suggestions. The goal is simply to stay in touch and build friendships.

One last word before we begin. Thank you! (I guess that's two words.)
THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK WITH YOUNG ADULTS AND FOR LEADING A STUDY OF #STOLEN. My prayer is that actions—and lives—will be changed as a result of your efforts. I am honored that you chose my book to use for your group. Let's dig in!

THANK
YOU

social media Statistics

Within the weekly reading assignments, you may encounter a statistic that can be discussed with your group. The following statistics are not specifically discussed in this guide, but they will give you some good background on the world your students are living in. You may find them helpful as you prepare to lead a discussion on social media and identity.



56% OF TEENS GO ONLINE SEVERAL TIMES A DAY

Network of choice

Three-quarters (76%) of teens use social media and 71% use more than one social network site.

71% USE FACEBOOK

52% USE INSTAGRAM

41% USE SNAPCHAT

33% USE TWITTER

24% USE VINE

33% USE GOOGLE+

14% USE TUMBLR

91%

of teens go online from a **mobile device**



A majority of teens (73%) have **smartphones**

Facebook force

Facebook remains a dominant force in teens' social media ecosystems. Asked which platforms they used most often, **41% said Facebook was their top choice**, followed by Instagram (20%) and Snapchat (11%).



58% of teens have or have access to a **tablet computer**

87%

of American teens have access to a **desktop or laptop computer**

Age and platform choice

Older teens ages 15 to 17 are more likely than younger teens to cite Facebook (44% vs. 35% of younger teens), Snapchat (13% vs. 8%) and Twitter (8% vs. 3%) as a most often used platform, while younger teens ages 13 to 14 are more likely than their older compatriots to list Instagram (25% vs. 17% of older teens) as a platform they visit most often.



Boys vs. girls

Boys are more likely than girls to report that they visit Facebook most often (45% of boys vs. 36% of girls). **Girls are more likely than boys to say they use Instagram** (23% of girls vs. 17% of boys). Over all platforms, teenage girls use social media sites—particularly visually oriented ones—more than their male counterparts do.

SESSION ONE

Introduction Chapter 1 Chapter 2

PREPARATION Before you meet as a discussion group for the first time, distribute copies of the book and ask your students to read the introduction and chapters 1 and 2 before they come to the group. If possible, have them reflect on the end-of-chapter questions as well, so they are prepared to discuss those at the meeting.

Opening Activity *An Icebreaker* Goal

This activity will demonstrate how difficult it is to hear through the noise and abundance of chatter experienced online, and even more difficult to make a connection. This activity works best when you have ten or more students in the group (they will be making noise and the more noise the better *in this case*).

Supplies

For this game, you will need a stopwatch (or, let's be honest, a stopwatch app on your phone). You will also need several pairs (2 each) of funny and serious phrases such as:

- "I could use a friend right now."
- "I love pizza!"
- "I have stinky feet."
- "My parents yell at me all the time."

Be creative and pick phrases that will make your group both laugh and think.

Directions *Round One*

1. Cut the phrases into strips, then fold them up and put them in a bowl or cup to be drawn later by members of the group.
2. Begin by having each member of your group blindly draw a piece of paper. Instruct them not to show (or tell) anyone what's on their paper.
3. Spread your group randomly across the room or in a large circle.
4. On the count of three, have everyone start saying his or her chosen phrase (yelling, whispering, or any variety of vocal ranges are okay ... embrace the chaos). Remember, there are two of each phrase, so two people will be speaking the same words.
5. After speaking the phrases together, ask your students if they could identify the person who has their same phrase. Chances are, not many. Go around the room and quickly brainstorm the results: Did they not hear well? Were they not listening? Were they distracted?)

6. As you hear their explanations, ask if the same is true when communicating online.

Directions *Round Two*

1. Have each student return their chosen phrase to the bowl or cup. Mix up the phrases and again have each student select a phrase (still keeping it to themselves).
2. Spread back out randomly around the room.
3. Set your stopwatch for sixty seconds. Instead of speaking all at once, ask your students to start speaking (or yelling or whispering) and continue speaking the phrase repeatedly for the sixty seconds.
4. As they are speaking, have students move around to find the other person in the group who is saying their same phrase. Once they find each other, have them stand together and stop talking.
5. When the sixty seconds are up, go around the room to see how many connections have been made. Briefly discuss the results, asking students what made it easy or difficult to make their connection and compare that process to making connections online.

