

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

Given the state of the country and the world right now, the reality is that most people are wrapped up in the health, social and economic ramifications of the pandemic, and they're feeling pretty bad about the state of the world. Social media allows miserable people to find the company of other miserable people and compare their misery to other people's misery. Sometimes, individuals need time to reset and come back with a better balance.

Karen North, Clinical Professor of Communication at USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, speaking about the need and benefits of taking a social media detox, *USAToday.com*, January 27, 2021.



Whose God?

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



If you are shocked by the story I'm about to share, you're most likely quite old-fashioned. And if the story I'm about to share results in a quick "so what" shrug of your shoulders, then you – like a growing number of our kids – are probably marching through life in step with the spirit of the times.

The story about the 22-year-old professing Christian girl from Connecticut is one that appeared in my news feed last month. Until recently, Lindsay Capuano spent her days pouring into kids through her work at a Christian daycare center. But she soon discovered she could make far more money through developing her presence and following on social media. She eventually took her large Snapchat and Instagram following with her to the social media site OnlyFans, where content creators earn money from users who subscribe to their photo and video content. Initially, content was created and shared by musicians, fitness instructors, and chefs. But because OnlyFans allows creators to share pornography, it's become a cash cow for people like Lindsay Capuano, who has millions of followers.

This all leads to the headline I spotted last month: "Christian OnlyFans model says her faith will not stop her from stripping down to the tune of \$200k a month." While Capuano's beliefs and behaviors regarding sexuality stray so far from God's good design that they are concerning enough, it's her understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ that's most alarming. "My family is Christian but very laid-back, my religion has never stopped me from doing anything I've wanted to do," she says. "God will love you no matter what – that's what I was taught in my household, school and church."

Lindsay Capuano is just one example of the way in which we increasingly opt out of a biblically-based Christian faith that believes God defines Himself and creates us in His own image, and into a "faith" that allows us

to create and constantly re-create our own personal idea of God according to whatever image we choose in the moment. In her recent book, *Strange Rites: New Religions For A Godless World*, Tara Isabella Burton describes the faith of Capuano and so many others: It is a "new, eclectic, chaotic, and thoroughly, quintessentially American religion. A religion of emotive intuition, of aestheticized and commodified experience, of self-creation and self-improvement and, yes, selfies. A religion for a new generation of Americans raised to think of themselves both as capitalist consumers and as content creators. A religion decoupled from institutions, from creeds, from metaphysical truth-claims about God or the universe of the Way Things Are, but that still seeks – in various and varying ways – to provide us with the pillars of what religion always has: meaning, purpose, community, ritual."

So, while we might be encouraged that our kids label themselves "Christian", talk about God, and show up at church, there are many whose ultimate authority is not the God who has revealed Himself in His written Word and the God-man Jesus Christ, but the authority of the holy trinity of *me, myself, and I*. They are following their intuition rather than following Jesus Christ.

Why should this matter to us? Of course, we want our kids to love, follow, and serve Jesus Christ. But with the culture and "the spirit of the times" catechizing our kids away from understanding who God *really* is and who He calls them to be, this reality should prompt us to increase our efforts to nurture our kids in the faith. G.K. Chesterton once wrote, "We need something like a test. It is necessary to have in hand a truth to judge modern philosophies." It's no secret that "the truth" Chesterton knew we needed was the unchanging Word of God. Parents, is the Truth in your hands, head, and heart? And, are you passing it on to the hands, heads, and hearts of your children? ✨

Streamed Movies of 2020

1. *Frozen II* (Disney+)

2. *Moana* (Disney+)

3. *Secret Life of Pets 2* (Netflix)

4. *Onward* (Disney+)

5. *Dr. Seuss' The Grinch* (Netflix)

6. *Hamilton* (Disney+)

7. *Spenser Confidential* (Netflix)

8. *Aladdin* (2019) (Disney+)

9. *Toy Story 4* (Disney+)

10. *Zootopia* (Disney+)



Nielsen
SVOD Content Ratings (Netflix,
Amazon Prime, Disney+ and
Hulu) - December 30, 2019
through December 27, 2020



QUICK STATS

64% of Americans say social media have a mostly negative effect on the way things are going in the U.S. today.
(Pew Research Center)

CBS has sold out all their commercial spots for the Super Bowl, with initial price estimates being reported at around \$5.6 million for a 30-second spot, compared with \$5.2 million in 2020. Last year's game, available on Fox, was watched by 99.2 million viewers.
(CBS/Kantar/Nielsen)

FROM THE NEWS:

TIKTOK SHOPLIFTING

It has been said that you can find a way to justify anything. If you don't believe that, you need to learn about a new trend that has teenagers combining shoplifting with the social media app TikTok in an effort to punish chain stores and other businesses kids deem as problematic. Believe it or not, there's an active and growing online community of teens who are sharing shoplifting strategies and tips through TikTok videos. These kids refer to the practice as borrowing, and they target particular store chains they have labeled as unjust in their social practices. In a nod to socialism, the teenagers are pushing back on big company capitalism, believing that their stealing punishes the corporations. One of the catchphrases within the online community is this, "If it's a chain, it's free reign." If you want to learn more about how this community operates and encourages sin, check out #borrowingtips. Parents, teach your kids that in God's economy, we are commanded *not* to steal.

