

# Parenting Teenage Faith

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



## YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

*“Sometimes the arrogance of youth is actually an essential part of moving forward. The clarity of being a 22-year-old and having such strongly held views now is more difficult, because you realize the thing holding you back is yourself. You are your own worst enemy.”*

U2 lead guitarist The Edge, when thinking back on the impact of their 1987 album, *The Joshua Tree*, Billboard.com, December 14, 2017.



Kyle was open about expressing his love for God. . . as a child. Then, according to his concerned parents, Kyle became a teenager and his devotion to the Christian faith seemed to fade. What was happening to Kyle?

Children from birth to age ten have a blind-faith tendency to accept without question the values and beliefs of parents. While they don't have a deep knowledge of biblical facts and theological truth, they do believe in the simple facts and truths which are taught by Mom and Dad, then reinforced at church. But it won't necessarily stay that way in adolescence. Armed with a God-given newfound ability to think, evaluate, and solve problems, teenagers oftentimes begin to question the values and beliefs they have previously accepted. They will take what you have painstakingly and faithfully handed down to them and put it to the test. This is oftentimes the case when it comes to the Christian faith.

The questioning attitude of a teenage child who has been raised and instructed in the faith can be the most challenging and disheartening aspect of parenting for Christian parents. I know several parents who have weathered this storm to watch their children grow up with a faith that has become their own. In fact, many of them have embraced the storm knowing that in the long run, their child will be better for having gone through the difficulty. When I ask them how they got through it, they consistently offer these simple and valuable suggestions to parents who are still facing this challenge:

- **Be diligent in teaching young children by precept and example.** Talk about your faith. . . and never stop. Spend time together learning to understand God's Word. By doing so you will help your children build a strong foundation.
- **Don't be upset when your children start to ask questions.** Rejecting the faith of your childhood is very different from

asking honest questions and expressing doubt. A teen's struggle to find answers to real and serious questions is a step on the road to spiritual growth.

- **Encourage your teen to be a vital part of your church.** Teens benefit from interaction with older Christians who in the context of a loving relationship, freely share with vulnerability and honesty the Godly wisdom that comes with advanced years and spiritual maturity.
- **Openly share your own doubts and struggles.** Teenagers value authenticity and vulnerability in parents and other adults. Sharing our doubts with our children allows them to see us in our full humanity and dependence on God.
- **Never, ever forget that spiritual growth is a process.** If you are a Christian parent, your level of faith, spiritual maturity, and understanding is not the same as when you were a teenager. You've gone through a long process of growth that is still continuing. Since they are just like you, show them patience and grace.
- **Remember that spiritual maturity is born out of struggle.** God always redeems horrible situations to bring His good out of our rebellious bad. That mistake your teen just made might just be the very thing God is using to whittle them into who He wants them to become.
- **Never stop praying for your kids.** We can never be successful in force-feeding faith to our kids. We can only teach them and answer their questions. The rest is in God's hands.
- **Don't ever believe that the story is over.** God's ways are not our ways. And His script for our story and the story of our kids is not the script we would write. My wife and I are continually reminded that for all of us, the story is not yet over. ✨

TOP 10...

Shows we Watched Together as a Family on Netflix

Source:  
2017 on Netflix  
- A Year in Bingeing



1. Stranger Things
2. 13 Reasons Why
3. A Series of Unfortunate Events
4. Star Trek Discovery
5. Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life
6. Riverdale
7. Fuller House
8. Chef's Table
9. Atypical
10. Anne with an E



### QUICK STATS

Older teens struggling with depression are more than twice as likely to drop out of high school as peers without that mental illness or those who recovered from a bout of depression earlier in life. *(Journal of Adolescent Health)*

58.7% of TV homes in the U.S. now own at least one Internet-enabled device capable of streaming to a TV set. *(Nielsen's Q2 2017 Total Audience Report)*

### FROM THE NEWS:

## OPIOID CRISIS

Unless you've been ignoring the news, you know that our country is locked in an opioid crisis that is wreaking havoc on individuals, families, and communities. In 2014, almost 29,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses. That number rose in 2015 to 33,000 opioid deaths. In 2016, overall deaths from drug overdoses are estimated to be almost 65,000. And this year, the numbers continue to track up. Thanks to opioids, overdosing on drugs is now the most common cause of death for people under the age of fifty years old. Drug and alcohol addiction is literally touching every family in our country. Parents, we can't sit by quietly and assume that our kids and our family are somehow immune from this issue. We need to be proactive in talking to our kids about the pressures to use drugs, the dangers of using drugs, and the need to worship God with our lives by choosing to live our lives free of drug abuse. Talk to your kids today.

## TRENDS: TRANSGENDERISM AND REVERSAL SURGERY

Ten years ago, virtually no one in youth culture was talking openly about transgenderism. Now, transgenderism has moved into the public consciousness, with a growing number of children, young and old, claiming that their personal identity does not correspond to their birth sex. There is strong speculation that the increase in those identifying as transgender has been fueled by a kind cultural promotion and popularity facilitated by social media and widespread acceptance. In the wake of a growing number of gender reassignment surgeries, more and more people, particularly transgender woman over the age of thirty, are asking for reversal surgery. Dr. Miroslav Djordjevic says that as the number of those who regret the surgery grows, they are motivated by experiencing crippling levels of depression and in some cases have contemplated suicide. Parents, we must push on this growing confusion by telling the creation story, where God assigns gender as male and female.