FROM THE BOOK

"We live in the loudest time in history. The voices are constant, and there are so many of them. Even in our most silent moments, we allow a multitude of voices in, letting them speak deep statements in our lives—statements about who we are, what we are worth, and who we should measure ourselves against. Words bombard us all the time. Comparisons. Criticisms. Compliments. And we don't even have to speak to anyone to hear them. Do you think maybe we've become addicted to the noise?" PAGES 10–11

Discussion Questions

1. How many hours do you spend on social media each day? Each week?
2. What is it that makes social media addictive? How do you define addiction? Where does addiction start? How do you know if you are addicted?
3. How do you think you would do if you had to give up your cell phone or social media for an entire day? What would be the hardest part?
4. There are some great things about social media, but there are also some downsides. Do you agree? (Have two students read the Love / Hate statements on pages 8–9 of the book. Have one student read Love and the other read Hate.) What are other things you love or hate about social media?
5. Social media can be a great way to be connected to people. What are your thoughts on whether true connection and community can come from social media? Is it possible or not?
6. How likely are you to share your deepest needs through social media? (You could even take a vote by show of hands: likely, maybe, not likely at all. Keep a tally on a whiteboard or piece of paper.)

#FactChat

Revisit the #FactChat on page 11 of chapter 1. Read the paragraph out loud (starting after the asterisks on page 12) and use these questions for further discussion:

- What's the difference between friends and followers?
- Do you think the number of followers someone has on social media makes a difference in real life?
- How does social media help you maintain friendships?

Read and Discuss

Ask one of your students to read John 8:32 out loud.

- What does a verse about truth have to do with social media? (If you need an additional prompt to continue the discussion: Do you think everything you read online is true? Partially true? Not at all true? Why do people not post the truth?)
- Why do you think the use of social media causes many people to feel depressed or dissatisfied?
- When you read on page 14 of the book, "Your desire to be loved is okay," what was your reaction? Do you believe that statement? How did that impact you?

- The book says true community is honest, consistent, and sacrificial. Which is hardest for you? Why? How do you think adding that to your friendships, even when it's hard, would change them? How so?

FROM THE BOOK

"Finding people who are honest, consistent, and sacrificial may not be easy. But I can't encourage you enough to keep searching for them. You know what's so special about those traits? People who are willing to do those things are people who really love you." PAGE 33

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

The truth is that social media can be fun, and we can enjoy it. But, it crosses a line if we love it more than we love Jesus. We should not be running from it, but there are two things that are good for us that we should be running toward: community and truth.

Takeaway

- Every day this week, remind yourself that you are beautiful, valued, and loved.
- As you "do life" this week, try to bring honesty, consistency, and sacrifice into your relationships.

Homework

Ask your students to read chapters 3 and 4 before your next meeting.

Closing Activity *A Homework Dare*

Ask for a couple of volunteers to accept a homework dare before they know what the dare is. Once you have volunteers, ask them to complete the #GiveltATry challenge on page 10 of the book: Give up your cell phone for an entire day and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it when you come back next week.



LEADER FOLLOW-UP

- Text or e-mail your students another #GiveltATry challenge from the book, such as the one on page 33: Sometime this week, stop before you comment on someone's status or post and force yourself to make that comment to your friend in person.
- Text your students a quote from the book or tag them in a shareable image from this week's reading (ready-made images are available at AbingdonPress.com/Stolen).

SESSION TWO

Chapter 3 Chapter 4

TRENDING TOPICS Since talking about social media is difficult without acknowledging what's currently happening *on* social media, reserve a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting for group members to share some of the funniest status updates or Tweets they have seen in the past week. Encourage them to also describe some of the more serious ones.

Opening Activity

Goal

We have all had moments where the refresh button has ruled our lives. All of us have experienced those moments when we missed something or someone important because we were looking at our Twitter or Facebook feeds. We have carefully crafted our words to post the perfect Tweet, and we have staged a selfie so we look our best. How often do we change our profile pictures? And how do we respond when someone says something negative in response to our latest post or picture? This opening activity might help us begin to see our motivations for using social media—that is, *why* we post what we post—and what effect those motivations have on our feelings of self-worth.

Directions

1. Have everyone share their last selfie (if they have the means—if not, just have them describe it, and tell the story behind the photo.) Have them share the *truth* behind the photo (was it a happy moment, a sad moment, a staged moment, and so on.)
2. Ask group members to describe how they felt as they waited for people to start “liking” their photo. (For example, students may say things such as *anxious*, *depressed*, or *unpopular*.)
3. Using a whiteboard or piece of paper, write these responses in a column that everyone can see. (Leave some space, because you will be adding to this.)
4. Next, ask your students how often they compare themselves to someone else online? What sort of feelings does this comparison evoke? (For example, students may say things such as not as *funny*, *unpretty*, or *not talented enough*.)
5. Add their responses to the list on the board.
6. Ask for two volunteers to look up Psalm 139. Have one student read verses 1-5 and another student read verses 13-16. In a separate list, write out all the truths about who we are in God's eyes, according to Psalm 139.
7. Now brainstorm, as a group, the feelings you might have if you were released from the feelings listed in the first column and were reminded of the truths in the second column. Write the responses in the second list. (For example, someone might say *more confident*, *less pressured*, or *relieved*.)

8. Have everyone look over the two columns of words you just created and ask which column they'd rather choose to describe themselves.