TRENDS: REDEFINING FREEDOM

Our kids are growing up in a world where freedom is understood to be the ability to choose to do whatever you want, whenever you want, based on how you are feeling at any given moment in time. But is that really freedom? Parents, we encourage you to take to heart these words from pastor Tim Keller, and teach them to your children so that they come to a true understanding of freedom. Keller writes, "Freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones, those that fit with the realities of our own nature and the nature of the world. So, the commandments of God in the Bible are a means of liberation, because through them God calls us to be what He built us to be." Parents, our kids need to realize that they have been made by God, in the image of God, for a relationship with God. What this means is that our loving God has established borders and boundaries that aren't there to diminish our freedom, but to give us true freedom. Teach your kids to live into God's will and way.



LATEST RESEARCH: WEIGHT LOSS GOALS

For those of you who have enjoyed watching the Netflix series *The Crown*, you have most likely finished watching season 4, which began streaming last fall. Now, the series isn't necessarily a hot commodity in today's youth culture, but season 4 has already served to remind us of an alarming youth culture trend that needs our attention. The show has depicted Lady Diana's struggle with disordered eating. New

research tells us that higher numbers of boys and girls are dieting to lose weight, and are overestimating their own weight. The marketing and social media blitz continues to pound kids – all of us in fact – with a message that to be skinny and perfect is necessary. The research, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, says that as of 2015, 42% of 14-year-old girls and boys were

trying to lose weight, compared to 30% in 2005. Parents, lead your kids into finding their identity in Christ, not in their appearance. And get them medical help if necessary.

A Prayer For Our Teens

by Walt Mueller



Lord, keep my children from sliding with or without thought into the path of spiritual suicide. . . the easy contemporary path where we deconstruct your timeless and unchanging Word. . . both your Word Incarnate and written. . . through any human-made theory. Foster in them a keen awareness of their own bent to wander. . . knowingly and unknowingly. . . off of your well-lit path of holiness and righteousness, and onto the over-populated dark path which is crammed with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sustain and grow in them an ever-present state of high alert where they are committed to the wise task of deconstructing any human-made theory under the spotlight of your Word. And, may they clearly discern truth from error so that they might not diminish your image in any person, or remake you in their own image through the same rebellious pride that took our first parents out of the garden. Grant them grace that they may ever live under your authority, rather than falling into the deadly trap of believing that they can somehow force you to live under theirs. Amen.

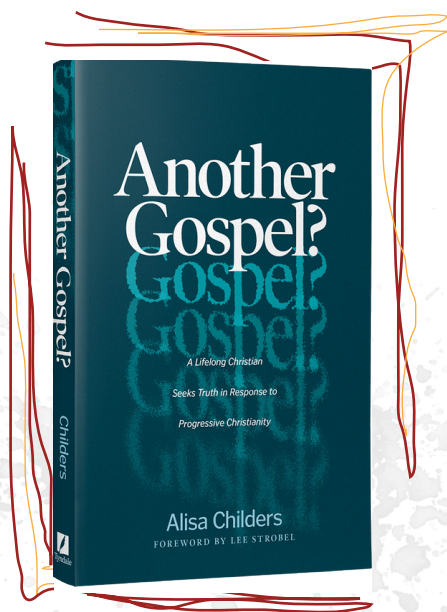
New Podcast

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 121 titled
“The Value of Theology
for Parenting and Youth
Ministry” with Stephen
Nichols



FROM THE WORD

In his first letter, John warns his readers about falling prey to dishonest schemers who are bent on misleading followers of Jesus out of believing the truth about Christ and into believing lies (1 John 2:18-28). Specifically, this is one more of the Bible’s many warnings about “false teachers” and “antichrists” who want to lead Christians astray. But not only does this passage warn us about those whose mission it is to deceive, but about how susceptible we all are to being deceived ourselves.

What’s most helpful in this passage is not just the warning John issues to us, but the secret he shares to successfully being able to spot and avoid getting fooled into believing the scammers’ lies. This secret is found in three little words that appear at the end of verse 27, and again at the beginning of verse 28: “abide in him.” To “abide” in Christ means that we are to “continue” and “remain” in him. John tells us that we are able to “abide” in Christ because of “the anointing” he has placed on us. In other words, because he has made us his own, we have all the resources we need to know the truth and recognize the lies. But this is not something that just happens. We have a role to play as we take steps to “continue” in Christ everyday by reading his Word, talking to him through prayer, engaging in fellowship with other Christians, and by our faithful obedience as his followers.

The sheer amount of the Bible’s warnings about false teachers and others who would lead us astray are there for good reason. Heeding and responding to those warnings through a commitment to “abide” will keep us and our kids from some day having to utter the words, “I can’t believe I fell for that.”

**“AND NOW, LITTLE CHILDREN,
ABIDE IN HIM, SO THAT
WHEN HE APPEARS WE MAY
HAVE CONFIDENCE AND NOT
SHRINK FROM HIM IN SHAME
AT HIS COMING.”**

I JOHN 2:28

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Alisa Childers never thought she would question her Christian faith. She’d been raised in a Christian home, where she had seen her mom and dad feed the hungry, clothe the homeless, and love the outcast. She had dedicated her own life to leading worship as part of the Christian band ZOEGirl. All that was deeply challenged when she met a progressive pastor who called himself a hopeful agnostic. *Another Gospel?: A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity* describes the journey Alisa took over several years as she wrestled with questions that struck at the core of the Christian faith and found the truth. Alisa’s story may be your own—or that of someone you love. Or perhaps you have encountered the ideas of progressive Christianity in your everyday life and aren’t sure how to respond. *Another Gospel?* will help you and others on a similar journey be pointed back to the truth.

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