

Vanity: From Vice to Virtue

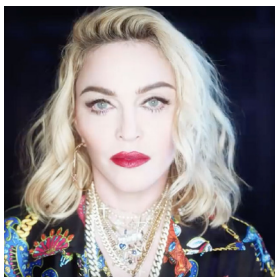
WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“I made a mistake when I gave my older children phones when they were 13. It ended my relationship with them, really. Not completely, but it became a very, very big part of their lives. They became too inundated with imagery and started to compare themselves to other people, and that’s really bad for self-growth.”

Madonna, in an interview for *Vogue*, June 2019 issue



Over the course of my lifetime, the game of football has changed. . . a lot. . . in ways that mirror the shift in culture. Consider how a touchdown, first-down, or completed pass were celebrated in years past. . . or more accurately, *not* celebrated. The contrast between the past and the present is marked, as players now dance, boast, and posture in ways that scream, “Hey! Look at me and what I just did!”

Historically, *vainglory* has been seen as a vice to avoid and overcome. In her book *Glittering Vices*, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung defines vainglory as “the excessive and disordered desire for recognition and approval from others.” It’s that inward driving desire for public acknowledgement of our person and our accomplishments. Over the course of my lifetime, I’ve seen the “game of life” change. . . a lot. In today’s world, social media has combined with our commitment to individualism and worship of celebrity-status to feed the beast of vainglory, turning what was once a vice into what we now believe is a noble pursuit.

How have you seen vainglory, and the tendency to lie to seem better than we are, evidenced in your own life and the lives of your kids? Here are two specifics:

First, there is the tendency to fabricate and present ourselves to the watching world in ways that draw attention to ourselves. In our worship of youthfulness and appearance, our dissatisfaction with ourselves and our desire for acceptance result in our efforts to photoshop ourselves both visually and textually on social media. We work hard to look good to others and position ourselves as better than others.

Second, there is the tendency towards “virtue signaling”, where we (or our kids) do something good and then tell the world with the expectation that others will notice and like what we’ve done. Sometimes the motivation to do good is itself rooted in vainglory.

As Christian parents, we are called and commissioned with the great responsibility to raise children who desire to bring glory to God, rather than idolatrous glory to self. Here are three steps you can employ to lead your kids and yourself in that God-honoring direction.

First, focus on the Scriptures to gain a clear understanding of what it means to focus glory on God rather than on self. Consider what it means to avoid “practicing your piety in order to be seen” and praised by others (Matthew 6:1-8).

Second, pray for a God-centered focus and life. Specifically pray that God would do whatever it takes. . . even suffering if necessary. . . to break you and your kids out of the habits and patterns of self-worship and vainglory in order to experience the joy of a life centered on giving glory to God alone.

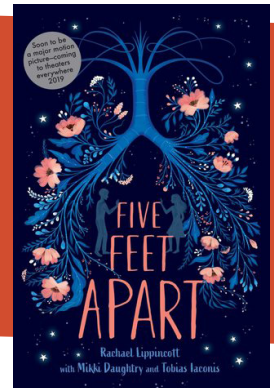
And third, follow the advice of DeYoung where she suggests moving from a life of spin to a life of silence. If we decide to move off of the stage of social media we can experience the joy of audience-free solitude, which is a place where we can see the Lord and hear His voice, which brings relief from our vainglorious desires for attention and approval from others.*

Young Adult Hardcover Books

The New York Times
bestseller list
June 2, 2019
Source:
The New York Times



1. *Five Feet Apart* by Rachael Lippincott with Mikki Daughtry and Tobias Iaconis
2. *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
3. *With the Fire on High* by Elizabeth Acevedo
4. *Again, But Better* by Christine Riccio
5. *We Hunt The Flame* by Hafsah Faizal
6. *Dry* by Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman
7. *The Red Scrolls of Magic* by Cassandra Clare and Wesley Chu
8. *On the Come Up* by Angie Thomas
9. *Stepsister* by Jennifer Donnelly
10. *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi



QUICK STATS

High school students who averaged 8.1 hours of sleep a night scored mostly A's on their report cards, while teens who averaged 7.3 hours of sleep a night scored mostly C's.
(Centers for Disease Control)

Among kids ages 11 and younger, only 11.1% own a smartphone, but 81.1% of kids ages 12 -17 own a smartphone.
(eMarketer)

FROM THE NEWS:

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

Researchers have found a connection between social media use and depressive symptoms in fourteen-year-olds. The connection is much stronger for our fourteen-year-old girls than for boys. The study found that our teenagers who use social media the most showed a 50% increase in depressive symptoms in girls, and a 35% increase in depressive symptoms among boys. Teens who use social media the most are defined as kids who are engaged with social media more than five hours a day. Here at CPYU, we believe that while social media and digital technologies are good gifts when used in the proper way in the proper measure, we also believe that too much time or misuse can undermine our well-being and human flourishing. We encourage you to teach your kids how to use social media and technology to God's glory. Set limits on time and place. And, encourage your kids to engage more with people in person, rather than through the screen.