FROM THE BOOK

“We all have a ‘time when.’ A time when we didn’t feel loved. A time when we felt unimportant to the world. A time when we wondered if anyone would ever think we were funny or beautiful or worthy. ... But there’s good news. Our ‘time whens’ don’t get the last word.” PAGE 48

Read and Discuss

Ask a student to reread Psalm 139:4.

- Ask your students: How do you think your social media posts would change if you recited or read that verse before every post you write?

Ask a student to reread Psalm 139:14 from the New International Version of the Bible.

- What do you think it means to be “fearfully” made?
 - Explain to your students the two types of fear found in the NIV translation: *There is the sort where you are a little excited or a bit nervous. It’s the fear you have when you anticipate that something big is about to happen. Some may call this “butterflies in your stomach.” The second type of fear is the more commonly understood definition of being afraid. It’s the sort of fear that evokes more than just nervousness but great terror and anxiety and shame. It’s serious enough to prevent you from interacting with others and may make you expect that harm will be done to you.*
 - Have students look up the following verses and identify what sort of fear is being discussed:
 - Genesis 3:8-10 (Answer: second type of fear)
 - Genesis 22:11-13 (Answer: first type of fear)
 - Matthew 28:4 (Answer: second type of fear)
 - 1 Peter 2:17 (Answer: first type of fear)

- Hint: If they are having difficulty deciding, ask them to replace the word *fear* in the Bible passage with either *anticipate* or *terror* and see which makes more sense. If *anticipate* fits, it's likely the *first* type of fear. If *terror* fits, it's likely the *second* type of fear.
- Return your attention to Psalm 139:14. What type of fear is meant in this verse? Did God create you to show terror and shame or to show excitement and to anticipate his reflection?
- Fear in this context is the same type of fear described when the Bible talks about the fear of the Lord. It means respect and reverence for God.
- If your students get sidetracked on what *wonderfully* means (boasting that they are pretty wonderful), agree with them that they are wonderful because *wonderfully* means to be distinct and unique and special.

Ask a student to read 1 Peter 3:3-4.

- By a show of hands, ask your students if they have any insecurities (if they are being honest, everyone should raise their hands.) If anyone is willing, ask them to share what insecurity fights for their heart most often and whether or not social media has fueled that insecurity.
- Why do you think insecurity is so common?
- In the verse we just read, Peter isn't against fashion. So, what do you think he is saying in these verses? Can you rephrase it?
- What difference does this verse make in our lives (and our wardrobes) today?
- How can we become truly free from the world's standards of beauty?
 - If grace is what makes us truly beautiful, when did the gospel make you feel the most beautiful?
 - How does it make you feel to know that you are already beautiful? That your mess and scars don't scare God?

Closing Activity

Goal

This quick closing activity is meant to remind students to change

FROM THE BOOK

"Whether you've heard the story of grace a hundred times or you're laying eyes on it for the very first time, let me encourage you to start acting on it. Today. Right now. Just hearing and knowing something won't change your heart. But when you pray and believe, you begin the coolest journey of your entire life." PAGE 64

their thoughts and practice affirmations. It will show your group that affirmations feel so much better than comparisons.

Directions

1. Direct your students' attention to the #WhatDoYouThink on page 47 of the book.
2. Ask students to pair off. Have one student look to their partner and speak an affirmation (compliment). Have the other student then speak an affirmation to the first.
3. Encourage your students to continue affirming people throughout the week.

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

"Your 'likes' do not define your life. You don't have to worry if what you post is good enough or pretty enough or funny enough. Your worth has already been determined, and you are more valuable than you could ever imagine." (page 51 of the book)

Takeaway

You are beautiful, valued, and loved.

Homework

Ask your students to read chapter 5 before your next meeting.

LEADER FOLLOW-UP

- E-mail or text individual members of your group with an affirmation about them.
- Find an article or picture of someone who is unattractive by culture's standards but whom everyone loves. Send your group a link to show them an example of *inner beauty*.
 - Example: J. R. Martinez was injured and scarred while serving in Iraq but came home to establish an impressive acting and motivational speaking career, including public acclaim after appearing on (and winning!) *Dancing with the Stars*.
 - Example: Malala Yousafzai was shot in the face by the Taliban and now is an activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate.
 - Example: PositiveExposure.org displays portraits from award-winning photographer Rick Guidotti who shoots photos of children with rare genetic disorders but who, despite their disabilities, exhibit great joy in life.
 - Example: Bethany Hamilton survived a shark attack in 2003 but ultimately returned to—and excelled in—competitive professional surfing.



- Send your group this challenge: open your Bible and read a verse or two before you open a social media. Do this every time you check one of your socials this week.
- Post one of the quotes or shareable images above and tag your group members. (These images are available for download at AbingdonPress.com/Stolen.)

SESSION THREE

Chapter 5

TRENDING TOPICS Reserve a few minutes at the beginning your meeting to allow your students to talk about their week and what they've seen on social media since you last met.