## LATEST RESEARCH: BINGE DRINKING AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

The human body is an amazing thing. It's been created by God as an integrated whole that is very complex. Science and medicine

have opened new doors of understanding as to just how intricate and interrelated the parts of the body really are. It should come as no surprise that introducing alcohol into one's system alters both consciousness and chemistry, regardless of one's age. But what is most alarming is the fact that a growing number

of kids are doing real damage to their brains as a result of the increasingly widespread practice of binge-drinking, in which they drink five or more drinks in a row. Researchers are now drawing more and more connections between teen drinking and issues in brain development. The dangers and consequences are real. We must help our teens come to an understanding of their need to practice good stewardship of their God-given bodies.

### COLLEGE TRANSITION INITIATIVE

a resource of CPYU



[www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com](http://www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com)

## Pushing Back on Alcohol Culture

by Walt Mueller



Last month, a grand jury investigating alcohol-fueled hazing rituals at Penn State University issued a report saying that "shocking apathy" on the part of the university contributed to the alcohol-related death of a fraternity pledge earlier in the year. The report concluded that Penn State should step up and take the ultimate responsibility for guarding against alcohol abuse by students.

Certainly, parents *should* be aware of drinking policies on campus when their students enroll in college. Schools *should* be setting up borders and boundaries that curtail and limit the partying and alcohol abuse culture. . . which is seen by many college students to be an expected part of their college experience. But all of the burden should not rest on colleges alone.

There is a shared burden that is necessary. Our parenting goal - from the time they are born - must be to educate and equip our kids for a God-glorifying college experience, which is marked by embracing and living out a counter-cultural attitude regarding the college partying scene. When they find their identity in Christ, God-honoring behaviors will flow out of the desires of their hearts, rather than the external constraints of campus rules and regulations. Equip your kids to become responsible for themselves, in this and all other areas of life.

## Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a long-format podcast from CPYU.

Co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek, each episode features an interview with an expert in a youth culture related field.



Listen at  
[www.cpyu.org/podcast](http://www.cpyu.org/podcast).

## FROM THE WORD

The reality is that in spite of your hopes and dreams for a pain-free and smooth-sailing new year, the next twelve months will be much like all the months you've already experienced over the course of your life. There will be days filled with joy and gladness, and there will be days when you have to work through heartache and difficulty. We live in a broken world and we can expect trouble.

But the good news is that the story does not stop there, leaving us hopeless. Instead, we can celebrate the coming of Christ into this broken world to make all things new. Through his life, death, and resurrection, we can know that the trials and sorrows that we experience in this life are limited to this earth only. In John 16:33, Jesus tells us that trials and sorrows are to be expected. But he follows those words up with a powerful "but"! He tells us that we can "take heart" in the knowledge that he has overcome the world.

As a parent, you will experience your own trials and sorrows. You will also live through the trials and sorrows of your kids. Read and meditate on John 16:33. Ask the Lord

to grant you the peace to endure the trials and sorrows you will face this year. Ask him to help you see beyond those things into the hope of eternal glory that he has promised.

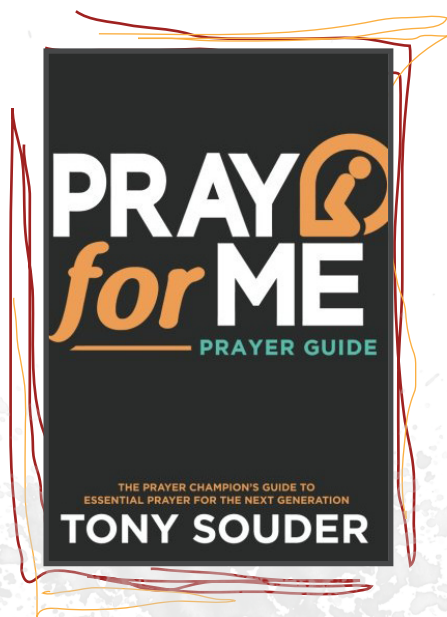
**"I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS SO THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE IN ME. HERE ON EARTH, YOU WILL HAVE MANY TRIALS AND SORROWS. BUT TAKE HEART, BECAUSE I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."**

**JOHN 16:33**

## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

The Pray For Me Campaign, founded by Tony Souder, is a strategic step in mobilizing adults from every generation to intentionally begin investing in the lives of teenagers in a natural way. They have taken the most basic of Christian acts - prayer - and made it the connecting point between the generations. Prayer provides an easy and non-threatening way to initiate relationships across generational lines, while also creating a bond that is supernatural and lasting. May God be pleased to create a vast web of relationships across generational lines throughout His entire Church by raising up a host of Prayer Champions for each emerging generation.

The *Pray For Me Prayer Guide*, written by Souder, is a tool specifically designed to help you, as a Prayer Champion, stay the course in praying effectively for the next generation. As you work your way through the guide you will taste the sweetness of turning Scripture into prayer. You will learn to look through the lens of The 7 Essentials when praying for the next generation. You will have the opportunity to begin experiencing the rhythm of life with God using the SeeSavorShare (S3) Discipleship Process. All of these benefits are captured in thirteen weeks of daily focused prayer for the next generation. Learn more at [www.PrayForMeCampaign.com](http://www.PrayForMeCampaign.com).



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