

CPYU PARENT PAGE

22 E D

HELPING PARENTS
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS
AND THEIR WORLD



I'm not sure what your Christmas Eve plans include, but I know at least some of what I'll be doing this year. I'll be watching a late afternoon football game. Later in the evening, we'll be heading to our Christmas Eve service to celebrate the wonder and joy of the coming of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. And, I fully expect that what I see and hear in both places will give me contrasting glimpses into the proper and improper ways that we understand and celebrate *glory*.

Based on what we see over and over again in football games at just about every level, players who break up a pass, sack the quarterback, catch or run for a first down, or score a touchdown will go out of their way to go beyond letting their accomplishments speak for themselves. They will pound their chests, do a celebratory dance, or taunt opposing fans in ways that scream "Look at me and what I just did!" Because we've been so conditioned by the repetition and regularity of these arrogant displays, we think nothing of them. In fact, we cheer for and thereby feed our own team's glory-seeking displays. We think that "This is normal, it's the way things are, the way things have always been, and the way things are

supposed to be." Let's be honest here: In every area of our lives we've come to believe that there's nothing wrong with trumpeting our accomplishments and seeking glory. We believe "It's all about me!"

Traditionally, glory-seeking, or *vainglory*, is seen as one of the seven deadly sins. In her book *Glittering Vices: The New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung defines *vainglory* as "the excessive and disordered desire for recognition and approval from others." It's all about swagger, arrogance, and braggadocio. It is the desire for attention, recognition, and acclaim. It's evidence of our desire for others to see and acknowledge not only our accomplishments, but our very selves.

All of us live in this "image is everything" world. Few, if any, of us will ever get to strap on the pads and indulge in glory-seeking in front of a stadium filled with 60,000 fans and millions more watching on TV. But that doesn't mean we are immune from the twin cancers of glory-hogging and honor-hunger. What we see on the playing field is really about you, me, and our kids. You see, the same disordered desires simmer

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

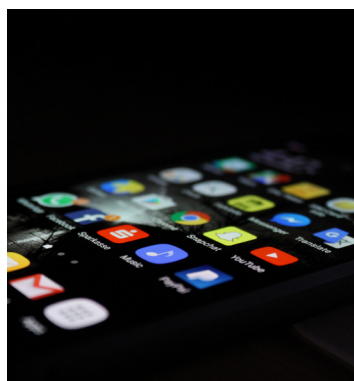
Actor Matthew Perry, discussing the writing of his recently released book, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing: A Memoir*.

"My life has had extreme highs and extreme lows and I thought that I'd be able to help people if I shared it with everybody because to the outside it looks like my life was great. I was on this TV show and dating beautiful women and doing all this stuff, but I was so caught in addiction that I couldn't really enjoy most of it."



Heart of the Matter Podcast
with Elizabeth Vargas
November 15, 2022

"IN TODAY'S WORLD, PERHAPS THE MOST OBVIOUS BREEDING-HOUSES AND PLAYGROUNDS WHERE OUR PERSONAL VAINGLORY BOILS OVER IS SOCIAL MEDIA."



endlessly in the very depths of our being, and they boil over into our lives in so many different ways. Rooted in our sinful and broken hearts, *vainglory* exposes our deep insecurities and human pride.

In today's world, perhaps the most obvious breeding-houses and playgrounds where our personal *vainglory* boils over is social media. Like those all-too-familiar family Christmas letters of the past, our posts are all-too-often outright expressions of conceit, or thinly-veiled "humblebrags." Is there a place that breeds more competition, comparison, envy, and conceit than our 24/7 online world? We'd be hard-pressed to find one. In fact, a growing mountain of data tells us just how dangerous a social media world marked by *vainglory* actually is. We see reports on how loneliness, anxiety, depression, physical illnesses, joylessness, despair, and more – all rooted in our sense of seeing and feeling ourselves as "less than" - are going viral among young and old alike. It seems that our glory-seeking ways are resulting in the exact opposite outcomes of what we earnestly desire and hope they will produce.

