



TEACHING KIDS TO HEAR GOD'S WILL

It's been 30 years since a 16-year-old high school sophomore rattled me in ways that continue to reverberate today. I was there to speak to a group of 200 students on a multi-church youth retreat. My task was to speak on how faith impacts culture, particularly those areas of concern and tension for young people including family, friendships, materialism, and sexuality. I was informed that before each of my talks, a student leader - who had been hand-picked based on their level of spiritual maturity - would speak to their gathered peers with some personal reflections on the topic I was going to address. Throughout the course of the weekend, I was impressed with the thoughtfulness and depth of Christian commitment evident in the student remarks. Each and every time, their words couldn't have been a more perfect and fitting introduction to what I was going to say.

Then, Saturday night arrived and it was time for my sexuality talk. The time arrived for the student testimony and a 16-year-old girl walked to the front of the room. She began by sharing how her youth pastor had asked her to speak about what it means to be both a committed Christian and a sexual being.

"Steve asked me to talk about our sexuality, the topic Walt will be talking to us about in just a couple of minutes," she said. "As a teenager, I think about this a lot. I'm sure all of you do too. There are lots of urges, temptations, and opportunities. Last year I started dating a guy and have been dating him ever since. One night last year we got a little too physical and wound up going all the way. Yes, we had sex. Right afterwards we felt dirty and guilty. That night and for a few weeks after that, we spent time praying to God and asking him to help us only do

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

"I, personally, based on the data I've seen, believe that 13 is too early ... It's a time where it's really important for us to be thoughtful about what's going into how they think about their own self-worth and their relationships and the skewed and often distorted environment of social media often does a disservice to many of those children."

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, talking about social media, the impact it has on adolescents, and the appropriate age children should be able to establish accounts. *CNN Newsroom*, January 29, 2023.



HOW CAN WE HELP OUR KIDS LEARN TO FOLLOW GOD IN A CULTURE WHICH ENCOURAGES THEM TO FOLLOW THEIR HEARTS, THEIR FEELINGS, AND THEIR INTUITIONS?



things that were pleasing to him. We also looked at the Bible. We began to realize that God made our sexuality to be a good thing. Not only that, but he wants us to be happy, to feel good, and to enjoy our lives. Pretty soon it became clear to us that it was okay with God if we had sex with each other. Ever since that time, we've been having sex with each other. I'm glad God wants us to be happy and wants us to feel good."

While her peers applauded, I sat there in stunned silence. I had heard this line of reasoning countless times before, but never in a setting like this. It became increasingly obvious to me that this was a young girl and a group of her peers that, when it came to their sexuality, had listened to their personal feelings and intuition, and then concluded that they had heard the Word of God.

What can we as parents do to help our children and teens steer clear of this type of faulty thinking, believing, and behaving that has increasingly entrenched itself not only in the culture, but in the church? How can we help our kids learn to follow God in a culture which encourages them to follow their hearts, their feelings, and their intuitions?

When I stood to speak that Saturday night, I spoke less about sex and more about discerning God's will. I told them this: Don't follow your heart, your feelings, or your passions. They are all-over-the-place. (Jeremiah 17:9). Rather, submit yourself, your feelings, your beliefs, and your behaviors to God's Word. It is there that He speaks His will to you (II Timothy 3:16-17). Every word of God proves true (Proverbs 30:5) and He will never lead you astray. If it seems like He is telling you to do something that contradicts what He has already said in His Word, that voice you're hearing is not the voice of God.

Parents, are you teaching your kids to navigate all the issues they face in today's world under the light of God's voice in His Word, or are you leaving them to trust their untrustworthy feelings? (Psalm 119:105).

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

SOCIAL MEDIA, MENTAL HEALTH, & SCHOOL

Over the course of the last several years, those who lament the rapid decline in mental health among children and teens have been working to figure out if there's any connection between the decline, and the pervasiveness of smartphones and social media in the world of children and teens.