Opening Activity *Pinterest IRL*

Goal

The goal of this activity is simply to create a physical representation for your upcoming discussion of what happens on Pinterest.

Supplies

- Lots of pages from fashion magazines that contain the trendiest shoes, clothes, jewelry, accessories, home decor, and so on. If you have guys in your group, make sure you have pages that represent their styles and interests as well.
- Scissors
- Tape (or glue sticks)
- Several sheets of white poster board (more for larger groups, fewer for smaller groups)

Directions

1. Distribute a piece of poster board to each student as he or she arrives and tell that student that they will be creating a real pin board, a physical representation of what they might create on Pinterest.
2. Have each student choose a theme for their board, as they would on Pinterest (for example: "my imaginary closet" or "my game room").
3. Allow each student to peruse the magazine pages and cut out the outfits, jewelry, and so on, that they like best. Use the tape or glue to arrange these images on the poster board. Make this a time to relax and be creative as a group, allowing casual conversation and time to settle in.
4. Display your poster boards at the front of the room.
5. Ask each of your students to look at the pin boards and say one word that describes what they see. (For example, you may hear: *interesting*, *stylish*, *crowded*, or *colorful*.)
6. Look at some specific photos displayed and, as a group, identify some of the most popular products your students have posted. Ask your students if they own any of these products in real life. If so, ask them to explain why they purchased it and whether or not they are content with it—or if they want a newer or better version.

FROM THE BOOK

"Do you ever feel like the things you have need just a little bit of work? Do you ever find yourself thinking life would be better with just one more thing? It's so easy to do. But is an upgraded closet, better cooking skills, or a better decorated house really going to provide the contentment your heart craves? In today's culture our hearts have been groomed to think so." PAGE 71

#GiveItATry

As a group, complete the #GiveItATry challenge on page 75 of the book. Assign a "scribe" to write on the whiteboard. Set your stopwatch (or your stopwatch app) to ten minutes. Allow your students to review their pin boards and say out loud anything they see on the boards that they want to purchase. Make a list. After the ten minutes is up, turn your pin boards around so no images are showing. Set your stopwatch for another ten minutes, choose another "scribe" if necessary, and ask your students to name as many blessings as they can in the time remaining. Make a second list on the whiteboard so everyone can see. At the end of the second ten minutes, ask your students to compare the lists. Which has more? Why? How do your students feel about what they see on the whiteboard?

Read and Discuss

Ask one of your students to read the parable of the rich and the kingdom of God from Mark 10:17-31.

- Have the group describe this story in their own words.
- Why do you think Jesus told the man that he was lacking one thing? Why do you think that his keeping the law wasn't enough?
- Describe why the man was sad after Jesus gave him his

instructions. Why do you think Jesus said that it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?

- Does this story change your view or opinion of what you posted on your pin boards? Why is it so easy to want more and more? What are some practical ideas of things you can do to curb your appetite for more stuff.

Ask a student to read Hebrews 13:5.

- Have the group define contentment in their own words. You might make a list of their definitions on a whiteboard.
- Why do you think the writer of Hebrews mentions Jesus' words here?

Select another student to read Philippians 4:12-13.

- What is Paul's secret to being content?
- Do the hard seasons of Paul's life make you uncomfortable? His secret to contentment was simply to love Jesus. How can you chase after that same *contentment* in your life today?

Find a third student to read 1 Timothy 6:6.

- Have the group rephrase 1 Timothy 6:6 in their own words.
- How do godliness and contentment work together?
- Why do you think being content is so difficult at times?

Closing Challenge

Read this challenge to your students before they leave:

If you struggle with materialism, challenge yourself to step away from social media for a bit. Allowing yourself time to refocus your heart is a good thing! Here's a suggestion from the book:

"Maybe you try something like this for a week: Every time your heart tugs at you to look for a new outfit or project to tackle, you head to the Bible for a few minutes instead. Or come up with another creative way to take a break from pinning and refocus your mind toward Jesus. Whatever you choose to do, I hope you'll discover the life, joy, and contentment that God's waiting to pour into your thoughts and heart." (page 75)

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

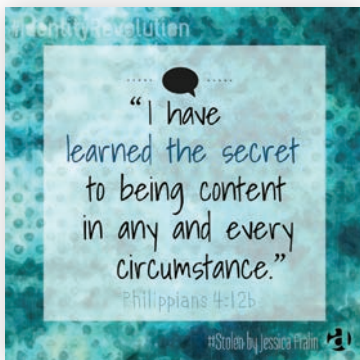
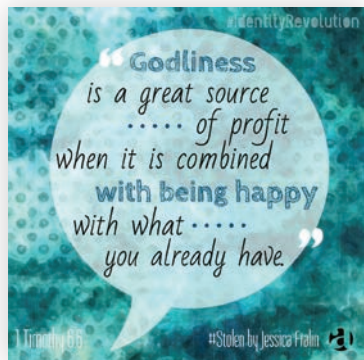
"If we want to be content in every circumstance—content with our current wardrobe, content with our current décor, content with the things we have right now—here's the secret to success: seek Jesus." (page 74)

Takeaway

Buying the latest and greatest satisfies us for a moment, but finding godliness satisfies for a lifetime.

