

Parenting: What Did You Expect?!?

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President

YOUTH CULTURE
HOT QUOTE

“As soon as I realized that I could actually live and breathe ... without having a boyfriend, something clicked in me.”

Nicki Minaj, on feeling empowered now that she's single, *Elle*, June 15, 2018



It couldn't have come fast enough. . . the birth of our first child, that is. Thirty-five years ago we learned that “we” were pregnant. As the anticipation built as fast as my wife's belly grew, I spent countless nights laying awake and pondering the joy that was to be ours when our daughter would finally arrive. But my day and nighttime dreams anticipated much more than her arrival. I thought about all of the joy-filled years that would follow. In essence, I created a parenting narrative full of joy and absent of any sorrow. And upon her arrival on December 1st, 1983, I couldn't take my eyes off of her. For what seemed like that entire first night I kept staring at our little bundle while thanking God over and over for this undeserved gift.

Since that night in 1983, our family added three more children. And now, two of those children have given us the gift of five grandchildren. And while each successive little bundle has increased our joy, I've also learned that my expectations about parenting haven't even come close to what raising kids is really like. And if you're like me, you too anticipated in your mind what the future would hold after arrival of your children. But that early-on view of parenting is really quite different from what it is found to be as the years unfold and we are engaged in it. In fact, the wonder and awe I experienced when I first held my daughter and asked God, “What did I do to deserve this?!?” quickly changed to a request for an explanation when in later years difficult parenting moments would lead me to utter the same question, but with a pleading tone!

Way back in 1774, the hymnwriter and clergyman John Newton wrote a letter which I recently stumbled upon and read. Newton's words of wisdom to a younger pastor hit me hard as I thought about how my original parenting narrative shifted into a parenting narrative willed to me by God. Newton wrote, “The young soldier, who has never seen an enemy, may form some general notions of what is before him; but his ideas will be much more lively and diversified when he comes upon the field of battle. If the Lord was to show us the whole beforehand, who that has a due sense of his own insufficiency and weakness, would venture to engage?”¹

Yep! God in his grace won't pull back the curtain to reveal our parenting futures all at once. If he did, many of us might cave to fear and choose to not to have children in the first place! Rather, he promises us that when he gives us the gift of children (Psalm 127) he will also give us the gift of needed grace to navigate the inevitable joys and sorrows we will face as parents. As Newton went on to write in his letter, “It is a good and noble cause, and we serve a good and gracious master; who, though he will make us feel our weakness and vileness, will not suffer us to sink under it, his grace is sufficient for us; and if he favors us with an humble and dependent spirit, a single eye, and a simple heart, he will make every difficulty give way, and mountains shall sink into plains before his power.”

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want to nor could I parent any other way! ★

¹Select Letters of John Newton, p. 46.

Best-Selling Games Year-To-Date

Source:
NPD Group via Forbes
(June 26, 2018)



1. *Far Cry 5*
2. *God of War 2018*
3. *Monster Hunter: World*
4. *Call of Duty: WWII*
5. *Dragon Ball: Fighterz*
6. *Grand Theft Auto V*
7. *NBA 2K18*
8. *MLB 18: The Show*
9. *Mario Kart 8*
10. *Playerunknown's Battlegrounds*



QUICK STATS

Only half of U.S. adults today are wed, down from 72 percent in 1960.

(Pew Research Center)

In 2016, the median age for a first marriage was 27.4 for women and 29.5 for men – about seven years more than the median ages in 1960 (20.3 for women and 22.8 for men).

(Pew Research Center)

FROM THE NEWS:

HOMECOMING AND GENDER

In a nod to changing values, attitudes, and behaviors, Penn State University has made changes to a long-standing homecoming tradition. As with most other schools, Penn State has been naming a Homecoming King and Queen. Now, the school is eliminating the titles of Homecoming King and Homecoming Queen in an effort, they say, to embrace diversity and gender inclusivity within the college community. A statement released by the school explains that ten candidates “who capture the essence of the values we hold true as a university will be chosen, regardless of their gender, gender identity, and/or gender expression.” Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised when other colleges and high schools follow suit. The Scriptures are clear that at creation, God created human kind as either male or female, and that marriage is the joining together of two people. . . one male, and one female. Teach your kids the biblical design and order for gender and sexuality.

TRENDS:
GABAPENTIN ABUSE

Gabapentin is one of the most prescribed drugs in the United States. Now, this generic pill that's long been seen and used as a low-risk way to treat seizures and nerve pain is finding itself in the news as a new drug being abused.

No, it's not a part of the opioid family. Because of new regulations surrounding the distribution and availability of opioids, Gabapentin is being used to get a cheap high that users say is almost always available. It's reported that the drug is being mixed with opioids, marijuana, and cocaine to enhance the high, with effects ranging from increased energy to a mellow numbness. Experts are estimating that between 15-25% of opioid abusers also use Gabapentin. With the CDC reporting a rise in abuse and overdoses related to Gabapentin, we need to once again warn the kids we know and love about the dangers associated with abusing all sorts of drugs. Teach them to deal with their anxiety in ways that bring hope and healing.