More and more research is pointing to a connection. In addition, anecdotal evidence put forth from educators makes the connection clear, so clear in fact, that back in January, the Seattle public school district filed a lawsuit against the major social media companies, including Tiktok, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The lawsuit argues that these companies have exploited the vulnerable brains of youth for profit, along with creating a mental-health epidemic. The school's are seeking compensation to deal with the rising costs of school-based mental health care. Parents, this serves as another reminder to set limits and boundaries on smartphones in your home.



TRENDS:

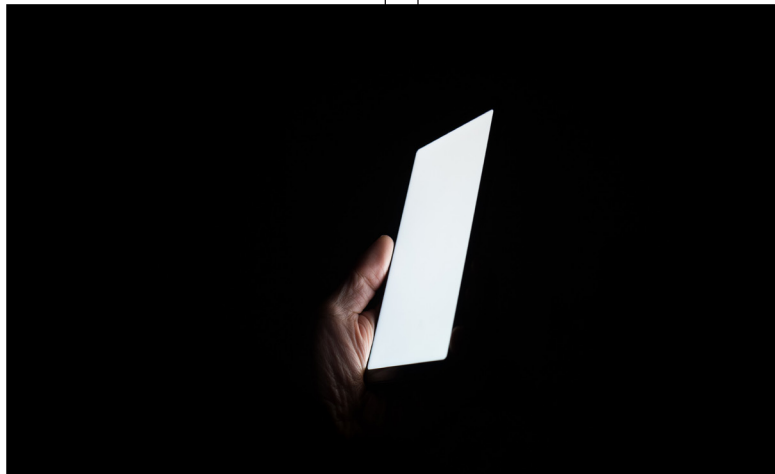


Gaslighting

With cultural change happening so fast, the dictionary is always deleting and adding words to reflect those changes. It seems that while some words are outdated and no longer necessary, new words are popping up all the time. Late last year, the folks at the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*

announced the word of the year for 2022 was gaslighting. The term originated from the title of a 1938 movie and play about a man who was doing everything he could to make his wife think she was going crazy. The dictionary defines the word this way: the psychological manipulation of a

person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories that typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator. Parents, we must teach our kids to evaluate all truth claims in light of the timeless Truth of God's Word.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Sexting

Parents, what sexual script are your kids following as they learn how to live out matters of sex and gender? You see, whoever speaks first to a child on these matters sets the bar for truth. When we teach God's good order and design for sex and gender, our kids will be better equipped to discern the errors of the cultural narrative. Not surprisingly, many of our kids

are learning about sex and gender through their smartphone screens. A new study from the University of Georgia questioned students ages 12-17, and found that about 15% had sent a sext to someone, and about 25% had received a sext. About 50% of those surveyed indicated they had been exposed to pornography, the first time, on average,

during sixth grade. Parents, it's not a matter of if, but when. Because we want our kids to know and live the truth on sex and gender, we need to have ongoing conversations with our kids about biblical sexuality. Remember, the culture is speaking to them 24/7.

QUICKSTATS

Shortly after TikTok videos encouraging and instructing teens to steal Kia and Hyundai vehicles and document their joyrides on social media went viral, police data showed that Kias and Hyundais made up 58% of vehicle thefts in Milwaukee and 49% of vehicle thefts in Grand Rapids, while Atlanta reported that thieves stole more than 3 times as many of these vehicles as compared to the previous year.

(FOX Business and FOX 5 Atlanta)

54% of teens say it would be hard to give up social media.

(Pew Internet and Life Project)

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SUPER BOWL COMMERCIALS

*According to USA Today
Ad Meter
February 13, 2023*

1. The Farmer's Dog - Forever
2. NFL - Run With It
3. Amazon - Saving Sawyer
4. Dunkin' - Dunkin' 'Drive Thru' starring Ben
5. PopCorners - Breaking Good
6. Bud Light - Bud Light Hold
7. T-Mobile - Neighborly
8. He Gets Us - Be Childlike
9. Disney - Disney100 Special Look
10. Workday - Rock Star



TRUE SUCCESS

by WALT MUELLER

What is your greatest desire for your children?

