

CPYU PARENT PAGE

THE CENTER FOR PARENT/YOUTH
UNDERSTANDING

Helping **parents** understand **teenagers** and their world

LIKE PARENT, LIKE CHILD

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“My thing is that I can do whatever I want... It’s all about what makes you feel good. If you want to get surgery, go get surgery. If you want to wear a dress that somebody thinks that you look too big wearing, f**k it – if you feel like you look good, you look good.”

Billie Eilish, speaking about her ‘gospel’ of confidence and how that has led to a lot of miscommunication, *Vogue*, May 2, 2021.



I recently stumbled upon an old public service announcement that hasn’t lost a step in its relevance since it aired on TV over 54 years ago. The “Like Father Like Son” anti-smoking PSA you can watch on YouTube serves as a powerful reminder of the life-shaping influence parents have on their kids.

A cute and impressionable three-year-old boy is shown spending a leisurely fall day with his dad. As dad stands high on a ladder painting the side



of the family house, the little guy stands right below running an empty paint brush back and forth on the siding. While riding in the family convertible, dad signals a turn with his extended arm. The young fellow watches and mimics dad, putting his own arm out his window. As they take a walk together on a trail, dad picks up a stone and slings into the woods. You guessed it, junior finds a rock and does the same thing. In the last scene of what is unfolding as a heartwarming video, father and son sit down against a tree. Dad pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one up as the little boy watches intently. He sets the pack down next to his son. As dad puffs away, the boy picks up the pack and starts to look inside. The PSA ends with the narrator telling viewers, “Like father, like son. Think about it.”

It’s no surprise that children become like their parents. In his recent book, *Handing Down The Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion On To The Next Generation*, sociologist Christian Smith tells us that research shows that nearly all human responsibility for the faith trajectories of a child’s life falls on the shoulders of his or her parents. He writes, “The empirical evidence is clear. In almost every case, no other institution or program comes close to shaping youth religiously as their parents do- not religious congregations, youth groups, faith-based schools, missions and service trips, summer camps, Sunday school, youth ministers or anything else.” Rather, it is

how we as dads and moms consistently live out our beliefs and behaviors in our ordinary lives each and every minute of each and every day which has the greatest influence on the faith development of our kids.

So, what about you? Here are four variables that Dr. Smith’s research has found to be vital if you want your kids to grow up to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.

First, just be yourself. Take the time to nurture your own faith through Bible study, prayer, corporate worship, sitting under good preaching/teaching, and other spiritual disciplines. And as you grow, your life will communicate your faith to your kids with genuineness and sincerity. You will be *living* rather than *performing* your faith. . . which kids can see right through.

Second, embrace an *authoritative* parenting style. Authoritative parents combine two important traits. First, they hold their children to clear and demanding expectations, standards, and boundaries in every area of life. And second, they relate to their children with warmth, support, and care.

Third, routinely talk about the Christian faith. Faith is not just a Sunday thing. Parents should weave the message of the Gospel and the implications of faith for everyday living into every area of life as they look for and seize teachable moments.

And finally, Dr. Smith says parents should be sure their children are in relationships with other non-family adults in the church who can engage with their children beyond just superficial chit-chat. These are adults who share and affirm our Christian faith.

A few weeks ago I updated my profile picture on my Facebook page. When an old childhood friend reconnected with me after a few decades without contact had passed, she made this comment on my photo: “Wow! You look just like your dad.!” Yep, that’s what happens. . . in more ways than you and I can even imagine. ✨

Teens Changing the World in 2021 List

Source:
PEOPLE Magazine
May 17, 2021



John Michael Stagliano,
photo courtesy Stagliano family

1. **Joy Ruppert, 16**
2. **Jordan Miller, 17**
3. **Nijel Murray, 17**
4. **John Michael Stagliano, 18**
5. **Isha Clarke, 18**
6. **Jordan Reeves, 15**
7. **Hollis Belger, 16**
8. **Jose Rodriguez Jr., 17**
9. **Ankitha Kumar, 18**
10. **Dasia Taylor, 17**



Joy Ruppert,
photo courtesy Lee Auerbach

QUICK STATS

Nearly 40% of college students exhibited symptoms of addiction to their smartphones. These students reported feeling that their phone use was out of control and that being separated from their phones was a cause for major anxiety.

(King's College in London)

In California, between the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years, a time after pot was legalized for adults, marijuana use by kids over the past 30 days grew 23%.

(Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs)

FROM THE NEWS:

TEEN CHOICES AND HEART DISEASE

Because we live in a fallen and broken world where the effects of sin touch everything everywhere, we know that time and gravity are not kind to the

human body. We experience the effects of aging, disease, and decay, with our ultimate end being the death of our physical bodies. Those of us who are older are aware of this, and many of us are suffering the consequences of lifelong bad habits and the toll they take on our bodies. But it's not just those of us who are older. Dr. Robert Lager, a cardiac physician, is now sounding the alarm that teenagers need to be concerned about heart disease, even at their young age. He reports that there has been a rise in teenagers with plaque buildup in their arteries, which of course can lead to a greater risk of heart disease later in life. Lager says that one in six teens already have significant plaque buildup in their arteries. How can we help our teens steward their bodies? Tell them to avoid smoking, to eat healthy foods, and to exercise regularly.

