



HOW DO I LOOK?

“Daddy, will people make fun of me?” Yep. . . she really asked me that question. She was my oldest child, yet only five years old. It was one day before she started Kindergarten and I was already a mess about sending her off to school for the first time. Then, she asked the question. I wondered to myself, “What is she talking about?” “Make fun of you for what?” I asked. Her answer woke me up to how body image pressures had compressed down to the youngest of ages: “Because of what I look like.”

That little interchange took place over 30 years ago. Now, that little girl of mine is a mommy raising three little children of her own. And if the body image pressure was strong back then, think about what it’s like now. The culture and the peer group are pounding even the youngest of the young with compelling and convincing messages regarding how necessary it is to look a certain way if you are going to be liked, accepted, and

even loved. In the three decades since my oldest went out the door for the first day of school, the volume and frequency of these life-*mis*-shaping messages has been turned up through the channels of media, marketing, and the 24/7 presence of social media. And now that your kids will once again be walking the hallways of their school, the pressure will ramp up even more.

The body image frenzy is literally consuming our kids. Lest you think this is just a youth culture pressure, think again. Body image pressure hits us all. And the more we as parents bow to the pressure ourselves. . . usually without even knowing it. . . the more we contribute to our kids’ struggle to find their identity in Jesus Christ, rather than in what they look like.

Sadly, researchers tell us that young children are experiencing dissatisfaction with the size and shape of their bodies

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE →

YOUTH
CULTURE

HOT
QUOTE

Halsey, publically calling out her record label and venting about the frustration of forced ‘viral’ marketing.

“Basically I have a song that I love that I wanna release ASAP, but my record label won’t let me. I’ve been in this industry for eight years and I’ve sold over 165 million records and my record company is saying I can’t release it unless they can fake a viral moment on TikTok. Everything is marketing, and they are doing this to basically every artist these days. I just wanna release music, man. And I deserve better tbh. I’m tired.”

TikTok, May 22, 2022.



“THE MORE WE AS PARENTS BOW TO THE PRESSURE OURSELVES, THE MORE WE CONTRIBUTE TO OUR KIDS’ STRUGGLE TO FIND THEIR IDENTITY IN JESUS CHRIST, RATHER THAN IN WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE.”



that puts them at risk of eating disorders in their teens. Among 13-year-old girls, 53% say they are “unhappy with their bodies.” By the time they reach the age of 17, 78% of girls fall into that category. Our boys are not at all immune from the same pressures and dissatisfaction. Around 25% of male children and adolescents are concerned about their muscularity and leanness.

It’s increasingly important for moms and dads to push back on this body image pressure. As Christian parents, we can begin to push back by living counter-culturally ourselves (Romans 12:1&2), as we endeavor to find our identity in who we are as Divine-image-bearers, and who we are in Jesus Christ rather than in what we see when we look in the mirror. We are called to do the same with our kids. Here are some first steps you can take to help your kids manage the pressure. . .

First, seek and find your own identity in who you are as a person made in God’s image and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Contrary to what the world tells you, you are not what you look like. The antidote to our fears and insecurities is found in our union with Christ and finding our value in him. Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us, “For our sake, he (God) made

him (Jesus) to be sin who know no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” When God looks at us He sees Christ. In other words, our identity is secure in Jesus Christ!

Second, teach your kids to spot the appearance lies in the 4,000 to 10,000 marketing messages they see each day. Point out how ads tell us that we are incomplete unless our appearance measures up to highly unattainable standards.

Third, do not criticize yourself, your kids, or others about body weight and shape.

Fourth, take stock of how much time you spend on curating your outward appearance. . . and make changes where necessary. Have you turned your body into an idol?

Fifth, compliment your kids on their God-given talents and character traits, rather than on their appearance.

And finally, spend time with your children reading and talking about God’s Word, looking to discover how what God values turns the world’s priorities upside-down.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

DADS ON DUTY

Last fall, after 23 students at a local Shreveport, LA high school were arrested over a 3-day span for fighting on campus, some fathers stepped in to keep it from happening again.

A group of parents met after the incidents to form a strategy for combatting violence at the school. After meeting for 4 hours, the group came up with a plan. Some fathers decided to go to the school to walk around and patrol the hallways, showing a strong and caring male presence at the school. One of the organizers of this Dads on Duty group says this: “I don’t care how old you are or what size you are, it’s something about seeing a man, a positive male figure, a father, your daddy whatever you want to call them, at the school. It will make you straighten up and fly right.” These dads have become like cool uncles to the students and there haven’t been any fights on campus since they started. Adults, God gives us great opportunities to meet the needs in our communities. Why not get involved?



