

So What's Wrong With Being Self-Centered?

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“I don't really consider myself famous in any fashion. To me, I'm just goofing off on camera for six to eight hours a day. That's what it literally feels like. And when I'm done, I'm downstairs with my daughter and beautiful wife, disconnected from the online world.”

Guy Beahm, known on the video game streaming service Twitch as DrDisRespect, speaking about family and fame, RollingStone.com, February 26, 2018



One sunny Labor Day, I had the opportunity to go boating with a group of high schoolers in the clear blue waters off the coast of Miami. Six of us enjoyed the beautiful weather while swimming and water-skiing off the back end of a pretty impressive boat that belonged to Dave's father. When it was Dave's turn to ski, I went to the back of the boat to slide him the skis while he dove into the water. When he came up out of the water, he leaned back and let out a comfortable sigh. "Ahhhh," he said. "I wonder what the poor people are doing today."

Dave had verbalized an attitude way too common in our culture today. We have become so consumed with meeting our own needs that we forget about or don't even care for those less fortunate than ourselves. Our actions, particularly our lack of assistance to others, reveals the fact that we are satisfied with being self-centered.

When it comes to integrating Christian faith into the material and financial parts of their lives, even Christian kids – like the rest of us – are having difficulty. I'll never forget something Kenneth Kantzer wrote that hit me right between the eyes: "The most serious problem facing the church today is materialism – materialism not as a philosophical theory, but as a way of life."¹

Tom Sine feels that adults are selling young people the wrong dream: "We all seem to be trying to live the American Dream with a little Jesus overlay. We talk about the lordship of Jesus, but our career comes first. Our house in the 'burbs comes first. Then, with whatever we have left, we try to follow Jesus."²

More and more of today's teens, even many (most likely most) who profess faith in Christ, see nothing wrong with this type of lifestyle, in

spite of the fact that Jesus called his followers to be totally committed to him, as opposed to being preoccupied with their own material needs. As one who speaks from experience, I can tell you that the more I have, the more those things that I have cloud or block my view of Christ and his calling.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by the selfish reflection we see of ourselves in the mirror of today's youth culture. Our kids have been exposed to the disease of self-centeredness. And like those of us who are adults, our kids run the risk of living with the disease so long that they forget that they even have it.

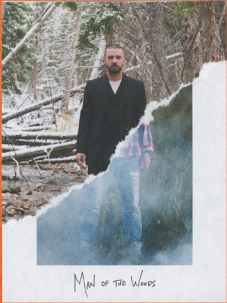
But we can't stop at being surprised. Jesus has called us to "follow" him by prioritizing obedience to his will and his way at the top of our earthly pursuits. The best way to lead our children and teens into a life of faithful obedience is to pursue faithful obedience ourselves. Leading and guiding your own kids begins with looking into the mirror and staring at your own heart. As Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). So, where is your heart? Then, along with modeling faithful obedience that puts earthly things in their proper place, we must preach the same Gospel to the hearts of our kids. Finally, adjust your spending and living habits to more clearly reflect Kingdom priorities, investing your overflow of time and money in ways that help others. Instead of arrogantly wondering what the poor people are doing today, humbly minister to those in need. . . with deep gratitude to God for what you've been given. ✪

¹ Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Ron Sider Is Mostly Right," *Christianity Today*, 8 October 1990, 21.

² Tom Sine, "Will the Real Cultural Christians Please Stand Up," *World Vision*, October/November 1989, 21.

