

## KIDS AND PANDEMIC GROWTH

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President

YOUTH CULTURE  
HOT QUOTE

*It's not  
easy. I  
think every  
parent is  
realizing  
how hard  
it is to be a  
teacher."*

John Legend, on  
parenting during this  
Coronavirus season,  
*People*, March 25, 2020



Like you, I'm wondering when this pandemic mess will end. At the beginning of June, our local area was still a few weeks from starting the process of opening up. But even when that date arrives, who knows what crazy twists and turns the Covid-19 pandemic will be taking? Many believe that our stay-at-home weeks will extend into months, perhaps even into the fall and beyond. And even though we might lament the changes, difficulties, and disruptions this has brought, one thing is certain: we have been given a golden opportunity to exercise and grow in our faith in God.

One of my heroes of the faith, J.I. Packer, has said that "we should not be taken aback when unexpected and upsetting and discouraging things happen to us now. What do they mean? Simply that God in His wisdom means to make something of us that we have not yet attained." As I've been engaging with hundreds of parents over the past couple of months, I've been encouraged by the number of you who have enthusiastically embraced the gift of extra time with your families to deliberately nurture your children and teens in the Christian faith. You know that this pandemic has brought your kids' questions and fears to the surface, which has made for a long (and perhaps even-longer) teachable moment in which to teach so much about God's love, provision, and ways.

One timely story to teach your kids is that familiar Old Testament story about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being placed in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Out of obedience to God they had refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image, knowing full well that their standing firm in their commitment to God would lead to this severe punishment

and even death. The late preacher James Montgomery Boice tells us that there were three things that give these men the strength to stand firm in this great test of their commitment. I believe that equipping our children with a knowledge and demonstration of these three things will not only help them to weather the "fiery furnace" of our current pandemic, but will strengthen them to trust in God's provision and deliverance for whatever challenges they face later in life.

First, they knew that God was sovereign. They were firmly convinced that God was the king, supreme ruler, and authority over the entire universe even though their immediate circumstances dictated something contrary. As a result, they entrusted their very lives to God.

Second, they knew the Scriptures. A knowledge of God's Word tells us what the right thing is to do in all circumstances. It is the only fully trustworthy and inerrant authority on which to stake our lives.

And third, they were willing to die for their convictions. They not only knew God and the Scriptures, but they were willing to pay whatever cost might come as a result of their obedience.

When all was said and done, these three men walked out of that fiery furnace without even one hair singed! . . . and, all the witnesses had seen a fourth man with them in the furnace. Parents, this pandemic is a time for great spiritual growth. Are you teaching your kids that Jesus is walking with his obedient followers through this. . . and will do so through all future difficulties? ★

# Songs on the Radio

Top 40 Category  
Week of May 28, 2020  
Source:  
Mediabase



1. **Say So** by Doja Cat
2. **Blinding Lights** by The Weeknd
3. **Intentions** by Justin Bieber
4. **Don't Start Now** by Dua Lipa
5. **Adore You** by Harry Styles
6. **Falling** by Trevor Daniel
7. **My Oh My** by Camila Cabello
8. **RITMO (Bad Boys For Life)** by Black Eyed Peas
9. **Break My Heart** by Dua Lipa
10. **Circles** by Post Malone



## QUICK STATS

Teens reported their annual spending was down 13% to \$2,300 compared with spring 2019, the lowest spending level reported by teens since fall 2011.

(Piper Sandler's "Taking Stock with Teens" Spring 2020 Survey)

58% of highly engaged Christian parents choose a church with their kids in mind.  
(Barna)

## FROM THE NEWS:

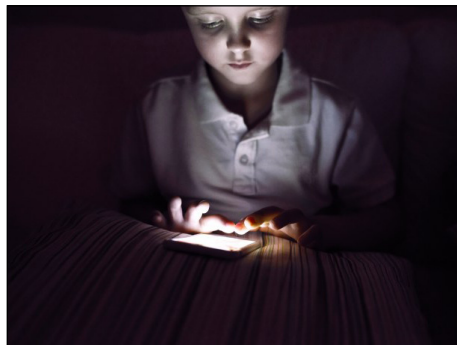
### ROBOTIC COUNSELOR

PC magazine recently ran an article with this headline: "This robot wants to help stressed-out teens." The robot is being developed by engineers at the University of Washington in an effort to address the issue of anxiety and depression among teenagers. It is estimated that 70% of teens see anxiety and depression as a major problem among their peers. The robot is being developed under the name EMAR, which is an acronym for Ecological Momentary Assessment Robot. Researchers found that teens like telling the robot their problems because it cannot judge them or feel burdened by their problems. The robot is even designed to relieve a teenager's stress through an interactive hug. While we applaud efforts to help teens relieve stress and anxiety, we have to wonder how we are failing kids if we don't engage them in loving, caring, and burden-bearing human interaction. God has made us for relationships. Perhaps it's the lack of interactions which are causing stress in the first place.

