



NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE

Even before they reach their teen years, our kids will be tempted, to one degree or another on numerous occasions, to become like chameleons. In an effort to protect themselves from feeling like they've been left alone to wander through adolescence, our kids will change colors and blend in with the surrounding environment of . . . the peer group. As Christian parents, what can you do to equip your kids to weather the inevitable peer pressure storm in a way that brings honor and glory to their Heavenly Father?

First, recognize that peer pressure reaches its greatest intensity during the adolescent years. Along with the rest of the teenage population, your child is experiencing the natural developmental shift in social focus from her family to

her peer group. They begin to disengage from the family while forming more and more relationships with same-sex and opposite-sex peers. Consequently, they will sometimes look for guidance and direction from their peers.

Second, recognize that the nature of peer pressure has changed since we were growing up. Peer pressure used to take the form of a **verbal invitation** to come and participate in some behavior that both you and the person inviting you to do it knew was **wrong**. There was always that element of sneaking around. Today, peer pressure typically takes the form of an **unspoken expectation** to participate in behavior that the great majority of the

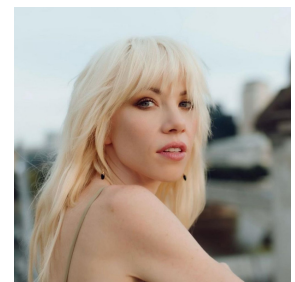
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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Pop singer Carly Rae Jepsen, when asked if she enjoys using social media.

"I'm the grandma of TikTok. I say this in a small personal-growth way: I'm having more fun with it. I only want it to be a place where I have fun. I don't want it to be a place of stress, where I feel like I have to post certain things at specific times. I don't look at it as an outlet of my soul [or] creativity. I've heard artists say they can no longer write songs because they use all their creativity to write a good caption. That sounds terrible. I'm still figuring it out."



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peer group believes to be **normal** and **right**. Today, it's much more difficult for our kids to go against the flow when the behaviors promoted aren't sneaky, but celebrated.

Finally, peer pressure shouldn't lead us to wave the white flag of surrender. Instead, it should motivate us to do all we can to encourage and equip our kids to stand firm in the midst of their pressure-filled lives. Realize that negative peer pressure is a spiritual battle that all of us fight constantly. Like the apostle Paul, we will find ourselves baffled by our behavior (Romans 7:15-24). But like Paul, we can see the way out of our struggle with sin through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:25).

Pray, pray, and continue to pray for your kids in the midst of pressure so intense that it can leave you and them feeling helpless and hopeless. Examine yourself and your lifestyle to see how your example teaches them to handle negative peer pressure. Model a lifestyle of discipleship and, by doing so, show your kids that following Christ is not always the easy choice but is always the right choice. Actively help your children realize their value and worth in God's eyes so that they are less prone to seek their satisfaction by conforming to the images

of the world. Get your kids involved in a positive peer group – perhaps a strong church youth group – where following the narrow path that leads to life is celebrated and affirmed by both leaders and students alike.

Help your kids to understand the truth of Proverbs 13:20 – that for better or for worse, friends always do influence friends.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



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FROM THE NEWS

“UNRULY SPORTS PARENTS”

**Over the summer, a
television station in
Des Moines, Iowa ran a
report about how unruly
parents were causing
issues for umpires at
youth baseball games.**

It seems that over the course of one weekend in June, umpires had to eject seventeen parents from baseball games for heckling and other bad behavior. In order to combat this, Central Iowa Sports, the organization that runs the league, instituted a strict no-tolerance policy. The following weekend, Central Iowa Sports reported that the new policy worked, as only two parents had to be ejected from the games. This story is not unusual, nor is the deplorable behavior of parents limited to Central Iowa. Increasingly we hear these reports from just about everywhere. Parents, sports are meant to be played. Play is meant to be fun. Negative sideline behavior ruins it for everyone, including our kids, who not only feel greater pressure, but learn these bad behaviors. We are to glorify God in all things, including our spectating.