TRENDS: AFFLUENZA

If we relentlessly pursue “the American Dream” and the desire to pass the material benefits of the good life on to our kids, bad things happen. Experts who work with kids who have been given too much by their parents have developed diagnoses known as “Affluenza” and “Rich Kids Syndrome.”

The disease is as common in middle-class and lower-class homes as it is in homes with lots of money. The danger lies in the fact that we are fostering and encouraging idolatry. Our lives and

actions should communicate to our kids that the best life is found by living in relationship with God, living out His will, and by pursuing His standards of “success.” The “best life” consists of directing all we have, all we do, and all we are toward loving and serving God in every nook, cranny, and minute of our lives. The “best life” includes the ability to tell the difference between “needs” and “wants.” And then, because of our love for Him, we should love those around us as He has loved us.



LATEST RESEARCH: THE PANDEMIC AND EATING DISORDERS

In a recent article in the *New York Times*, adolescent psychologist Lisa Damour reported that eating disorders among teenagers have exploded during the pandemic. Eating disorder clinics are reporting a

two-fold increase in intakes of adolescent patients since the pandemic began. The National Eating Disorders Association hotline saw a 40% jump in call volume after March 2020. 35% of those callers

were between the ages of 13 and 17, which was up from the year before. There are many possible causes. The stress of the pandemic and the changes that it brought fed anxiety. Since eating disorders are associated with high achievement, many kids who had been focused on academics and extracurriculars now spent time focusing on their physical health and appearance. Still others felt increased appearance pressure from spending more time on social media. If your child is struggling with disordered eating, secure the help of a qualified and experienced Christian counselor.



SEXUAL INTEGRITY INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

Sex Positive

by Walt Mueller



With sex-positivity being taught both implicitly and explicitly as foundational in today's school-based comprehensive sex education, the beliefs our kids hold are being shaped in ways that will yield behavioral evidence, now and for the rest of their lives, that they personally choose sex-positive. And with pop culture reinforcing the sex-positive message, along with elevating the self to a position of final authority on all matters of life, the message is convincing and clear.

Sadly, the sex-positive movement sees traditional biblical sexuality as sex-negative. The movement holds that “sex-negativity has been a yoke upon civilization for nearly ten thousand years, hoisted upon us by dominator/patriarchal culture as a system of control and exploitation.” But nothing could be further from the truth. The Christian knows that true human freedom and flourishing come when we live into and under the authority of God, choosing to see sex and gender as good gifts from a God who offers a resounding and celebratory “YES!” to sex and gender as He established them at creation. The reality is that God is completely “sex-positive”!

To learn more about the Sex Positive movement, download our free Trend Alert by scanning the QR code on the left.

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 130: "Keeping and Handing Down the Faith" with Christian Smith

FROM THE WORD

The short little New Testament book we know as Third John was a letter from the apostle John to a man named Gaius, who was a member of one of John's churches. In the opening paragraph of the letter, John shares his joy at the report he's received regarding Gaius and the spiritual growth that was taking place in his life. He was pleased that Gaius was embracing and living the truth. While Gaius was not a biological child to John, he was a spiritual child to John. This is why John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth (v.4).

Our highest and most noble calling as Christian parents is this: to lead our children into knowing and following Jesus Christ. Nothing is more important. . . not grades, accolades, athletic achievements, social media followers, size of bank account. . . nothing! Consequently, our greatest parental joy must be like that of John's.

How can we nurture our children as John nurtured Gaius? First, we must be sure that they are seeing and hearing the truth. They have to be taught. As parents, we are called by God as their primary teachers. Second, we want to pray that our children would give assent to the Gospel-message, including everything it says about following Jesus. And third, we want to equip them to apply the faith to their everyday-all-the-time behavior. Creed and conduct need to be in alignment.

What is it that gives you your greatest parental joy? Is it seeing your kids know *and* live the Truth?

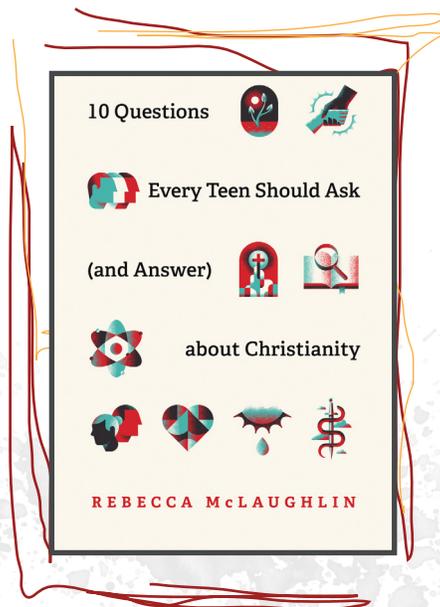
**"I HAVE NO GREATER JOY THAN TO HEAR THAT MY CHILDREN ARE WALKING IN THE TRUTH."
3 JOHN 1:4**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

How can we believe the Bible is true? Why can't we just agree that love is love? Isn't Christianity against diversity?

Going to school, hanging out with friends, or scrolling through social media feeds, teenagers are sure to face real challenges to faith in Jesus Christ. And whether you consider yourself a Christ follower or not, these questions can seem like deal breakers.

Backed by state-of-the-art research, personal stories, Harry Potter illustrations (warning: spoilers!), and careful biblical study, *10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity* by Rebecca McLaughlin doesn't dodge tough questions. Instead, it invites teenagers to ask their hardest questions about Christianity and to find surprising, life-giving answers.



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