Homework

Ask your students to read chapters 6 and 7 before your next meeting.



LEADER FOLLOW-UP

- To help your students put this week's lesson into action, e-mail them during the week and ask them to bring a canned food donation or new clothing item with them to the next meeting. Collect the items and donate them to a local shelter or food pantry.
- If you took pictures of your pin boards, post some of those to social media and tag your students. Make sure to add a note summarizing what you learned that week.
- Ask your students to post one or both of the verses at left to social media sometime this week. (Reminder: these images are available for download at AbingdonPress.com/Stolen).

SESSION FOUR

Chapter 6 Chapter 7

TRENDING TOPICS

Reserve a few minutes at the beginning your meeting to allow your students to talk about their week and what they've seen on social media since you last met.

Opening Activity

Goal

The goal of this activity is to show students how easy it is for others—even those they don't know—to see what they post on social media. This session will discuss over-sharing and the consequences associated with it.

Supplies

- Note cards; one for each student
- Tape that will stick to fabric
- Pens

Directions

1. Ask your students to stand in a large circle.
2. Give each student a note card and small strips of tape.
3. Have everyone write a short "status update" on the card. It should be something that they would normally post or Tweet on social media. For the purpose of this activity, shorter is better. Instruct them *not* to reveal what they are writing.
4. When they are finished writing, arrange your students in a circle and have each student use the tape to secure the note card to the back of the person on their left, without revealing what is on the card.
5. Have each person take turns going around to each student in the circle asking only yes or no questions to figure out the phrase they have taped to their backs. They can only ask each person one question, and then they must move on to another person until they have figured out the status update.
6. Students don't have to guess the status word for word, but they should have a good concept of what is on the card. After someone has guessed their status, have him or her resume their spot in the circle. That student will now be available to answer yes or no questions.
7. Once everyone has guessed their status updates (or when time has run out), ask the students how many people they had to question before they guessed their phrase. What were your feelings about how many people saw it before you figured it out? Embarrassed? Surprised?
8. If the group is small enough, or if you have more time, you can recycle the cards, mix the group up, and play again.

#FactChat

Read the #FactChat on pages 95–96 of the book and then discuss these questions with your students:

- Do you find it surprising that employers check social media while considering job candidates? Have you ever posted something you hope a future employer will never see? Do you feel a need to change how or what you post after today's activity and this #FactChat?
- Besides future employers, what are some other situations where someone could experience embarrassment or negative consequences for things they've posted on social media?
- In general, do you think people are willing to post more risqué content than they would be comfortable sharing in real life or to someone's face? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some people over-share? What are they trying to accomplish?

FROM THE BOOK

"Words on social media have the power to encourage or discourage, bring laughter or tears. ... They can change someone's mood or someone's day. Maybe even their life. Words matter." PAGE 79

Read and Discuss

Ask a student to look up and read Genesis 11:1-9.

- Have the group describe the scene in Genesis 11.
- It wasn't wrong for them to want to be near God, was it? Where did they go wrong?

Assign several readers to find and read these passages out loud: Proverbs 17:27-28; Proverbs 13:3; Proverbs 10:19; Psalm 141:3; Psalm 19:4a; Luke 6:45, Romans 10:15; Ephesians 5:15-16; James 3:17; Psalm 34:14

- What are some of the words in these verses associated with someone who isn't very careful about what or how much they say?

- What are some of the words in these verses associated with someone who is careful about what they say?
- In the two passages from Psalms, the writer asks God to do certain things. What are they?
- What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? (If they've read the chapter assignment, possible answers could include: Wisdom requires action or implementation. Wisdom is pure. Wisdom is peace-loving.)

Activity

Goal

The goal of this activity is to help students process what to post on social media.

Directions

1. Begin asking several "Which is harder ... ?" questions
2. Ask students to voice their response. If the group is too large and voicing responses becomes chaotic, you may choose to ask them to raise their hands to indicate the choice they feel is harder.
 - Which is harder: keeping other people's secrets or keeping your own?
 - Which is harder: ranting about something or encouraging someone?
 - Which is harder: saying what you think or holding your words in?
 - Which is harder: talking about someone or getting to know someone new?
 - Which is harder: having a healthy debate on social media or having a war or ugly words?
3. Discuss why these choices are so hard.

Read and Discuss

Ask a student to read Romans 8:1. Discuss what that verse has to do with today's activities.

Have another student look up Luke 6:45.

- Is this verse true or false?
- How does it make you feel about the words you say and type?
- Could it be that the choices we just discussed are so hard because they reveal truths about yourself? Consider what your words say about the condition of your heart.

Closing Activity

Ask your students to ponder these questions this week. Read them slowly so students can take the questions to heart.

