



It's reasonable to assume that by the time any individual is 20 years past their own high school graduation, a look back at their senior yearbook photo more often than not prompts this head-shaking thought: "What in the world was I thinking?" And if for some reason you aren't prompted to question the wisdom of your adolescent hairstyle and dress, all you have to do is show that yearbook photo to one of your teenaged children. Come on. . . you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Last month, my brother sent me several emails filled with digitized versions of some 35mm family slides that I hadn't seen for decades. Looking back through dozens of still shots from my childhood and teenage years occasioned many smiles. There were also quite a few cringes and some "Oh my's!" as I flipped through the photos. At one point, I wasn't

only questioning my personal choices for how I was presenting myself to the world at the time. I seriously wondered if there still might be time to press charges against my parents for letting me look like that out in public! 😊

That little trip down memory lane served to remind me that what I now call "the earthquake of adolescence" is a time where kids try on a variety of selves for size, all in an effort to develop an identity as everything inside and outside one's self seems to be morphing at breakneck speed. For me, I remember that all I wanted to do was curate myself in a way that allowed me to fit in.

In today's world, the quest to find an answer to this "Who am I?" question is a bit more complex to navigate. The adolescent world we lived through *did*

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YOUTH  
CULTURE

HOT  
QUOTE

Taylor Swift, reflecting on the organic success of her single "All Too Well", which wasn't promoted as a single when it was first released a decade ago.

*"There's so much happening in the music industry that's so exciting. The fans have kind of subverted the label model of 'we sit in a conference room and we pick the songs you're going to like.' You guys are like, 'No, we don't want to do that anymore.' I find it so radical and wonderful, and I'm just trying to listen to the heartbeat of what fans want."*

At the Tribeca Festival  
June 11, 2022  
as reported by  
USAToday.com



"I AM A CHILD OF GOD!"

"GOD IS MY FATHER!"

"HEAVEN IS MY HOME!"

"EVERY DAY IS ONE DAY NEARER!"

"MY SAVIOR IS MY BROTHER!"

"EVERY CHRISTIAN IS MY BROTHER TOO!"



include the task of identity formation. We all wanted to figure it out. We wondered, each of us, "Who am I?" We tried on a variety of options, some of us more options than others, and where we settled has shaped the rest of our lives. If our "Who am I?" question had been a multiple-choice question, we might have been able to choose from options a., b., c., or d. Relatively speaking, those four answers might still be options for kids today, but e., f., g., h., i., j., k. etc. are now options as well. And, as long as the options exist and are promoted everywhere kids turn, those choices will be made.

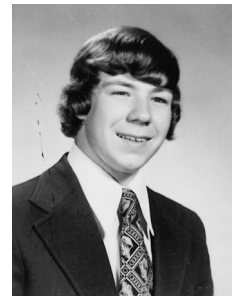
For those of us who are "in Christ," this identity question has been settled once and for all at the cross. We have been adopted into God's family and our identity is as adopted daughters and sons of the sovereign King of the universe! Still, our continued battles with our own flesh along with the principalities of this world leaves us wavering between times of certainty and times of doubt.

This is where I've found wise counsel in the words of the great theologian J.I. Packer as written in his classic book, *Knowing God*. Packer tells us that in order to fully understand ourselves and know our *real* identity we must embrace and

continually preach six truths to ourselves: "I am a child of God!", "God is my Father!", "Heaven is my home!", "Every day is one day nearer!", "My Savior is my brother!", and "Every Christian is my brother too!"

Packer continues, "Say it over and over to yourself first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, any time your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it is all utterly and completely true. This is the Christian's secret of a Christian life, and of a God-honoring life, and these are the aspects of the situation that really matter. May this secret become fully yours and fully mine."

Parents, we live in a world where the identity options continue to multiply. Get your identity bearings. Teach your kids to get their bearings. Preach these truths to yourself and teach them to do the same.



**WALT MUELLER**  
CPYU President

"What in the world was I thinking?"

## FROM THE NEWS

### SELFIES & NOSE JOBS

**The official journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons is called *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*.**

In the April issue of the journal, researchers report on a study that found that the selfies we snap don't offer us an accurate perception of our facial features. For example, the length of one's chin decreases in our selfie photos, while our noses appear larger than they actually are. So, what's the big deal? Researchers say that there is a noted relationship between the increase in selfie photographs and an increase in rhinoplasty requests, particularly among younger patients. In other words, being dissatisfied with what we see of ourselves in our selfies, we now try to fix what we interpret as a socially unacceptable appearance through getting a nose job. Physicians are concerned that selfie facial distortions are contributing to adolescent mental health concerns. We are far too consumed with our appearances. God is most concerned with the state of our hearts, and we should be as well.