Albums

Source:
Billboard Magazine,
Billboard 200 Chart
 Week of February 24, 2018



1. ***Black Panther: The Album, Music From and Inspired By (Soundtrack)***
 by Various Artists

2. ***Man of the Woods*** by Justin Timberlake

3. ***The Greatest Showman (Soundtrack)*** by Various Artists

4. ***Culture II*** by Migos

5. ***Fifty Shades Freed (Soundtrack)***

by Various Artists

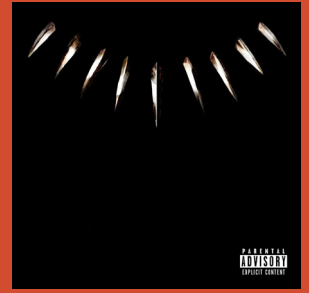
6. ***Divide*** by Ed Sheeran

7. ***24K Magic*** by Bruno Mars

8. ***Stoney*** by Post Malone

9. ***DAMN.*** by Kendrick Lamar

10. ***Camila*** by Camila Cabello



QUICK STATS

Teens and adults who stay up late on weeknights are more likely to gain weight over time than their peers that head to bed at an earlier hour.
(Sleep)

Participating in youth tackle football prior to age 12 doubled a player's risk of suffering from issues related to behavioral regulation, executive functions, and apathy. In addition, the risk of eventually suffering from clinical depression tripled.
(Boston University's Chronic Traumatic Encephelopathy Center)

FROM THE NEWS:

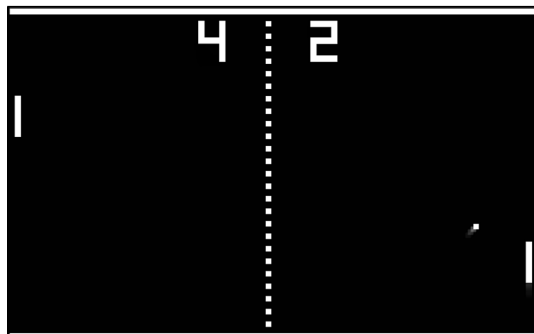
RISING SUICIDE RATES

There's sad news from the realm of adolescent mental health. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are reporting that the suicide rates for adolescent boys and girls have been steadily rising since 2007. The suicide rate for girls ages fifteen to nineteen actually doubled between 2007 and 2015. Suicide among teen girls has reached its highest point in the last forty years. Among our fifteen to nineteen year old boys, the suicide rate increased thirty percent between 2007 and 2015. It is safe to say that teen suicides have reached epidemic proportions in today's youth culture. The message for parents, youth workers, and teachers is clear: we must familiarize ourselves with the causes and signs of teen suicide. And, we must exercise diligence in building our relationships with the kids we know and love, so that they will not only know that someone cares for them, but that they will know they have someone to go to if they are struggling with depression.

TRENDS:

VIDEO GAMING AS VARSITY SPORT

We've come a long way since the first video game was released for mainstream use. Do you know what that game was and when it debuted? It was back in 1972 that the Atari corporation released the two-dimensional game known as *Pong*. For those of you who remember those days you can recall just how amazing we all thought that original *Pong* game was. Fast forward 46 years and almost half of all U.S. households report owning a dedicated gaming console. Additionally, 63% of households are home to at least one person who plays games at least three hours a week. With video gaming moving from coin-operated arcade games to the bedroom, you might not be surprised that our love for video games has resulted in some colleges making video gaming a varsity sport. Yes, that's really happening. While there is nothing wrong with video gaming, parents should be limiting gaming times and the types of games they allow their children to play.



LATEST RESEARCH:

GEN Z, LGBT AND ATHEISM

Recent research from the Barna Group sheds light on some trends we need to be aware of regarding Generation Z, who are the 70 million kids born between 1999 and 2015. Teenagers in Generation Z are at least twice as likely as American adults to identify as LGBT or as atheist. The folks at Barna correctly assert that these realities post new ministry challenges for Christian parents, youth workers, and the Church. Among other things, this research affirms that our teenagers are in the process of exploring and adopting answers to two basic questions. First, "who am I?" This applies more and more to discovering how to embrace and live out their God-given gift of sexuality. And second, "what do I believe?" While there are many strategies we can employ to help our teens navigate these questions, one strategy is primary. From a young age, we must be educating and catechizing our kids into a deep understanding of the truths of God's word. Christian education is not optional.