LEADER FOLLOW-UP

- This week's lesson discussed the power of words. Demonstrate that power to your students this week by texting or e-mailing them a single kind word that you think describes them. Courageous. Loving. Honest. Kind. Whatever the word, tell them why they exude that characteristic. Invite them to repeat this activity—sending a single kind word description—to their friends.
- Ask your students to post or share one or both of the quotes or images at right (or another one they choose from the book or find at AbingdonPress.com/Stolen).

FROM THE BOOK

"If you're careless with your words, chances are it's usually because you are careless with your heart. Our hearts are the core of who we are. Our identities." PAGE 90

- Is it time to mend some relationships that have been broken because of your words? Is there anyone you need to apologize to for hurting them with your careless words?
- Is there a friend you could ask to hold you accountable for using words that are kind, true, and necessary?
- Is there a particular area of your life where you need to ask Jesus for wisdom? What is it?
- Is there a creative way that could help you think before you speak (or post)? Tell your students that if any of them answered yes to any of those questions, you encourage them to think, pray, and act toward resolution this week. Remind them that you are here to help.

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

"One of the things I'm most passionate about in life is for you to know that you're free. Not just to think about it, but to know it. To walk in that freedom. Trust me, I know what it's like to have your identity stolen by the ways of the world. You'll hear whispers that you aren't loved. That you're not pure. Not worthy. Not beautiful. Not enough. But they are all lies. And I will wage war on those lies as long as I have breath. I will tell even the messiest parts of my story if Jesus can use it to show other people the way to freedom. He knows every bit of the mess, and He still loves me. That can be your story, too. In fact, it already is. God sees your mess, and He loves you anyway. Believing it will change everything." (pages 104–105)

Takeaway

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Homework

Ask your students to read chapters 8 and 9 before your next meeting.



SESSION FIVE

Chapter 8 Chapter 9

TRENDING TOPICS Reserve a few minutes at the beginning your meeting to allow your students to talk about their week and what they've seen on social media since you last met.

Opening Activity

Goal

The goal of this activity will demonstrate how quickly stories (true and false) can spread on social media and will explore the variety of feelings and emotions (positive and negative) that these quick stories can convey in as little as 140 characters.

Supplies

Discussion starters written on a whiteboard or large piece of paper, for example:

- One time I went to ...
- You won't believe this, but I ...
- I really like to ...

Directions

1. If you have a large group, divide into smaller groups of six to ten people.
2. Have the group sit in a circle and assign a person to begin. Ask this group member to share a one-sentence story or piece of information about himself or herself. Use the discussion starters, if needed.
3. When that person has spoken his or her one-sentence story, the person sitting to the right must build on that story with his or her own sentence. Continue this pattern around the circle. For example:
Person 1: "One of my favorite places to go is Disney World."
Person 2: "My family went to Disney World when I was five."
Person 3: "When I was five, I had my tonsils removed."
4. Once you have completed the activity, repeat it but make it a race to see how fast you can complete the circle. If you have more than one circle, have them compete to see who can finish first.

Discuss

After the activity, gather everyone again. Read these quotations from the book:

"Our emotions help us connect, feel, and experience life in the

fullest of ways. But as girls who've been defined by Jesus, we need to be careful. Emotions can be so strong in the moment, and it's all too easy to let them define us temporarily and lead us toward bad choices." (page 112)

"When I feel my emotions take the lead, I'm often tempted to just sit back and let them. But that almost never has positive effects in my life." (page 114)

- Think about some of the one-sentence stories that were shared. What types of emotions were involved in what was shared? Happiness? Sadness? Fun? Celebration? Frustration? Fear? Shock?
- Was there a difference in emotions between the first round and second? Did having less time to respond and think through your response change how you felt and acted?
- Have group members think back to the beginning of their day. Can you remember the very first emotion you felt after you woke up this morning? How did that affect your day?
- On a scale of 1 to 20, how stressed out do you feel most days? What factors cause stress in your life and the lives of those around you? How does social media affect stress? Does it contribute to stress or help take it away?

Read and Discuss

Ask a student to look up and read both Psalm 8 and Psalm 51:1-12.

- What are some of the feelings you see communicated in each passage? Make a list of them as a group.
- David shares some powerful emotions in each Psalm. Why do you think he shares these with God?

FROM THE BOOK

"David wasn't afraid to express emotions, good or bad, to the God who created him. You don't have to be afraid, either. There's no emotion too deep, no mess too big, and no problem too complicated for God to handle." PAGES 119-20

#GiveItATry

Take a few minutes of silence to complete the #GiveItATry on page 117. Pass out pen and paper if needed. Have your students write a letter to God describing the last time they felt overwhelmed.