TRENDS: DISTRACTED DRIVING

In an effort to keep our young and inexperienced teenage drivers safe while they are behind the wheel, we need to encourage them to adopt healthy driving habits, while discouraging those driving habits which put them and other drivers at risk. A recent study from the National Institute of Health shows that teens increase their risk for crashing by seven times whenever they reach for objects while driving. The study also found that teens who manually use their phone to dial a number, send a text, or browse the Internet while driving doubled their risk for crashing. Interestingly enough the researchers gathered data from tracking 82 newly licensed teen drivers for one year. At the end of the year, researchers reported that there were a total of 72 crashes among the 82 drivers. Drivers were performing secondary tasks in over half of the crashes. Teach your kids safe driving habits. And be sure to teach them that integrating faith into driving means that driving is an act of worship.



LATEST RESEARCH:

BINGE DRINKING & THE BRAIN

Binge-drinking is a term used to describe the practice of consuming several alcoholic drinks in a row. Because of curiosity, marketing, peer pressure, and a sense of invulnerability, many of our teens will engage in the dangerous and sometimes deadly practice of binge drinking. While binge drinking is a problem for people of all ages, a new study has found that bingeing in the early to mid teenage years can alter how the brain deals with stress, even into one's adulthood. Because of ethical boundaries, the research was conducted on rats rather than on real teenagers. But because the brains of rats respond similarly to the human brain, researchers were able to conclude that binge-drinking changes the effects of the stress hormone known as cortisol, making it difficult for the brain to adapt to stress. Concerns are that this can lead to long-term anxiety and depression. Teach your kids to honor and glorify God by living alcohol-free during their teenage years.



SEXUAL INTEGRITY INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

What If I Discover My Child Has Viewed Pornography?

by Walt Mueller



What should you do if you discover your child is engaged with pornography? My friend Nicholas Black at the HarvestUSA ministry recommends that parents take seven steps. First, control your anger. Direct your anger to the sin, and not to your child. Second, you want to target their hearts with a grace-filled approach that will direct them to Christ to find forgiveness. Third, a door has been opened, so keep the conversation about biblical sex going. Fourth, examine your own heart. Are you living out God's design for sexuality? Fifth, block the doors. Restrict their access to porn to keep them safe and invite them into accountability. Sixth, don't let up or give up. This is not a behavior that is fixed with controls. Shepherd them forward in their spiritual lives with the goal of heart change. Finally, evaluate whether or not outside counseling is warranted. If in doubt, err on the side of caution and secure the services of a competent and experienced Christian counselor.

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 83 for an interview with Peter Lynas titled "Understanding Transgender in a Changing Culture."

FROM THE WORD

Some of the most powerful and reassuring words of Jesus are recorded in John 10, where Jesus speaks of his role as "The Good Shepherd" and our standing as His sheep. Not only does the passage help us understand the assurance of salvation that is ours as we listen to and follow our Good Shepherd, but it offers us a much-needed perspective as we parent children and teens in today's world.

The compelling and convincing voices calling kids to "come and follow" are many in today's world. Our kids are called to worship and serve themselves rather than worshipping and serving God. As parents, we fear that these cultural voices that come to steal, kill, and destroy will somehow shadow and silence the voice of the Savior and His invitation into a life of discipleship.

But in John 10, Jesus promises to hold tightly in his grip those who have made a profession of faith by answering his invitation to "come and follow me" in the affirmative. His promise is certain as he tells us, "No one can snatch them away from me." Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Jesus answers that question here in John 10. Parents, Christian nurture requires us to voice the words of the Scripture so that our kids hear the voice of the Good Shepherd speak. Help your kids get to know his voice. Then, trust God with your children!

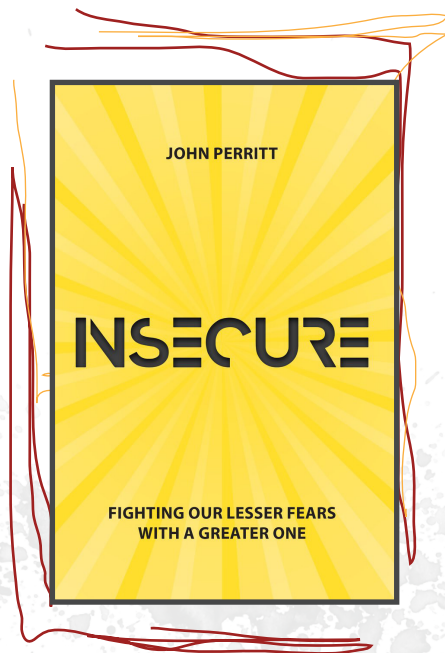
"I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH; NO ONE CAN SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND."
JOHN 10:28

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

It's there when you look in the mirror. You'll find it roaming the halls of your school or workplace. It tucks you in at night and greets you as you roll out of bed. You'll read it in text messages & tweets. See it on Facebook and Instagram. It's in our conversations and is always rattling around in our minds.

What is it? Insecurity.

Insecurity is something all humans struggle with. Young and old, male and female, across the globe – insecurity has no boundaries. While it is a commonality among humanity, in *Insecure: Fighting Our Lesser Fears With A Greater One*, John Perritt shows us it doesn't mean it's something you have to live with. Insecurity is painful for many, but there is a greater fear to drown out this lesser one. Scripture tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is in this greater fear, that we learn how to grow, live, and, possibly defeat, our insecurity.



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