

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

LGBTQ+ & YOUR TEEN



Connecting Parents, Teens & Jesus
in a Disconnected World

AXIS PARENT GUIDES SERIES

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You don't have to label your sexuality; so many kids these days are not labeling their sexuality and I think that's so cool. . . . If you like something one day then you do, and if you like something else the other day, it's whatever. You don't have to label yourself because it's not set in stone. It's so fluid.

**LILY-ROSE DEPP,
JOHNNY DEPP'S DAUGHTER**

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A LETTER FROM AXIS

Dear Reader,

We're Axis, and since 2007, we've been creating resources to help connect parents, teens, and Jesus in a disconnected world. We're a group of gospel-minded researchers, speakers, and content creators, and we're excited to bring you the best of what we've learned about making meaningful connections with the teens in your life.

This parent's guide is designed to help start a conversation. Our goal is to give you enough knowledge that you're able to ask your teen informed questions about their world. For each guide, we spend weeks reading, researching, and interviewing parents and teens in order to distill everything you need to know about the topic at hand. We encourage you to read the whole thing and then to use the questions we include to get the conversation going with your teen—and then to follow the conversation wherever it leads.

As Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen point out in their book *Difficult Conversations*, “Changes in attitudes and behavior rarely come about because of arguments, facts, and attempts to persuade. How often do *you* change your values and beliefs—or whom you love or what you want in life—based on something someone tells you? And how likely are you to do so when the person who is trying to change you doesn’t seem fully aware of the reasons you see things differently in the first place?”¹ For whatever reason, when we believe that others are trying to understand *our* point of view, our defenses usually go down, and we’re more willing to listen to *their* point of view. The rising generation is no exception.

So we encourage you to ask questions, to listen, and then to share your heart with your teen. As we often say at Axis, discipleship happens where conversation happens.

Sincerely,
Your friends at Axis

¹ Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 137.

**TODAY'S TEENS
RELY ON THE
INTERNET,
DISLIKE LABELS,
AND LOVE THEIR
LGBTQ+ FRIENDS**

IN THE 1990S, BEING GAY was more controversial than it is now. Ellen DeGeneres sparked controversy in 1997 for coming out as a lesbian on her hit TV show. In recent years, Ellen's daytime talk show became one of the most popular,¹ and at the end of 2016, President Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.²

Modern teens are growing up in a culture that has changed significantly since the '90s. If they aren't questioning their own sexuality, they have friends who are. They're living in a society where Harry Styles is modeling Gucci's womenswear³ and where there are so many letters in the current LGBTQ+ initialism (LGBTQQIAAP)⁴ that it's simpler to use a plus sign than to list all of them. It's no longer as big a deal to explore what it means to be gay or bisexual. Young people now tend to focus more on the

newer terms represented by the acronym: *queer*, *questioning*, *intersex*, *ally*, *asexual*, and *pansexual*.

Even if your kids don't struggle with their sexual orientation or gender identity, they probably know people who do. For the most part, the way the church has addressed these issues has been inadequate at best and polarizing at worst. What follows is what we think you need to know about what is shaping Gen Z's perceptions of these issues, as well as how you can engage well with your teen and the LGBTQ+ community.