## TRENDS:



## Virtues as Vices and Vices as Virtues

How do we help our kids discern good from evil in a world where increasingly we see what used to be called vices embraced as virtues, and things that used to be virtues seen as vices? We are living in a world once described by cultural critic Gene Veith as a world where the only sin, is to believe in sin. As parents, we must begin by teaching our kids the truths of God's Word. We must help them look carefully at God's borders and boundaries for our lives so that they might live into worshiping and glorifying him by following his way and will for their lives. Second, we must teach them how culture twists our understanding of sin. In his book *Knowing Sin*, Mark Jones says this: "In our temptations, Satan wants us to call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). He clothes sin with the appearance of virtue. Greed is 'saving,' lust is 'love,' abortion is 'self-care,' drunkenness is 'medication,' and laziness is 'rest.'" Let's help our kids see all of life through the truth of God's Word.



## LATEST RESEARCH:

## Are We Spending Too Much on Sports?

According to the latest research, it's not just time that we're spending so our kids can play organized sports. We're also spending money. . . lots of money! Researchers have found that the average annual family spending on just one child for just one organized sport

is \$903! Multiply that number by the number of kids who are playing and the number of sports they play, and it can be overwhelming. For example, a family with three children who play two sports each will spend over \$5,000 annually on organized sports! While the spirit of the times encourages this type of involvement and spending, we must step back and look at the bigger picture through the lens of God's Word, asking if this is truly responsible stewardship of our time and money. It's been said,

"You tell me who and what you're spending your money on, and I'll tell you who or what your God is." Parents, is your commitment to organized sports crossing the line into too much?



## QUICKSTATS



More than 17% of people phub (the act of snubbing someone you're talking with in person in favor of your phone) others at least four times a day.

(*Computers in Human Behavior*)

This year, 4.0 million Gen Zers (born between 1997 and 2012) will become social network users, up 8.4% over 2021. That momentum will continue, and in 2025—the year the youngest members of the generation turn 13—there will be 13.8 million more Gen Z social network users than there were in 2021.

(*eMarketer*)

III TOP III

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## TEENS' TOP CONCERNS ABOUT PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Costs (49%)
2. Taking Student Loans (43%)
3. Uncertainty about Future Careers (32%)
4. Lack of Return on Investment (27%)
5. Moving Away from Home (25%)
6. Being Around New People (25%)

Source:  
*Junior Achievement USA  
and Citizens Bank*  
(Among teens surveyed,  
ages 13 to 18, February 2022)



## WORKING TO GOD'S GLORY

by WALT MUELLER

What will the kids you know and love see as the end or purpose of work? Why will they choose to pursue the job and career path they choose to pursue? Will their goals be economic in ways that make the old Loverboy song "Working For the Weekend" their personal anthem? Or will they push back on the empty promises and dead-end of what's known as "The American Dream?"

If we truly believe that the Gospel speaks to all of life and that Christian nurture leads to the integration of faith into our work, then we need to be pointing our kids to something better than what the culture is currently giving them.

In a recent edition of *First Things* magazine, professor Max Torres writes about the Christian view of work: "The investment of the person into productive products is of transcendent, transformative importance, not just for the material progress of society, but most of all for the full realization of human potential."

We've been made to work to God's glory.



# FROM THE WORD

We all know people who have been adopted into their families. Perhaps when you were growing up you had friends you learned had been adopted. Or, maybe even you yourself were adopted by your parents into your family. Those who are adopted legally and fully become members of a family, they take on that family's last name, and they reap all the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of belonging to that family. Their identity is as a member of that family.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us that for those who are in Christ, God has gifted us with the Spirit of adoption and we are children and heirs of God (Romans 8:15-17). Adoption gives a free inheritance to us, people who are fully undeserving of such a gift but graciously given this gift by God. We are God's children and we can call Him "Abba", or "Father."

New Testament scholar P.H. Davids summarizes our spiritual adoption this way: "Adoption is a deliverance from the past, a status and way of life in the present, and a hope for the future. It describes the process of becoming a child of God and receiving an inheritance from God."

Because we are now God's children, we are to imitate our Father, glorify our Father, and strive to please our Father in all we are, all we have, and all we do. This is our identity. It's who we are!

**"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."**

**JOHN 1:12&13**



## PODCAST



### Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

#### Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU hosted by Walt Mueller.

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODES 152 & 153:**

**"RESPONDING TO THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY" A 2 PART DISCUSSION WITH YOUTH WORKERS**

**LISTEN AT [WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST](http://WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST)**

Unfortunately, we become so obsessed with not missing out on what is happening *online* that we miss out on what is happening *off-line*. We care so much about keeping up with those far from us that we damage the relationships of those closest to us.

- Chris Martin



## HELPFUL RESOURCES



### BOOK

Do we use social media, or are we being used by it?

Social media is brilliant and obscene. It sharpens the mind and dulls it. It brings nations together and tears them apart. It perpetuates, reveals, and repairs injustice. It is an untamed beast upon which we can only hope to ride, but never quite corral.

What is it doing to us?

In *Terms of Service: The Real Cost of Social Media*, Chris Martin brings readers his years of expertise and experience from building online brands, coaching authors and speakers about social media use, and thinking theologically about the effects of social media. As you read this book, you will:

- Learn how social media has come to dominate the role the internet plays in your life
- Learn how the “social internet” affects you in ways you may not realize
- Be equipped to push back against the hold the internet has on your mind and your heart