TRENDS:



Belief in God

How many Americans say they believe in God? The Gallup organization recently released the results of their Values and Beliefs poll and found that the vast majority of adults in the U.S. believe in God. Currently, the number stands at 81%. That's down six points from the 87% who said they believed in God just five years earlier, in 2017. Gallup first asked this question in 1944, when 98% of Americans said they believed in God. On the one hand, we should be concerned about this drop. But lest we think that this majority can allow us to become lazy in terms of nurturing our kids in the Christian faith, think again. We have to ask who or what this God Americans believe in really is. Many believe in a self-defined God rather than the God who has revealed himself in the Bible. Parents, take the time to regularly talk about and nurture your kids in the faith. Prepare them for an adulthood filled with vibrant faith and trust in God for their salvation.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Alcohol and the Impact on Adolescent Brains

Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks in a two-hour period for men, or four or more drinks in a two-hour period for women. Adults who binge drink are at greater risk for increased violence, accidental injuries and death, impaired memory, increased risk for heart disease, and other chronic conditions. Less is known about the effects of binge-

drinking on the brains of adolescents. Researchers at the University of Buffalo have published a study that's found that even low and moderate levels of alcohol consumption can significantly impact the brain function of adolescents. The study found that all levels of alcohol consumption — low, moderate and high — decreased blood glucose metabolism in the primary somatosensory cortex and visual cortex, which are key

to processing sensory and visual information, as well as executing motor functions. We need to watch over our kids and warn them about the physical, legal, and spiritual issues related to alcohol consumption.



QUICKSTATS



"House of the Dragon" - a prequel to the popular "Game of Thrones" series - posted nearly 10 million viewers for its premiere episode. This set a new record for the HBO Max/HBO platform for a new series. (Warner Bros. Discovery)

The global gaming market is forecasted to hit \$200 billion in 2023, with in-game purchases and virtual goods providing a boost. 52% of 10-12 year-old internet users report spending money on video games. (eMarketer/InsiderIntelligence)

III TOP III

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STREAMING PLATFORMS

1. "Other"
2. Netflix
3. YouTube/YouTubeTV
4. Hulu
5. Prime Video
6. Disney+
7. HBO Max

July 2022
Source: Nielsen



JESUS AS LORD

by WALT MUELLER

In Ephesians 4:14, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are no longer to be like children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning. In essence, Paul is warning us to deepen our understanding of the truths of God's Word so that we might not be led astray by false teaching.

New Testament scholar Michael Kruger warns us that in today's world, many in the church are believing the false teaching which says that Jesus is a model for how we should live, rather than an object for our worship. This way of thinking is leading many of our kids into believing that Jesus

is only one of many moral teachers we can follow, rather than truly God and truly man.

We need to teach our kids that yes, Jesus is a moral example and he has called us to come and follow. But Jesus also has divine authority and He is both our Lord and our Savior.

Teach your kids that Jesus' moral teaching only works when we worship him as Lord.

FROM THE WORD



Our teenagers' lives are marked by a convergence of realities that often result in sinful behavior. They are fallen and depraved beings, they are at a developmental stage where impulsivity is strong, they believe they can make good decisions, and they are immersed in a culture that oftentimes exerts a powerful negative influence. When they fail, we can easily be lured into believing that if their outward behavior suddenly conforms to Godly standards, everything is alright on the inside. As a result, we sometimes fall into the trap of putting a premium on outward behavior, rather than on inward heart change.

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Matthew 15:8

Jesus reminds us that we should shoot for the heart, not the behavior. When speaking about the Pharisees he said, "These people honor me with their lips (outward behavioral conformity), but their hearts are far from me" (Matthew 15:8). While it might be easier on us if we demand and receive behavioral conformity from our kids, the reality that bears long-term fruit for the Kingdom of God is the obedience that flows not from fear, but from a changed heart. In other words, everything that looks alright might not be alright.

We must tend to the hearts of our children through teaching them God's Word, by praying regularly for God to transform their hearts, by involving them in worship, and by engaging them in missions and service. Our goal should be to raise Godly children who honor Christ with their lips and their lives as the obedient outflow of hearts that have been transformed and given new life.