Discuss

- When emotions become really strong, what's your go-to place to air them out? Is it friends? Social media? A blog? Does that place point you to truth or does it allow you to sink deeper into your feelings?
- Are there particular emotions that are harder to digest than others?
- Have you ever felt hurt by something you read—about yourself or someone else—on social media?
- Have you ever hurt someone else because of something you've said to their face, behind their backs, or on social media? If you haven't spoken hurt, have you ever thought something negative of another person?
- In general, how often do you see mean-spirited comments on the social media sites you use? How often do you see loving comments? Which one happens more often? Why?

Activity *Chase Until Change—Revisited*

Goal

The goal of this activity is to help students notice the trigger that causes mean comments to start and help them identify the issue that caused that trigger in the first place.

Directions

1. The Chase Until Change concept was described in chapter 3 of the book. Revisit this concept with your students. You may need to summarize or remind them how it works.
2. Ask someone to describe a situation—either real or made up—where a mean comment has been spoken. (For example, a classmate might be teasing a girl at school, telling her she's not trendy.)
3. Choose a volunteer to identify a possible trigger that could have caused that mean comment to be spoken. (For example, the girl wore something to school that looked cheap or old.)
4. Ask other students to identify the *why* behind the trigger, and keep chasing deeper, until a root issue is identified. For example:
 - *Why is what that student wore an issue? Appearances imply value.*
 - *Why are appearances so important? The accuser may have an insecurity about her own appearance.*
 - *Why does this person have an insecurity? She has believed someone else's definition of value rather than God's definition (the root issue).*
5. You may choose to do this activity more than once, chasing different situations to uncover triggers and issues.
6. After you've completed the exercise or time has run out, ask your students if they think they can spot these triggers in real life. Why or why not?

FROM THE BOOK

"At the root of a mean comment, you'll usually find the insecurities of someone's heart. So it might sound weird, but the best way for us to love others well is actually to believe truth about ourselves." PAGE 126

Read and Discuss

Ask a student to read Proverbs 12:18.

Keeping in mind the triggers and issues just discussed. Brainstorm with your students how they can use their words to bring healing instead of negative comments. Encourage students to share practical examples.

Closing Activity

To close your session, complete the #GiveItATry section on page 136 of the book. Set a timer. Have your students take out their cell phones. Tell them that all together you are going to post or Tweet or e-mail as many encouraging messages as possible in ten minutes. It can be a message on someone's wall. A Tweeted quote. A status update. Anything. Ask students to use #IdentityRevolution so they can search the hashtag and see other people's encouragement. On the count of three ... post.

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

"Thinking that someone is less important than you is a lie of the most vicious kind. That girl whom you don't think is pretty or smart or talented? Jesus created her. He loves her—so much that He died for her. And He's already defined her as beautiful and loved and precious in His sight. You don't get to define her. Remember all those truths we've been preaching to ourselves about God's unconditional love? They are just as true about others." (page 133)

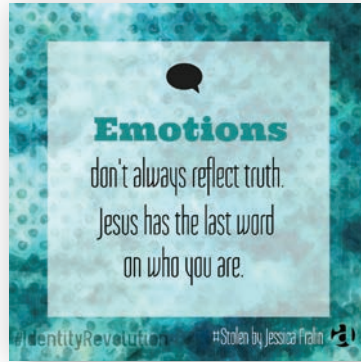
God loves messed up people, even when emotions—and words—get the best of them. God already knows all of your thoughts before you can even speak them. He can see inside to the hidden feelings buried in your heart. He isn't afraid of what you feel, he isn't afraid of what you've said or done, and He still loves you. He knows how to walk with you through them.

Takeaway

No one has ever had a bigger audience than we do right now because of social media. With more people listening to us, we can show the love of Jesus to more people. Speak kindness and truth and love. You never know who will be listening in.

Homework

Before your students leave, ask them to read the rest of the book (chapters 10 and 11 and appendices) before your next—and last—meeting.



LEADER FOLLOW-UP

- Send your students a quick text, post, or e-mail to remind them to continue encouraging others this week.
- Send a personal encouragement to each of your students this week.
- Challenge your students to post daily encouragement all week long using the hashtag #IdentityRevolution.
- Tag your students when you post one or both of the quotes or images at left to social media sometime this week. (Reminder: these images are available for download at AbingdonPress.com/Stolen).

No one has ever had a bigger audience than we do right now because of social media. **WITH MORE PEOPLE LISTENING TO US, WE CAN SHOW THE LOVE OF JESUS TO MORE PEOPLE.** Speak kindness and truth and love. You never know who will be listening in.

KINDNESS
TRUTH
LOVE

SESSION SIX

Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Wrap Up

TRENDING TOPICS

At the beginning of each session, we've reserved a few minutes to talk about what's currently happening on social media. Since this is your last session, you might consider changing this time to invite your students to share what they have learned about social media and about themselves.

FROM THE BOOK

"We've learned all about what not to believe, and why. Now we get to talk about what we can do instead. We can redeem our time on social media and make it something great. We can walk with confidence into the places that used to drag us down. And now that we understand the truth about whose we are, we can share that good news with the hurting hearts around us." PAGE 143

Opening Activity

Goal

The goal of your final activity together is to brainstorm *good*, consider if or how *good* can become *not-so-good*, and discuss ways to duplicate the *good* while avoiding the *bad*.