## TRENDS:

AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST  
DRUG USE TRENDING UP

Here at CPYU we endeavor to keep you up-to-date on the latest trends regarding teenagers and drugs. While we lament the reality of any teenager abusing drugs and alcohol, there is a positive trend which is somewhat encouraging. Researchers at Washington State University have found that between 2004 and 2017, that average age for first use has been trending upward. The age at which teens started drinking alcohol and smoking rose from 16 to 17. The age of first use for those trying heroin rose from 17 to 18. And for first use of cocaine it went from 18 to 19. Researchers believe that this positive trend is evidence of the fact that drug and alcohol prevention efforts are working. The take away for us as parents is to keep working to warn our kids about the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual toll that drug and alcohol use exacts. Teach your kids to rely on God's Word, and to carefully steward the gift of their brains and bodies.



## LATEST RESEARCH:

## LIMITING SCREEN TIME

Whether you know it or not, most if not all of us engage from time to time in what's known as ethnographic research. Ethnography

is the study of people in their social environments through the practice of observation. Your own engagement in ethnography has no doubt revealed just how attached we human beings are to our smartphone screens, even from the youngest of ages. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 18 months and under should not be allowed to engage with screens. Children

from ages 18-24 months should engage with screens slowly. And children ages two to five should be limited to an hour a day. But researchers have found that 87% of children have daily screen time which exceeds these recommendations. We are just now learning the effects of screen time, and we do know that the more time we spend, the more we become attached to our devices. Are you pushing back on digital dependence in your home?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY  
INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

Parents  
Should Be Sex  
Educators

by Walt Mueller



It wasn't until I got to high school in the early 1970s that I had to engage in formalized sex education in school. Our segregated class of my male peers sat and listened to one of our physical education teachers dispense information off a script that he had been commissioned to read, most likely because he drew the short straw. I remember two things happening. First, we did more snickering than learning. And second, we had absorbed the majority of our knowledge about sex and sexuality as a result of interactions among our peers. In essence, our first sex educators were our friends. Consequently, the education we received was anything but accurate or biblical. In today's world, sex ed comes at our kids from the youngest ages, and many times through smartphones and porn. Parents, you must understand this principle: the first one to speak to your kids about sex sets the bar and owns the conversation. For this reason, be the first to talk to your kids. . . and talk about biblical sexuality.



## 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 106 for an  
interview with Youth Pastor  
Mike McGarry titled "A  
Post-Pandemic Theology of  
Youth Ministry."

## FROM THE WORD

Over the course of the last few months I have heard countless stories of circumstantial changes, with many individuals losing jobs and financial resources. One of my friends runs a large Christian camp that has maintained a faithful witness to the Lord for many years. With the Coronavirus leading many camps to shut down programming for at least this coming summer, there is much uncertainty regarding whether or not these camps will survive, including the camp being led by my friend.

**"FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS  
BLESSED YOU IN ALL THE WORK  
OF YOUR HANDS. HE KNOWS YOUR  
GOING THROUGH THIS GREAT  
WILDERNESS. THESE FORTY YEARS  
THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS BEEN WITH  
YOU. YOU HAVE LACKED NOTHING."**

**DEUTERONOMY 2:7**

How do we maintain a perspective of hope when circumstances seem to dictate hopelessness? My friend told me that he has been leaning hard into the words of Deuteronomy 2:7, a verse that he had never really noticed until the crisis hit. Moses is recounting the events of the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness as they stand on the threshold of moving into the Promised Land. Those 40 years were a time of wandering, want, and uncertainty. But one reality was constant: God's faithfulness. God was with His people constantly and they lacked nothing.

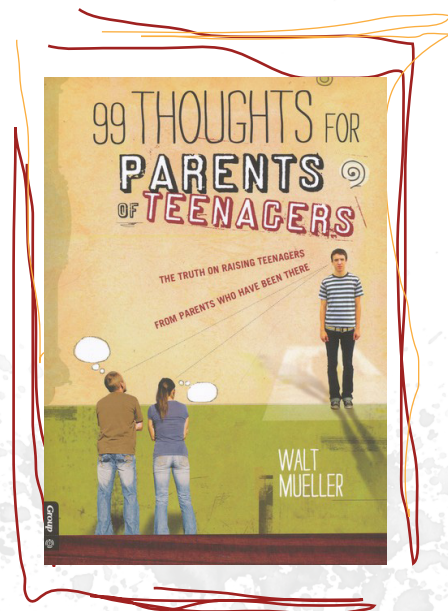
I have no idea what tomorrow holds for me, and the same is true for you. Circumstances will change but God and His faithfulness will remain constant. As we navigate the uncertainty of our present time, it is a helpful exercise to look back over history. . . our own history, the history of the church, and Old Testament history. . . to see that God never leaves or forsakes His own. This reality gives us every reason to believe that He will remain the same for each one of us!

## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

If you're the parent of a teenager, you need all the help you can get. How do you help your children make wise choices? How do you give your teenagers freedom to make their own choices while still providing a guiding hand? How do you invest your time and energy in ways that make an eternal difference in your children's lives?

Walt Mueller delivers the goods in *99 Thoughts for Parents of Teenagers: The Truth On Raising Teenagers From Parents Who Have Been There*, a no-holds-barred look at the good, bad, and ugly aspects of parenting teenagers. Drawing on his experience as a parent of four children who have passed through their teenage years, Walt shares wisdom, thoughts, insights, and suggestions for making the teenage years count.

If you're a parent, you'll want to read, devour, and absorb the dynamic truths in this book.



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