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McKee's "Get Your Teenager Talking: Everything You Need to Spark Meaningful Conversations" (Book Review)

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While it might be an interesting story, the numerous grammatical errors are a major detraction, making it difficult to read. Examples are “it’s” when it should be “its,” and “sir names” for “surnames.” In addition, there are typographical errors, such as “is” for “in,” and “widow” for “window.” I find those errors puzzling not only for an English teacher, but also for the publisher who did not catch them. The author seems to delight in descriptions, many of which have absolutely nothing to do with the story. Cases in point are his very detailed description of what a person ate at a restaurant, as well as a room in which he describes every little thing and where it was. These were totally irrelevant and detracted from the story.

Almost every one of the sentences on the first page has some reference to God and the protagonist’s faith. This is fine, but I feel that a non-Christian, not wanting to be hit over the head with Christianity, would probably close the book and not pick it up again.

If a person is only interested in a good story, this would be a good selection, but the reader needs to be prepared to be distracted by grammatical and typographical errors, as well as irrelevant details.

**Get Your Teenager Talking: Everything You Need
to Spark Meaningful Conversations,**

by Jonathan R. McKee. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014.
172 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 0764211854

*Reviewed by Jeffery S. Gates, Information Services Librarian,
Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH*

I have a quiet teenage son, so I was attracted by the title of this book – and even more so when I read that the author has 20 years of youth ministry experience, has written other books for youth, and regularly speaks to parents and leaders worldwide. Since the ideas for these discussion starters came from his family, friends, and his blog readers, I assumed they would be relevant. McKee has a short section at the beginning with tips for getting teenagers talking, such as “Don’t ask yes or no questions,” and “Don’t ask dull questions,” but he devotes most of the book to *180 Conversation Springboards*. Each includes a main question, follow-up questions, insight into the question, and related questions. He ends the book with a 59-entry subject index that includes topics such as addictions, careers, dating, etiquette, fun, heroes, internet, jobs, movies, possessions, recreation, social media, temptation, values, and wisdom. After using the discussion questions with my son, I can say that I am not disappointed. Some questions in the book brought more discussion than others, and

some of them were not appropriate to ask my son. However, asking *Conversation Springboard 19*: “When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?” resulted in some discussion. The follow-up question “How has this changed as you’ve gotten older?” and the related question “What is a job you never want, and why?” made him open up even more. *Get Your Teenager Talking* is a great book for parents of teenagers and those who work with them.

God in the Machine: Video Games as Spiritual Pursuit,

by Liel Leibovitz, West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013. 144 pp.

\$19.95. ISBN 9781599474373

*Reviewed by Sarah E. Keil, Instruction and Serials Librarian,
Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN*

Many dismiss video games as a worthless pursuit, and some even go so far as to consider them a harmful and addictive activity that sets individuals towards violence. Liel Leibovitz defies those assumptions while explaining gaming’s allure and place in the world. He bypasses the notion that video games are simply entertainment, equating video games to religion and a setting where one can explore morals and ethics while better understanding the divine order of the world. Leibovitz admits the comparison of video games to religion is flawed, since the worlds of the games are not real, and the designers are not gods. He does not advocate gaming as an alternative to religion, stating that gaming “is a practice in rituals, ethics, morality, and metaphysics” (x).

Despite this, Leibovitz’s arguments are well supported through the invocation of philosophers and communication theorists like Kierkegaard, Augustine, and Heidegger and the analysis of video game history, design, and theory. He also utilizes illustrations from his personal gaming life to add value to the argument that the element of storytelling in games allows for growth, purpose, and fulfillment gained by exploring the self and the world. Notably absent in this argument, despite the comparison between gaming and religion, is analysis from the Bible or other religious texts. Though the final chapter delves more into the spiritual realm instead of philosophical evidence, that omission is striking. For the Christian, this argument is lacking. At best, video games are more like religious ritual than spiritual pursuit, so the title and thesis can be a bit misleading for some. Regardless, this work is a thoughtful, well-written, and concise scholarly analysis of a popular pastime. As such, it is a recommended resource for college and university libraries. Though an academic text, it is accessible to undergraduates.