LATEST RESEARCH:
SEXTING

A recent study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* confirms what we've believed to be the case now for some time. The practice of sexting – or sharing sexually explicit photos, videos, or messages – is increasingly common among today's teens. About 27% of teens say they've received a sext. Almost 15% admit to

having sent a sext. And 12% said they had forwarded a sexually explicit photo, video, or message without permission. While teens do use computers to sext, the practice is now happening most frequently on smartphones. Of course, our preventive efforts should include warnings about both the legal and long-term fallout that can occur with sexting. But even more than that, we must help our kids understand God's grand and glorious design

for the gift of our sexuality. Sexting undermines God's plan for our flourishing. Sex is to be experienced and enjoyed within the context of heterosexual marriage.

**COLLEGE
TRANSITION
INITIATIVE**

a resource of CPYU

www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com

**Higher Ed
BS!**

by Walt Mueller



My head is still spinning from an op-ed piece² I read in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* way back in January. Written by Christian Smith, an educator/researcher I highly respect and the author of the book *Soul Searching*, Smith says that higher education is drowning in BS that is mortally corrosive to society. . . and he's sick of it.

Smith begins his piece with a long litany of just what the BS is, including a loss of capacity to grapple with life's big questions, the fantasy that education can be accomplished online through "distance learning", a commitment to political-correctness that stifles learning, and a standard undergraduate mentality that sees college as a passport to credentials and money. Christian Smith is a higher ed insider. . . and he's speaking truth.

If this is the state of contemporary higher education, what can parents do? First, investigate every one of your child's higher ed choices with a fine-tooth comb. If you're an alum, don't assume it's the same school that you graduated from. Second, run interference for your kids. If you believe that enrollment in a particular school will do more harm than good, direct them somewhere else. Finally, pursue an education that values that which is good, true, right, and honorable. Spending four or more years immersed in BS won't do your kids any good.

²<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Higher-Education-Is-Drowning/242195>

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 60 titled
“Sacrificing Truth on the
Altar of Relevance?”
with Duffy Robbins and
Marv Penner.

FROM THE WORD

The Apostle Paul knew full well what it is like to face pain, hardships, difficulties, calamities, persecutions, and weaknesses. Many today find this difficult to believe because, after all, we see Paul as a sincere and committed follower of Jesus Christ. Shouldn't Paul then be free from these things?

The Scriptures never promise a life free from difficulty for those who follow Christ. Instead, we are told that to follow Jesus requires leaving everything and taking up a cross. And as we encounter difficulties, God works in us and through us, conforming us to His image and glorifying Himself before a watching world. Paul knew that relief comes not in the removal of trials and difficulties, but in abiding in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 we learn that God's power is perfected in and through our weaknesses.

**“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU,
FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT
IN WEAKNESS. THEREFORE I WILL
BOAST ALL THE MORE GLADLY OF MY
WEAKNESSES, SO THAT THE POWER
OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME.”
2 CORINTHIANS 12:9**

Parents who are committed to Christ, growing in their faith, and humbly learning to rely on Christ quickly learn that weaknesses are the stage on which God showers us with His grace and His power. Through it all, we learn not to depend on our undependable selves, but on Him. The greater our awareness of our own weaknesses, the more conspicuous is the power of God's grace in our lives and in our parenting. God's power is manifested in the weak. . . and that's just where He wants us!

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Why the call to *Love Thy Body*? To counter a pervasive hostility toward the body and biology that drives today's headline stories:

Transgenderism: Activists detach gender from biology. Kids down to kindergarten are being taught their bodies are irrelevant. Is this affirming—or does it demean the body?

Homosexuality: Advocates disconnect sexuality from biological identity. Is this liberating—or does it denigrate biology?

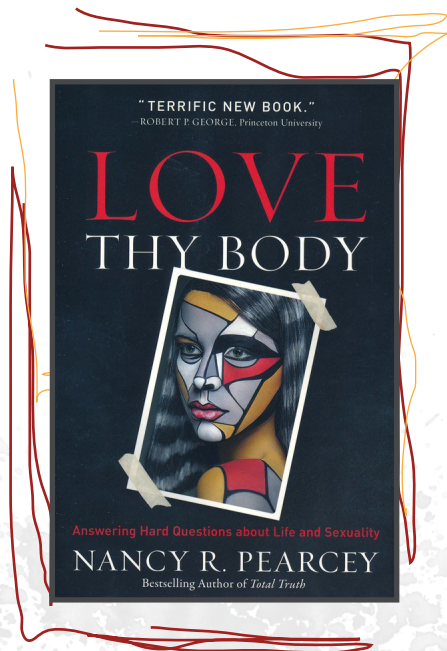
Abortion: Supporters deny the fetus is a person, though it is biologically human. Does this mean equality for women—or does it threaten the intrinsic value of all humans?

Euthanasia: Those who lack certain cognitive abilities are said to be no longer persons. Is this compassionate—or does it ultimately put everyone at risk?

In *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*, bestselling author Nancy Pearcey goes beyond politically correct slogans with a riveting exposé of the dehumanizing worldview that shapes current watershed moral issues.

Pearcey then turns the tables on media boilerplate that misportrays Christianity as harsh or hateful. A former agnostic, she makes a surprising and persuasive case that Christianity is holistic, sustaining the dignity of the body and biology.

Throughout she entrances readers with compassionate stories of people wrestling with hard questions in their own lives—their pain, their struggles, their triumphs.



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