PODCAST

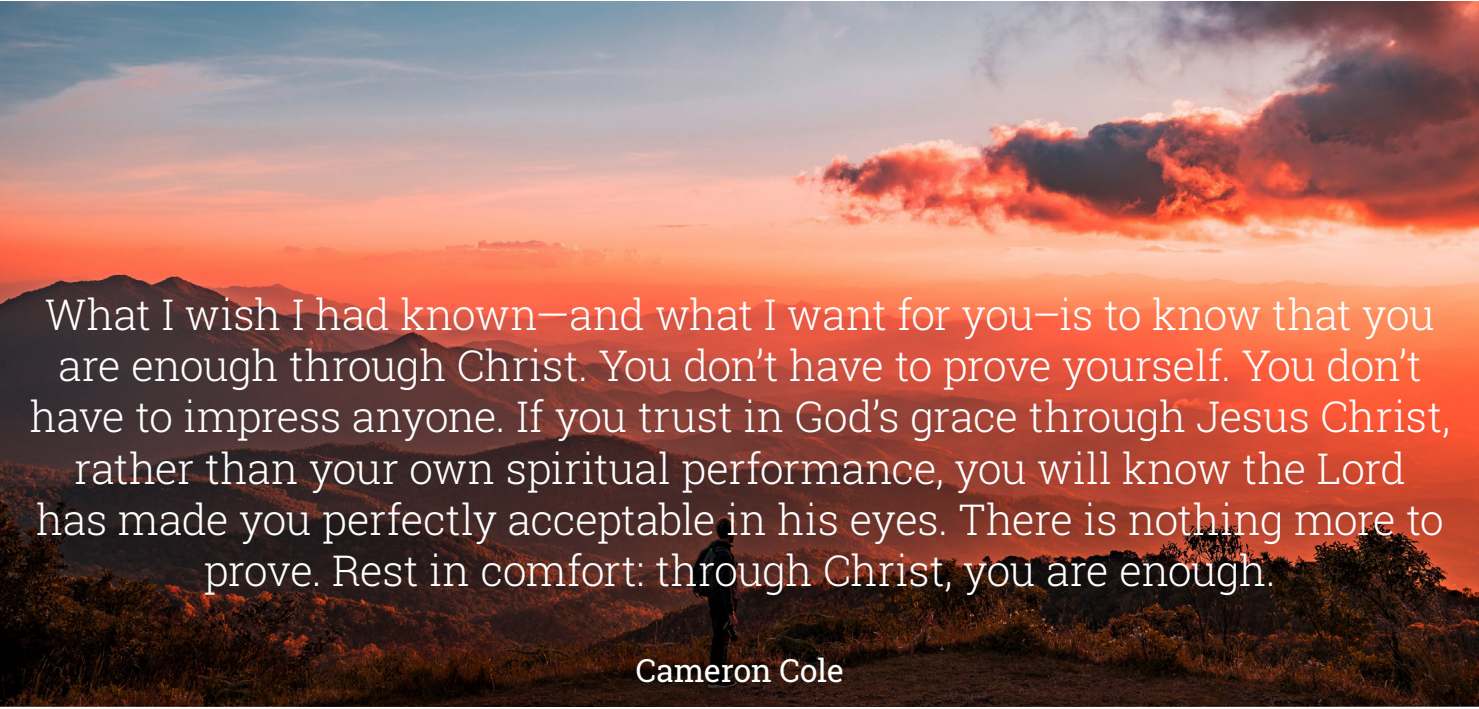


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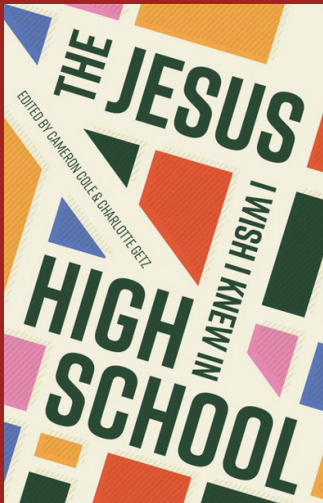
LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/YOUTHCULTURETODAY



What I wish I had known—and what I want for you—is to know that you are enough through Christ. You don't have to prove yourself. You don't have to impress anyone. If you trust in God's grace through Jesus Christ, rather than your own spiritual performance, you will know the Lord has made you perfectly acceptable in his eyes. There is nothing more to prove. Rest in comfort: through Christ, you are enough.

Cameron Cole

HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

The pressure of being a teenager can be overwhelming. School, sports, jobs, and relationships all press in at the same time. But the hardest thing can be feeling alone, that you have no one to share your most difficult problems with. In *The Jesus I Wish I Knew in High School*, thirty authors from many different backgrounds come together to say, “We get it—and Jesus gets it too. Here’s who Jesus is and how he wants to meet you in this intense time.”

Hear from authors such as Scott Sauls, Sandra McCracken, Michelle Reyes, Jen Pollock Michel, David Zahl, and others as they share firsthand stories of bullying, eating disorders, pregnancy, addiction, racism, family conflict, expectations, and the intense pressure to achieve. See how their encounters with Jesus brought healing, rest, and purpose to their lives and hear what they wish they knew earlier: when you know Jesus, you know what it's like to be perfectly loved and accepted, have hope for the future, and experience grace and mercy when you mess up.

Edited by Cameron Cole and Charlotte Getz of Rooted Ministry, *The Jesus I Wish I Knew in High School*, will help you discover the love, freedom, affection, and acceptance we all so desperately long for—in Jesus.