Budding romances and new relationships are all just part of the pressures a typical teenager will face with regards to their sexuality. Here are four thoughts to consider as you prepare to have difficult conversations around each of these and how best to communicate your values surrounding your son or daughter's choice to live with sexual integrity.

#1 - Communicate your value and communicate it often. I can't emphasize how important it is that your teenager knows what is important to you as a parent and why. Your voice has power...believe in it! If you want your teenager to wait to have sex, then tell them directly and give them a reason. Become the authority.

#2 - Listen and listen some more. Ask questions, check-in, and hear their thoughts. Also, take advantage of those opportunities where you get to overhear their friends sharing or even what you see on your teenager's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram accounts (sometimes those are the most telling) and follow up.

#3 - Respond out of love, not anger. If you end up hearing or being told something you don't approve of, remember that taking time to breathe, reflect, and seek discernment might give you (and them) the best opportunity to respond. Creating a safe place for your teenager to respond is important and can change what and how they share in the future.

#4 - Own your stuff. Sometimes the decisions your son or daughter makes can bring up your own past mistakes. Be sure you've forgiven yourself before you work through the mistakes your teenager might make.

SEXUAL INTEGRITY
INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

Preparing
for Difficult
Conversations

by Jason Soucinek



New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a long-format podcast from CPYU co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek.



Listen at
www.cpyu.org/podcast.

Be sure to check out Episode 53 for an interview with Dr. Marv Penner about suicide intervention.

FROM THE WORD

Your teenagers will make mistakes. They will fall into sin. They will do wrong. They will disappoint you. How should you respond? Christian counselor and parenting expert Dr. Paul Tripp offers some great advice in his helpful book *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*.

He reminds us that we need to demonstrate to our children “how the Bible interprets, explains, and organizes life.” Tripp writes, “Don’t resort to on-the-fly, ‘This is what I think about it’ or ‘Do it because I said so’ responses.” Your teenager needs confidence in Scripture as God’s source of wisdom and understanding about life. He needs to grow in his ability to use this amazingly sufficient resource.

Each circumstance also provides an opportunity to demonstrate how the Bible makes sense out of the things your child faces each day. The goal is that he would really embrace Scripture as a “lamp to my feet and light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

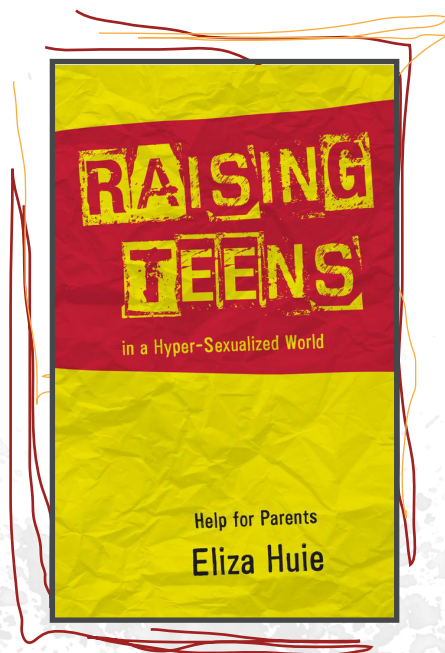
**“YOUR WORD IS A
LAMP TO MY FEET
AND LIGHT TO
MY PATH.”
PSALM 119:105**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Parents of teens face the challenge of raising their children in a sex-mad, sex-saturated world.

Eliza Huie, a parent and Christian counsellor, takes you through, practically, how to walk with your teen in the midst of this hyper-sexualized world. The tips come in the form of what not to do, yet they do so without giving a sense of judgment or failure. Instead, *Raising Teens in a Hyper-Sexualized World: Help for Parents* takes a look at the value of reframing the mistakes both parents and teens may have already made and gives a hopeful picture of how our compassionate Father moves toward us in weakness.

This short book (42 pages) is packed with wisdom on how parents can tackle the subject of sex with teenagers, avoiding the twin dangers of overreaction and abdication, while being positive about sex and keeping communication lines open.



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