

Make **Life** Hard For Your Kids

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“There seems little point in a religion which is merely a weekly social event. What’s the point of faith unless you and it are serious – seriously serious – unless your religion fills, directs, stains, and sustains your life?”

Author and agnostic Julian Barnes, in his 2008 memoir *Nothing to be Frightened Of*.



There’s a parenting memory that makes my heart ache whenever it pops into my head. We were new to the neighborhood and all my 5-year-old son wanted to do was hop into the game of backyard football that was happening next door. But the 6 and 7-year-olds who had organized the game didn’t let him play. So there he sat. . . cross-legged. . . watching, wishing, and defeated from our side of the property line.

That was only one of an immeasurable multitude of parenting moments I would encounter where I wondered whether or not it was best to intervene on behalf of my kids in order to make things easier on them by eliminating a difficulty. Nobody wants to see their kids suffer and hurt.

In today’s world, parental intervention and running interference for our kids has become standard practice. We hover at the ready in order to protect kids from the difficulties of life’s responsibilities, and it’s called “helicopter parenting.” We push forward on behalf of our kids in order to keep them ahead of their peers, and it’s called “snowplow parenting.” And, when we remove obstacles in their path to make life easier it’s called “lawnmower parenting.”

But are these practices what make for good parenting? And, are we preparing our kids to handle the inevitable difficulties of life in ways that bring honor and glory to God, while showing respect, responsibility, and maturity? Research is consistently pointing to the fact that in our effort to make life easier for our kids we actually leave them ill-prepared for adult life. We make life *more* difficult for them as we steal away the opportunities provided by childhood and adolescence to mature and grow emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.

Before Jesus launched into his adult ministry he was led by the Spirit into a time of fasting and preparation. When we take time to read the Gospel accounts of what is known as “The Temptation of Jesus” (Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4), we see him experiencing what Elisabeth Elliot refers to as the “three elements essential to spiritual growth”: *stress, discipline, and choice*.

In the wilderness Jesus was shaped and prepared for life through the *stress* of physical hardships and loneliness. While in the wilderness, he engaged for forty days in the difficult *discipline* of fasting. And in the midst of these difficulties, he was confronted by Satan and tempted three times to compromise, which necessitated making difficult *choices*.

Parents, there is a powerful parenting lesson we can learn from the perfect Father who struck the perfect balance between doing too much and doing too little for His Son. We must allow our kids to encounter and navigate the normal stresses of life. We must look for ways to encourage them to develop disciplined habits that will prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life. And, while we must teach them to make wise choices, we must also allow them to make those choices and then learn from whatever may come. . . both good or bad consequences. . . in the wake of those choices.

Do your kids a favor and allow them to experience and navigate the inevitable hardships of life as you walk *beside* them to support and encourage, rather than *in front of* or *over* them in ways that steal these valuable opportunities for growth. ★

Selling Video Games

Retail and Digital, July 2019
Source:
NPD Group



1. **Madden NFL 20**
2. **Fire Emblem: Three Houses**
3. **Super Mario Maker 2**
4. **Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order**
5. **Minecraft**
6. **Grand Theft Auto V**
7. **Super Smash Bros. Ultimate**
8. **Mortal Kombat 11**
9. **Mario Kart 8**
10. **The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild**



QUICK STATS

Teens who had used e-cigarettes had about twice the risk of having symptoms such as ongoing cough, congestion or wheezing or developing bronchitis, compared with teens who hadn't used the products.

(American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine)

75% of parents say their kids are now more likely to look up information online than ask them for homework help.

(Lenovo)

FROM THE NEWS:

13 REASONS WHY AND INCREASED SUICIDE

One of the most sobering realities we have to face among our adolescent population is teen suicide.

With anxiety, stress, and depression on the rise among our kids, it's not surprising that teen suicide rates are elevated. The suicide of 17 year-old fictional character Hannah Baker was the subject of the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, which in its first two seasons has grabbed loads of teen viewers. With the recent release of a third season of *13 Reasons Why*, it's worth mentioning some recent research from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. A new study found that suicide rates among 10 to 17 year-old boys spiked in the month after the release of the series. That month, April 2017, had the highest overall suicide rate for this age group in the past five years. As always, we recommend that parents stay tuned in to the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of their kids, and if your teen is struggling, intervene with a qualified Christian counselor.

TRENDS: HIDING ALCOHOL

You're no doubt familiar with the old phrase, where there's a will there's a way. That phrase certainly holds true when it comes to our teenagers and the various methods some will employ to get away with hiding various forms of substance abuse from their parents. During last year's high school prom season, news outlets reported various ways kids were hiding alcohol from parents and school authorities. Many were using flasks designed to disguise alcohol. Searches for "secret flasks" on Amazon bring up some pretty surprising results. There are flasks that look like lotion tubes, umbrellas, and those blue-colored re-usable freezer ice packs. Other flasks look like deodorant spray dispensers, and some look like a normal pair of mittens. Most surprising are the flasks that look like a chemistry text book, and one disguised as a Bible. Parents, be aware, and warn your kids about the physical and spiritual dangers associated with substance abuse.



