

## The Lie of Christmas

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



### YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

*“The problem lies not with our desire to connect, but with our form of connection. Our technology gives us a form of connection with the whole world, but at the same time it can limit the depth of our connection to the world around us, to those closest to us, and to ourselves. Technology has been very good at giving us what we want, but less good at giving us what we need.”*

Arianna Huffington, on technology addiction and relationships, *Think*, NBCNews.com April 6, 2018.



It starts earlier and earlier each year. This year they – retailers, that is - tried to grab our attention, loyalty, and cash long before kids came knocking on the door looking for Halloween candy. The Christmas shopping season starts earlier every year, and pretty soon it will be a year-long event. That means that the promises of redemption and fulfillment through the accumulation of random, largely meaningless stuff won't wait until “Black Friday” to be revealed. Sad, isn't it?

I remember what it was like when I was kid. In a world void of Internet marketing, we had *The Wish Book*. I believed that the stuff inside that annual Sears, Roebuck & Co. *Christmas Catalog* could and would change my life. When it arrived in the mail I would eagerly go through it, circling all the toys I hoped to get for Christmas. Then, on Christmas morning, I would descend the stairs into the Promised Land that sat under our family Christmas tree.

Just as I remember those excited feelings of pre-Christmas anticipation, I also remember the empty and disappointed let-down I felt in the hours and days after the wrapping paper had been ripped off. Don't get me wrong, I was happy. . . but only for awhile. Some of the stuff under the tree just didn't look or work like it had in the catalog pictures. It wasn't long before the novelty wore off and everything wound up in the back of my closet or bottom of my toybox. I had believed that all that stuff under the tree would somehow make me feel better, make me happy, or make me complete. It was nothing but a lie. But stupid me, each and every year it was the same thing as my yearning for completeness, peace, and satisfaction led me to buy into the great “lie of Christmas” one more time.

Even though I know better, I sometimes still find myself falling back into those ridiculously hollow patterns. You think I would have learned by now. But now it's any number of attractive lies floating around in the cultural air we all breathe that are full of nothing but empty promises. Yes, the “lie of Christmas” lives on strong in our culture year-round.

Without a doubt, the greatest inheritance we can pass on to your kids is the truth about the lie. Not only that the “lie of Christmas” is a lie, but that the “truth of Christmas” is *the* truth. For me, it was my parents' annual Christmas wish list that helped me gain perspective. You see, when I'd ask them what they wanted for Christmas, they usually answered by saying, “We don't need anything.” When Christmas morning arrived, I'd feel bad for them as they opened boxes of socks, kitchenware, and itchy shirts. Much to my surprise, they were never disappointed. Why? Because they had already been satisfied by the truth of Christmas. And because they didn't want anything, I quickly learned they already had everything.

While the “lie of Christmas” lives on strong, it can't compare to the life-changing power of what Christmas is really about. The truth of Christmas is the *only* thing that answers our deepest of longings and fills the most empty of lives! *The Redeemer*, Jesus Christ, is the *only* source of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. Perhaps as you gather around the tree this Christmas you'll make it your prayer that your kids would behold the same Truth that's filled countless eager eyes and hungry hearts since the day God became man.\*

TOP II...

# Most Anticipated Holiday Games 2018

Multi Platform Video Games  
Source:  
Nielsen.com



1. **Call of Duty: Black Ops IIII**
2. **Red Dead Redemption 2**
3. **Battlefield V**
4. **Fallout 76**
5. **Assassin's Creed: Odyssey**
6. **FIFA 19**
7. **NBA 2K19**
8. **NBA Live 19**
9. **Shadow of the Tomb Raider**
10. **Hitman 2**
11. **WWK 2K19**



## QUICK STATS

Less than 3% of teens get the recommended 8 or 9 hours of sleep a day.  
*(Pediatrics)*

28% of teens ages 13-18 have tried some type of medication to help them sleep; including over-the-counter cold medicine, antihistamines and prescription sleep medicine.  
*(C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health)*

### FROM THE NEWS:

## XANAX ABUSE

**Sadly, we have to report on another teen substance abuse trend.** Substance abuse and addiction specialists are warning parents to be aware of a growing trend toward the abuse of anti-anxiety and sedative drugs known as benzodiazepines, or “benzos.” This includes drugs with names like Xanax, Valium, Ativan, and Klonopin. One of the most popular drugs being abused right now is Xanax, which teens erroneously believe are a safer alternative to prescription opioids and heroin, but which provide similar effects. Experts are warning that these drugs, oftentimes found in the medicine cabinets of parents and grandparents, can be just as deadly as opioids, especially in combination with other drugs and alcohol. Of course, we need to exert a preventive influence on our kids when it comes to drugs and alcohol. Talk to your kids about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. Teach them to run to Christ, rather than to drugs, as a source of comfort, hope, and healing.

## TRENDS: NEW DICTIONARY TERMS

Each and every year, editors of the most popular dictionaries have to make some difficult choices. They decide which words should be removed from the dictionary, and which new words should be added. What makes this task necessary is the rapidly changing nature of our culture.