Directions

1. As a group, reread the #FactChat on pages 163–64 of chapter 11.
2. What are some other examples of videos or causes that have gone viral on social media? Take a few minutes and invite students to share them. Look them up on video websites.
3. After you've found some examples, discuss:
 - In what ways is the going-viral effect a good thing? In what ways can it be a bad thing?
 - What are some messages or ideas that you wish could go viral in social media?
 - Brainstorm some creative ways that Christians could try to go viral on social media. Is there an idea you could try? Take the time to flesh out these ideas and think through them with the help of everyone in the group. Allow your students to get excited about what they can accomplish for good on social media.

Read and Discuss

Have a student read Hebrews 12:1-2.

- What things are we instructed to do in these verses, and how are we supposed to do them?
- Verse 2 talks about what Jesus did for us. How does this play a role in the instructions from verse 1?
- How do you feel about sharing what you have learned with others? Are you excited? Scared? Feel burdened? Ask your students to be honest about what they are feeling and encourage them to ask for help with their emotions.

Choose another student to read Psalm 46:10a.

- What are some things you can do in order to "cease striving" or "be still," as it talks about in Psalm 46:10a?
- Have you ever considered a social media fast? What do you think could be the benefits of taking a break from social media for a short time? What might stop you from taking a time out?

FROM THE BOOK

"You need to spend some time in the truth before you proclaim it." PAGE 152

Closing Challenge

Ask students to volunteer for a social media fast. Some may not want to participate, but some may be eager to give it a try. For those who want to join, pass out copies of the "How to Fast from Social Media" handout on the last page of this guide.

Truth and Takeaway

Truth

You are free! Do you remember that? If you know Jesus, you are free! You are free to embrace the fact that the One who created you has identified you as BEAUTIFUL, VALUED, AND LOVED.

Takeaway

How do you go on as this beautiful child of the King, and



how do you help others see their worth and value? How do you shake off the other things that have tried to define you for so long?

“Be a force for encouragement. Let’s be kind. Speak truth. Speak freedom. Speak the gospel. It’s the opposite of what most of social media is saying. So it’ll get attention. ... Let’s start an #IdentityRevolution. May his love go viral!” (page 164)

Closing

End your time by gathering together to pray. If your group is large, break into smaller groups. Have each person share one thing from the study that they need prayer for. Or have them each pray for the person they hope to share the truth with about who they are (beautiful, valued, and loved). They don’t have to name names, of course. Encourage the prayer time to be specific. Have each person pray, but do not put someone on the spot if they really, really do not want to pray in the group. After prayer, read Mark 16:15 as a blessing over your students.

I hope you look in the mirror and smile because you know you’re valuable regardless of what happens on Twitter today.

BE A FORCE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. Let’s be kind. Speak truth. Speak freedom. Speak the gospel. It’s the opposite of what most of social media is saying. So it’ll get attention. ... Let’s start an #IdentityRevolution. May his love go viral!”

**SPEAK
TRUTH**

TIPS FOR FASTING FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

The idea of taking a social media fast may be an intimidating one, especially if you are one who Tweets and posts and blogs several times a day. If you're intrigued by the potentially amazing results from taking a time out from social media but are afraid to actually give it a try, here are some tips on how to make the most of your time away.

Have a Plan

You may not need to fast from every aspect of social media. Or perhaps your work or school require you to be able to text and e-mail. Before you begin a fast, determine the extent of your fast (which and how many of your social medias), the time of your fast (3 days, 5 days, 8 days ... 30 days!), and the boundaries you need to maintain to make your fast a success. (A boundary example: no logging into, posting, or Tweeting actively, but discussing those things is okay).

Limit your Access to Social Media

- If you keep your phone on your bedside table and look at it immediately after waking up in the morning, consider moving your phone across the room so it's not as easily accessible.
- Deactivate your social media apps from your phone or tablet.
- Delete or move bookmarks on your computers so that social media is not staring at you.
- Turn off notifications so you aren't e-mailed about social media activity while on your fast.

Refocus your Attention

If you have the urge to open a social media, ask yourself what you wanted to do or say there, and then find another way to accomplish that. For example, if you have the urge to post something on a friend's wall, call that friend to verbally tell her what you were going to write.

Find Accountability

Tell a friend or family member what you are doing and ask them to help keep you accountable.

Fill Your Time

- Read a book or two ... or three.
- Write hand-written letters rather than typed posts.
- Go out for coffee dates and talk in person.
- Read your Bible.
- Write in a journal.
- Go for a walk or hike. Offer to take your neighbor's dog for a bit of exercise.
- Host a picnic or event for your friends—no cell phones allowed.
- Instead of posting pictures, look through old printed photos, create a scrapbook, pick one or two of them to frame.