And that leads me from Christmas Eve football to a Christmas Eve service that's all about the coming of Christ. You see, we will sing a host of carols and traditional Christmas hymns that echo the words of the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest." Just as seeking glory for ourselves is a disordered desire that results in only escalating our battle with insignificance, seeking the Glory of God is the only path to wholeness.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks this question: "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever!" The Gospel is about God in His mercy and grace doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus came to rescue us from all of our sin, brokenness, and disordered desires. The Gospel creates an entirely new view of self that is not based on competing with and comparing ourselves to others. Rather, it is about salvation by grace that allows us to find our sense of worth in who we are in and through Jesus Christ. In the Gospel we find the freedom to stop indulging in practicing *vainglory*. Ultimately, *vainglory* is a path of destruction just as it was for our first parents (Genesis 3). In their desire to "become like God," they cut themselves off from God. Thank God that He has given us a way out of our self-serving bondage through Jesus Christ. In grateful response to God's grace, we are to live to His glory and His glory alone.

As you celebrate Christmas with your family, talk about God's glory and the glorious message of the Incarnation. Shut down your own battle with social media *vainglory* by shutting down your phones for the day. Save your kids from the online world of seeking to satisfy their glory-hunger through glory-hogging. Reflect on these words from the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:17-18).

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

AN INTERESTING HIGH SCHOOL CLUB

Way back in the early 1800's, several groups of textile factory workers in England took to destroying machinery in cotton and wool mills believing that the arrival of those machines threatened their jobs.

They were led by a man named Ned Ludd. Very quickly, they became known as Luddites. Now, the term Luddite refers to a person who is opposed to new technology. Currently, there's a group of teenagers in New York City who meet regularly at a local library with this rule: no smartphones. They call themselves the Luddite Club. One member, high school student Lola Shub, was - like many of her peers - obsessed with her phone. She was constantly snapping selfies and scrolling through social media. But when she saw the freedom a friend experienced when she ditched her smartphone, Shub did the same. She offers this advice to teens: "Spend time getting to know yourself and exploring the world around you, it's so much more fulfilling and real than the one inside your expensive little box."



TRENDS:



Prank Videos

Some of the most popular YouTube and TikTok videos these days feature families that pull pranks on each other. Parents will prank their kids. Kids will prank their parents. These videos are especially popular among our younger kids, who will sit and watch these videos continually. If

you're an adult who views these videos with your children, you will quickly notice that everything is staged, sometimes in ways that lead you to feel embarrassed for their creators. But the fact that millions subscribe to and watch these videos indicates that the families really don't care what you think. They are getting followers. Because of that, these influencers are being recruited by those who have something to sell, and products are being placed in the videos, and thereby marketed to our kids. If your kids are watching these prank videos, we encourage you to give them a look for yourself. Help your kids notice how they are being marketed to, and then it might be wise to simply turn them off.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Phoneliness

One of the marks of the young generation known as Generation Z is loneliness. These are the kids born between 1997 and 2012. You would think that since they are immersed in a smartphone world where 24/7 connections with others are possible, they wouldn't struggle with feeling lonely. Yet, 56% of these kids report feeling lonely once or twice a month,

compared to only 24% of Baby boomers who say that they felt lonely this often during their childhood years. While there are many factors that contribute to the loneliness epidemic among Generation Z, one cause might be surprising. It seems that their smartphones are isolating them rather than connecting them, a reality that's

oftentimes described with this new word: Phoneliness. Since digital encounters can't come close to real life interaction, we should be limiting phone use while facilitating face-to-face relationships. One great place for this to happen is in the church youth group.



QUICKSTATS



9 and 10 year-olds who regularly slept less than 9 hours a night showed a smaller gray matter volume in the brain regions responsible for memory, attention, and inhibition-control. These kids also showed negative effects of issues with memory, anxiety, depression, problem-solving, and school performance.

(Lancet Child and Adolescent Health)

Researchers found that each additional hour of time spent on social media was linked to a 62% higher prevalence of behavior disorder. These include things like shoplifting, bullying, aggression, violence, anger, irritability, defiance, and disregard for others.

(Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry)

III TOP III

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VIDEO GAMES CUSTOMERS INTEND TO BUY NEXT

Console and PC
Week ended Aug. 13, 2022
Source: Nielsen

1. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare II (2022)
2. God of War: Ragnarok
3. Pokemon Scarlet
4. FIFA 23
5. Hogwarts Legacy
6. Pokemon Violet
7. Fortnite
7. Evil West
9. Playerunknown's Battlegrounds
9. The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom
9. Call of Duty: Warzone 2.0
9. Pentiment



CHRISTMAS LISTS AND SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS

by WALT MUELLER

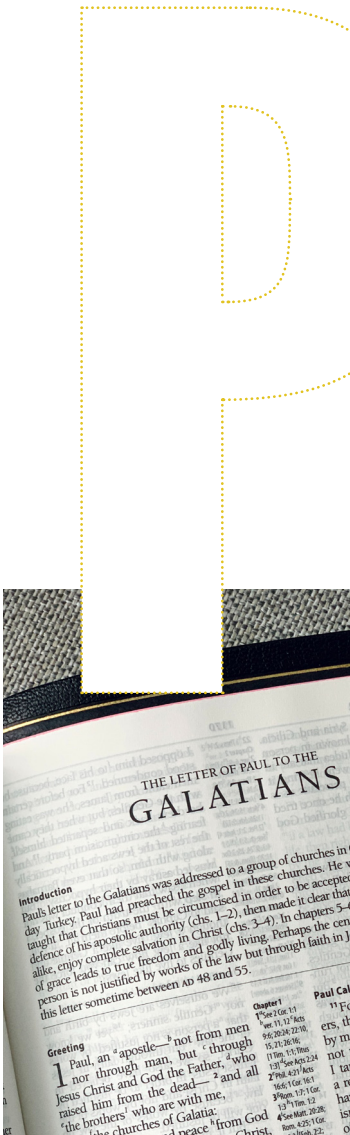
With Christmas just a few weeks away, those of us who have kids and grandkids will start receiving - or likely have already received - lists of what those kids and grandkids say they want to find under the tree. The pervasive and convincing presence of marketing lures us all, young and old alike, into thinking that if I would just have this or just have that, the vacuum cleaner of desire that lives in me will shut down and I will somehow have been made complete.

Of course, most of us who are older realize the exact opposite: that the more stuff we

have, the more stuff we want. Our kids need to learn that things never fill the hole in our souls that can only be filled by the presence of God in our lives. Sure, the prosperity and pleasure that makes our earthly lives easier might feel good, but they never bring us closer to God.

Abraham Kuyper once wrote about the dangers that come with having too much stuff. "Comfort and ease weaken character, drain away our dependence on God, and fill us with the idolatry of self-reliance."

FROM THE WORD



Perhaps you're familiar with Paul's letter to the Galatians and his instructions on what it means to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-26), as opposed to living one's life in ways that satisfy the desires of the flesh. Living obediently results in bearing the "fruit of the Spirit" along with inheriting the Kingdom of God. Immediately after helping us understand this new life-style, Paul gives us in verse 26 a concrete example and instruction on what we must avoid in our lives if we are walking in the Spirit: "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

What is Paul telling us to do here? First, we are not to become conceited. Other words for what Paul is saying here are "boastful" and "vainglorious." Conceit is a deep insecurity which fuels our efforts to prove our value and worth to both ourselves and others. It's not surprising that it leads to a paralyzing commitment to comparing ourselves to others. Second, we are not to provoke one another. In other words, we are not to become competitive with others, trying to catch and pass those who we believe are better than ourselves, or to one-up somebody else. Finally, we are not to become envious or jealous of others. Envy is a double-edged sword. We envy first when we want what the other has, and we envy second when we don't want them to have it either.

"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Galatians 5:26

However these things are working themselves out in your life today, never forget that the arrogant person who thinks he's won and surpassed others, and the inferior person who sees themselves as a loser and less-than are both self-reliant idolaters who desire to gain glory for themselves.

The Bible reminds us that "the Gospel creates a whole new self-image that is not based on comparisons with others" (Tim Keller). We are saved by grace, not by "likes," "followers," or applause. Our sense of worth can only be anchored in who we are in and through Jesus Christ. Celebrate that beautiful reality as you gather with your family for Christmas!