TRENDS:



Lack of “Free Play”

Just like we used to hear from our parents and grandparents when we were kids, today’s kids hear us talking about how things have changed since the old days. Of course, many changes are good. But some changes actually undermine our human flourishing. Perhaps you’ve heard yourself telling your kids about your childhood and what is now called “free play.” It was those self-organized afterschool and weekend pickup games in driveways and backyards among the neighborhood kids, all void of an adult presence. Experts tell us that free play helps kids build skills in cooperation and problem-solving. Free play encourages physical fitness. It builds resilience as kids have to navigate arguments, failures, and poor sportsmanship. Parents, we want our kids to learn how to get along with others, ultimately in ways that evidence the fruit of the spirit. Perhaps we need to peel back on our tendency to over-schedule our kids in organized sports, and allow them to get outside to play with each other.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Quitting Sports Early

According to a 2019 survey from Project Play at the Aspen Institute, the average child today spends less than 3 years playing a sport, then quits at age 11. There are a variety of reasons for this. Two of the main reasons are economics and relationships. On the economic side, youth sports are just getting way too expensive for many families to afford, especially those that are low-income families. For other kids, it’s

the pressure to perform and excel that comes from parents and coaches, oftentimes through yelling and poor sideline behavior. One physical activity that did pick up during the pandemic was

bike riding, which used to be a daily occurrence for kids. 12% of parents said their child tried riding a bicycle for the first time during the pandemic. Parents, we need to pull back on the pressure and teach our kids that sports are to be played, and that play is to be fun.

QUICKSTATS

The “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” teaser trailer nabbed 172 million views in its first 24 hours, becoming one of the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s top trailer debuts for a superhero movie.

(Variety)

A survey of college students found that 50% of them could remember a specific news story that they had seen during childhood that frightened, worried or upset them. The effects included feeling scared and being unable to sleep. And 7% of participants said they were still frightened of that event at their present college age.

(Communication Research)

||| TOP |||

10



SONGS ON RADIO

1. "About Damn Time" by Lizzo
2. "As It Was" by Harry Styles
3. "First Class" by Jack Harlow
4. "Get Into It (Yuh)" by Doja Cat
5. "Late Night Talking" by Harry Styles
6. "Numb Little Bug" by Em Beihold
7. "Sunroof" by Nicky Youre f/Dazy
8. "Boyfriend" by Dove Cameron
9. "Big Energy" by Latto
10. "Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God)" by Kate Bush

*Top 40 Category
Week of July 28, 2022
Source: Mediabase*



INVOLVED FATHERS by WALT MUELLER

One of the greatest gifts I received in my life was the gift of an active and involved father. My father not only took the time to be around and spend time with me, but to teach me about Jesus and what it means to live with Christ as the Lord of my life.

Those were great benefits to having a loving and involved father. But there's more! Researchers tell us that when a dad gets involved in his child's life, that child will learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior. Children with involved dads have fewer emotional and behavioral problems in adolescence. Teens who feel close to their dads grow

up to have healthier marriages. And girls who have a strong relationship with their dad during their teenage years move into adulthood without as many psychological issues and distresses.

Dads, your heavenly father has given you the gift of your children. He has also given you to them as a gift. Love your children as you've been loved by your heavenly father.

FROM THE WORD

he Apostle Paul knew full well what it is like to face pain, hardships, difficulties, calamities, persecutions, and weaknesses. Many today find this difficult to believe because, after all, we see Paul as a sincere and committed follower of Jesus Christ. Shouldn't Paul then be free from these things?

The Scriptures never promise a life free from difficulty for those who follow Christ. Instead, we are told that to follow Jesus requires leaving everything and taking up a cross. And as we encounter difficulties, God works in us and through us, conforming us to His image and glorifying Himself before a watching world. Paul knew that relief comes not in the removal of trials and difficulties, but in abiding in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 we learn that God's power is perfected in and through our weaknesses.

Parents who are committed to Christ, growing in their faith, and humbly learning to rely on Christ quickly learn that weaknesses are the stage on which God showers us with His grace and His power. Through it all, we learn not to depend on our undependable selves, but on Him. The greater our awareness of our own weaknesses, the more conspicuous is the power of God's grace in our lives and in our parenting. God's power is manifested in the weak... and that's just where He wants us!