LATEST RESEARCH: PARENTAL EXAMINATION OF SMARTPHONE USE

While we should all be concerned about the amount of time our teens are distracted by their smartphones, a heavy dose of parental self-examination is warranted as well. Recent data from Pew research reveals that parents are now realizing that device distractions are not unique to teenagers. Parents are now reporting their own challenges with being hyper-connected and managing screen time. Six out of ten parents say they at least sometimes feel obligated to respond to messages immediately on their cell phone. Four out of ten parents say they at least sometimes lose their focus at work due to checking their cell phone. And 36% of parents say they spend too much time on their cellphone. Time spent with digital technology is time that's taken away or even stolen from more important pursuits, like spending time with family or engaging in spiritual growth activities. How are you spending your time?

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

Marriage is a Duel?

by Walt Mueller

The famous writer and thinker, G.K. Chesterton, once wrote these clever little words about marriage: "Marriage is a duel to the death which no man of honor should decline." Because I grew up with a romanticized view of love and marriage, my younger self would have wondered what in the world Chesterton was talking about. How could someone who is a follower of Jesus write such negative words? But after 37 years of my own marriage and lots of years observing and talking about good marriages, I realize that Chesterton was on to something that we should be talking about and sharing with our kids. You see, many of today's kids have notions of marriage that are entirely unrealistic. Our responsibility is to get them to see that marriage is a commitment, and love is a decision. We are all broken people who in turn, marry broken people. As a result, marriage is hard work from time to time. Are you teaching your kids that God is the marriage glue?

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 87 for an interview with Rosaria Butterfield titled "Navigating LGBTQ Issues."

FROM THE WORD

Sociologists love to use the word *zeitgeist*. The German word refers to "the defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideas and beliefs of the time." In Ephesians 2:2 the spirit of the times is also called "the course of this world." It's important for us to know the prevalent ideas and beliefs of our times in order to evaluate and respond to them in light of the truths of Scripture. God's Word clearly lays out the ideas and beliefs we should embrace, live, and teach to our kids.

One of the most prevalent ideas and beliefs of our current times has been called "expressive individualism." We embrace, live, and teach this way of life when we live like our highest value and goal in life is to follow our emotions and be true to ourselves. In today's world, this is oftentimes called "authenticity."

In Matthew 16:24 Jesus makes it clear that the way to realize the fullness of our humanity and created purpose is to deny one's self and follow Him. This is the life of discipleship. Because it involves the difficulty of a cross, our natural inclination is to avoid this kind of life. But this is the path to eternal life.

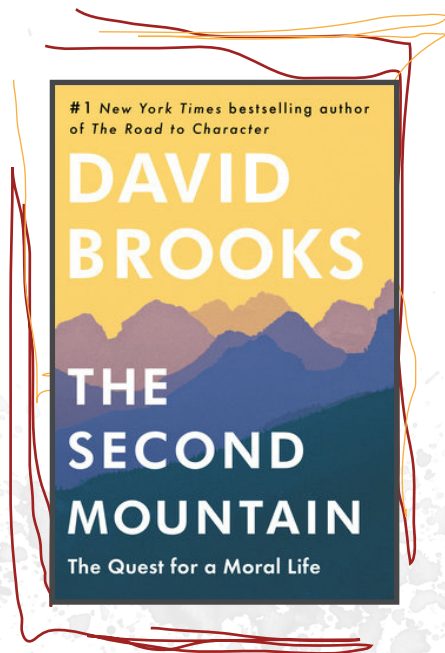
Parents, are you teaching your kids to live the path laid out by the spirit of the times, or the path laid out by the Spirit of God?

**"IF ANYONE WOULD
COME AFTER ME, LET
HIM DENY HIMSELF AND
TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND
FOLLOW ME."
MATTHEW 16:24**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

In *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life*, David Brooks explores the four commitments that define a life of meaning and purpose: to a spouse and family, to a vocation, to a philosophy or faith, and to a community. Our personal fulfillment depends on how well we choose and execute these commitments. Brooks looks at a range of people who have lived joyous, committed lives, and who have embraced the necessity and beauty of dependence. He gathers their wisdom on how to choose a partner, how to pick a vocation, how to live out a philosophy, and how we can begin to integrate our commitments into one overriding purpose.

In short, this book is meant to help us all lead more meaningful lives. But it's also a provocative social commentary. We live in a society, Brooks argues, that celebrates freedom, that tells us to be true to ourselves, at the expense of surrendering to a cause, rooting ourselves in a neighborhood, binding ourselves to others by social solidarity and love. We have taken individualism to the extreme—and in the process we have torn the social fabric in a thousand different ways. The path to repair is through making deeper commitments. In *The Second Mountain*, Brooks shows what can happen when we put commitment-making at the center of our lives.



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