PODCAST

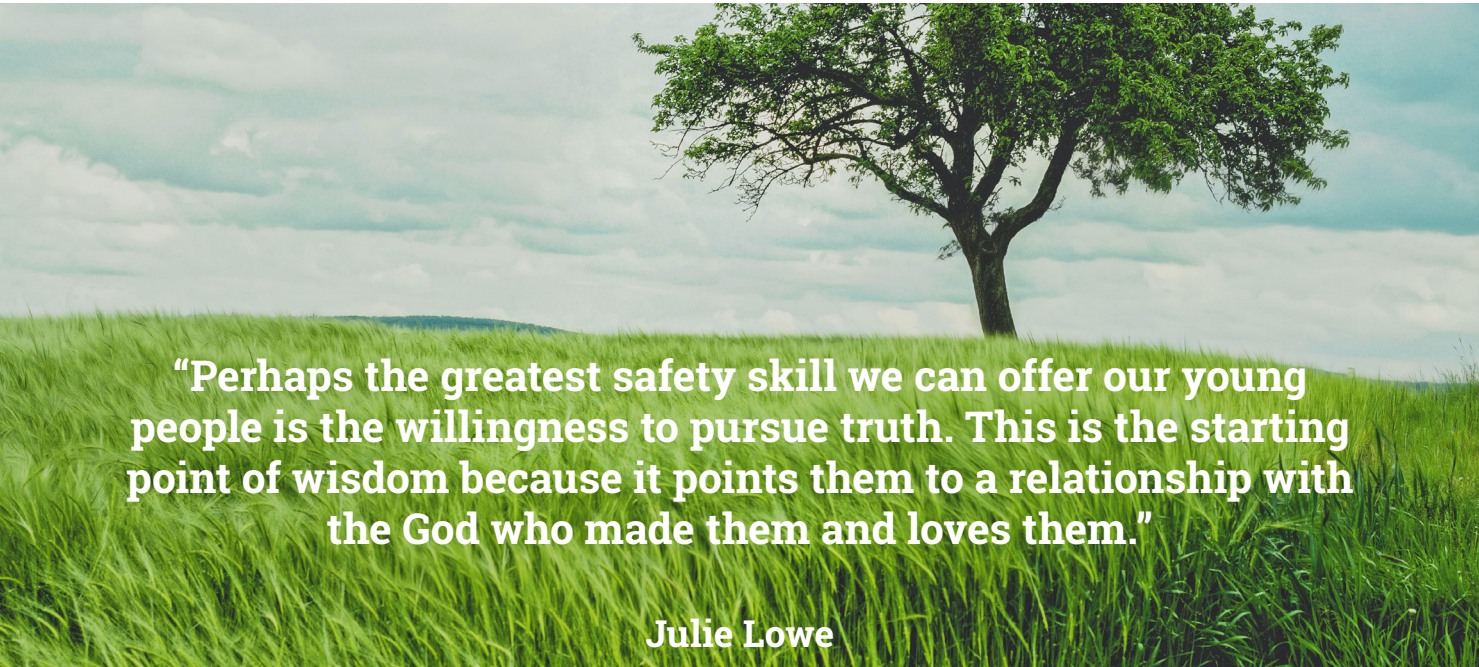


*Youth Culture Today with Walt Mueller
is a one-minute daily radio show
and podcast from CPYU.*

**A NEW SHOW IS POSTED
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“Perhaps the greatest safety skill we can offer our young people is the willingness to pursue truth. This is the starting point of wisdom because it points them to a relationship with the God who made them and loves them.”

Julie Lowe

HELPFUL
RESOURCES



BOOK

Because children are vulnerable, they need to be protected. After more than two decades as a family counselor, Julie Lowe has seen how important it is to help parents and caregivers think wisely and biblically about the dangers children face. Instead of living in fear or denial, parents and caregivers can equip children to assess people and situations and model for them how to live by faith in a world where evil exists.

Lowe helps parents and caregivers teach the safety skills that will help protect their children from mistreatment, unsafe situations, violence, bullying, cyber-crimes, predatory behavior, sexting, abuse, and other kinds of danger that they might encounter. The safety skills that are needed at every stage—preschool, elementary-age, teens, and college-bound—are discussed and applied in an age-appropriate way.

Safeguards: Shielding Our Homes and Equipping Our Kids provides tools, skills, and resources to help when faced with uncomfortable, challenging, or dangerous situations. Instead of growing more anxious, parents and caregivers can grow in a biblical understanding of the type of dangers and issues children and young people might face, learn how to instill confidence and conviction in responding to new or fearful situations, and distinguish safe vs. unsafe people and situations.