“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

2 Corinthians 12:9



PODCAST




The WORD
in Youth Ministry

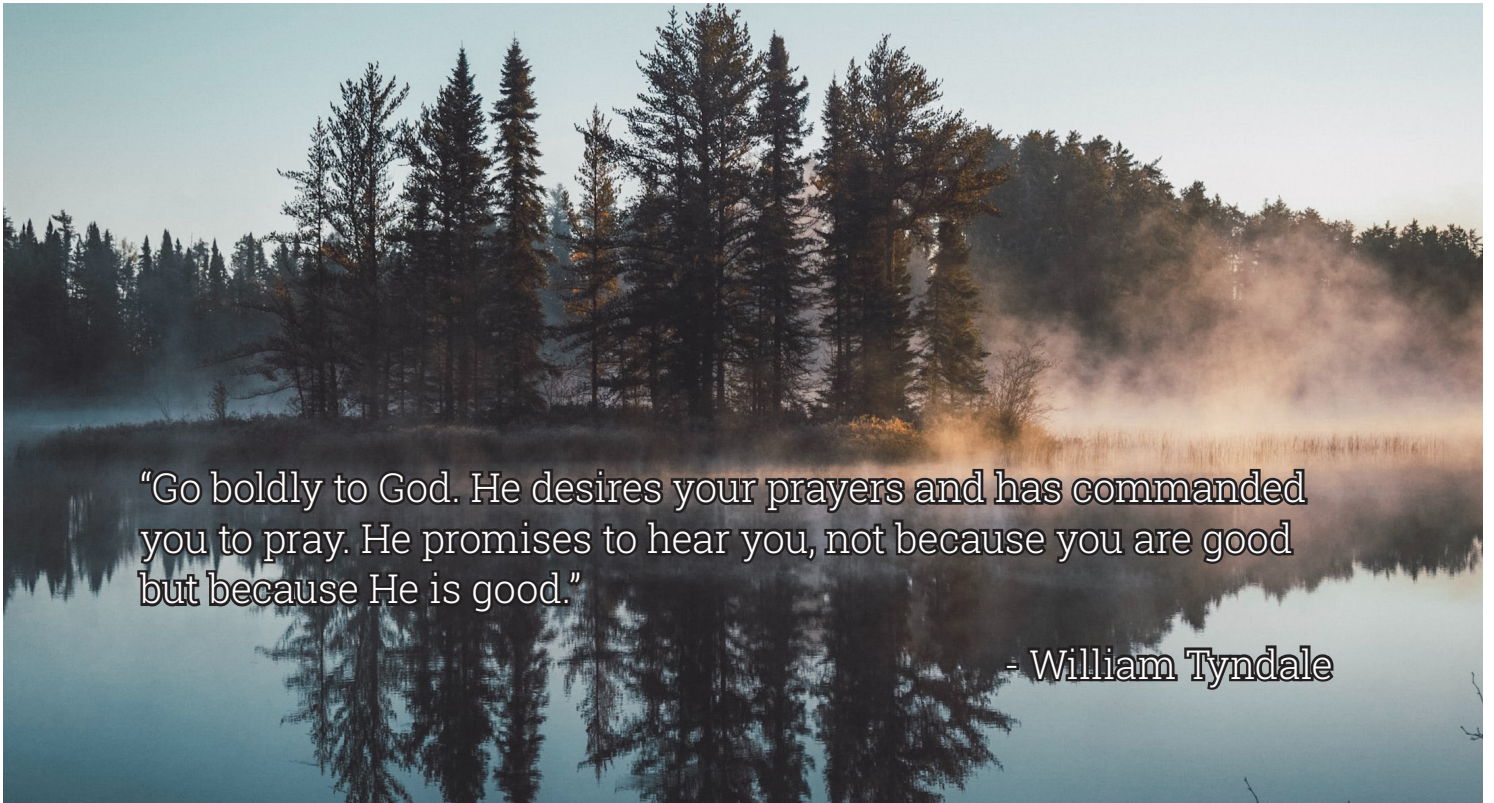
A CPYU PODCAST

The Word in Youth Ministry
is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 32 -
GOD'S FOUR PART STORY -
CHAPTER 4: CONSUMMATION**



LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM



“Go boldly to God. He desires your prayers and has commanded you to pray. He promises to hear you, not because you are good but because He is good.”

- William Tyndale

HELPFUL
RESOURCES



VIDEO SERIES

Young adults are leaving the faith in droves, and unlike previous generations, they’re not coming back. The new, 14-episode original video series Darkroom, provides a safe and engaging context for teens to explore key issues of faith with caring adult leaders in church or small group settings. Darkroom conveys to students that doubts and questions are a normal and healthy aspect of faith development. Viewers are encouraged to seek clarity when challenged, talk openly with trusted adults, and dig deeper into their faith.

Based on experiences of real teens, viewers can relate to the questions and struggles of the characters portrayed in the videos. Each 8-to-10-minute episode of Darkroom touches on a different topic and follows a unique journey of faith. The topics include doubt, love, church, sin, science, religion, suffering, bible, purpose, identity, justice, afterlife, mission, and supernatural.

The conversation-starter videos are available at no cost at darkroomfaith.com. The site also includes free discussion guides and leader materials for adult mentors to help facilitate and listen well.