This year's edition of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* has added a host of new food and beverage related words that reflect our culture's growing obsession

with carefully curated eating and drinking experiences. Numerous other words relate to all the new technology we've incorporated into our lives.

One new word that jumps out is the abbreviation TL;DR, which stands for "too long, didn't read." The addition of TL;DR serves as an indicator that we've filled our lives with so much

busyness, that we are always in a hurry. For our kids, a hurried and over-scheduled life adds up and can cause them to crumble. God made us for a rhythm of work and rest.

Are you getting your kids to slow down?


## LATEST RESEARCH: STICKING WITH DIFFICULT KIDS

Youth workers are often aware that the kids who seem to be the most difficult to work with are typically the kids who need our time and attention the most. You see, kids who have experienced extreme forms of difficulty, brokenness, and trauma at home and in other

areas of their lives tend to act out in ways that are inappropriate, disruptive, and horribly annoying. Yet, the behaviors that could easily be interpreted as something intended to push us away, are actually an indicator of a deep need for involvement in their lives. Recently, researchers at the University of Buffalo completed a study of young adults who had experienced difficult circumstances during school-aged years.

Subjects consistently indicated that they had wanted adults to stick with them and not give up on them. Isn't that what Jesus does with us as he shows us consistent mercy and grace? All of us can do better at reaching out to troubled kids, sticking with them, and showing them the love of Christ.

**SEXUAL INTEGRITY  
INITIATIVE**  
*A resource of CPYU and Project Six19*

**Teen Sex:  
Prevention and  
Intervention**  
by Jason Soucinek 

When it comes to issues of sex, we have to give equal emphasis to intervention (the actions after) as we do with prevention (the actions before). Sometimes the way we talk about Christian sex is more about waiting and holding onto our virginity than it is about our relationship with Christ. Because we make it all about waiting we can make those that have already had sex feel less than human. One teenage girl said, "I've tarnished my virginity so why start over?" She represents the voice that many youth share.

The reality is that we are all tarnished. That is why Jesus died for the sins of all human beings. That includes you and me, not just that teenager that made a mistake. Yes, we have to be unapologetic about the sin our teens are engaging. However, if we are going to be successful in seeing teens engage in fewer risky behaviors then we have to start thinking about how we discuss them with teens. If we are not pointing them towards the restoring and redeeming work of Christ then they will never be able to experience the rebranding that takes place when we are in His presence.

## 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](http://www.cpyu.org/podcast).

Be sure to check out Episode 70 for an interview with Marv Penner about "Loving Kids Well in our #MeToo Culture".

## FROM THE WORD

If you're like most parents, what you hope for is a safe, smooth, and problem-free ride through the years of adolescence with your kids. So why should we actually pray for our teenager's corrupt and sinful nature to rise up and reveal itself while they're still living under our authority and watchful eyes? Why in the world would we ever hope for difficulty?!?

Think about this: we need to constantly remind ourselves that part of our teenager's makeup (because they are human) is that just like us, they were born with a tendency to sin. In other words, they didn't have to be taught how to do wrong. It comes naturally. The apostle Paul recognizes this reality when he instructs parents to teach their children how to do right by bringing them "up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Sadly, in many Christian homes, kids will often hide their sinful nature through behavioral conformity that doesn't reflect the true condition of their hearts. But if the nuances of their corrupt nature come out when they are young, we have the opportunity to address those heart matters now. If those things are left to rear their ugly heads later in life and our kids don't recognize or know how to deal with them, think about the great troubles and difficulties that will come. Pray that God would reveal your teen's sin issues and tendencies now so that you are able to teach them how to recognize and deal with them, both now and for the rest of their lives. When God answers this prayer it's certainly not easy. But it's important to face and address their sin tendencies *now* so that you can nurture your teen's heart into a God-honoring adulthood, rather than having to face them later.

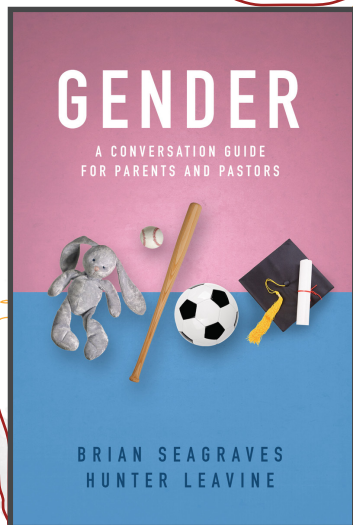
**"BRING THEM UP IN  
THE DISCIPLINE AND  
INSTRUCTION OF THE  
LORD."  
EPHESIANS 6:4**

## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Our culture is filled with confusing messages about gender and identity and it's difficult to keep up. If you are a parent or someone involved in youth or children's ministry who wants to teach the Bible faithfully, this book is for you. *Gender: A Conversation Guide for Parents and Pastors*, by Brian Seagraves and Hunter Leavine, provides a practical step-by-step guide to articulating the teaching of Scripture on gender to children and young people as they grow up.

Each chapter contains conversation starters and soundbites for every age and stage from preschool to high school and beyond. It will help families teach the Christian worldview clearly and consistently throughout a child's life.

Whether you are a parent, mentor, pastor or friend, this book will help you find clarity in a world spinning in confusion.



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