Most parents summarize their desire with the word "success." But what is success? For many, it's a secure job, the accumulation of things, and personal safety. The Jesus who calls us to "take up your cross and follow me" defines success differently. When asked by the teacher of the law about which commandment is most important, Jesus defined success. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and "love your neighbor as yourself."

True success in life is faithfulness to God and obedience to his commands. Our desire for our kids should be that they become like Christ in all things.

We must know the truth as it's contained in God's Word, talk about it, live it, model it, experience it, and prayerfully trust God to change our kid's hearts and minds.

FROM THE WORD

In the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy, Moses spends the first nine chapters recounting for the Israelites all that God in His faithfulness had done in their midst during the Exodus. In Deuteronomy 10:12 Moses shifts gears with the words “And now. . .” In the Old Testament, these two words are common when after a recounting of what God has done, the people need to be brought to a point of personal commitment. It’s a way of saying, “Because of what God has done, here is how you need to respond.” The reality of God’s provision and faithfulness requires a response.

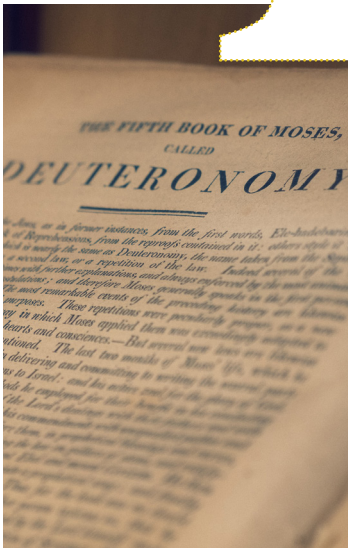
The proper response is to willingly and wholeheartedly do what God requires. God is to be revered (“fear”), loved, and served. His people are to obediently keep His ways, commandments, and statutes. In other words, God was calling His people then, as He does now, to a biblically-faithful discipleship that permeates all of life.

At the end of his instructions to the Israelites in these verses, Moses makes a statement about God’s Word that holds true for us today. It is this: God’s borders, boundaries, commandments, and statutes are not meant to be a burden that ruins our lives. Rather, they are His loving provision given to us in His grace to protect us from harm and provide for our well-being. They are for our good!

Teach your children to love, value, and obey God’s Word as the pathway to bring glory to God, and to provide for their human freedom and flourishing.

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?”

Deuteronomy 10:12&13



PODCAST



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

A NEW SHOW IS POSTED EVERY WEEKDAY!



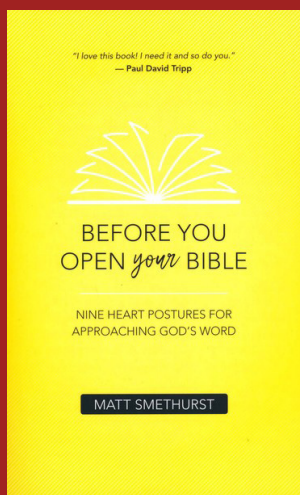
LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/YOUTHCULTURETODAY

“Your Bible is a bottomless treasure chest of beauty and wonder, strength and joy. May you approach it for the rest of your days as if that’s true, because it is.”

- Matt Smethurst



HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

We know the Bible is important, but many of us struggle with it. We’re not biblical experts though we may have started enough reading plans to be really familiar with Genesis. If we’re honest, the Bible often intimidates us, confuses us, and reading it doesn’t always thrill us.

And yet, the Bible is where God reveals his loving character and incredible plan of redemption. In a practical and engaging manner, Matt Smethurst, pastor of River City Baptist Church and editor at The Gospel Coalition, presents nine heart postures that will prepare you to unpack all that’s awaiting you in God’s Word.

Although there are many great resources on how to read and study Scripture, hardly any focus exclusively on how to approach it in the first place. That’s what Smethurst provides in this unique “prelude” to opening your Bible, *Before You Open Your Bible: Nine Heart Postures for Approaching God’s Word*. For without the right heart postures, we’re not yet ready to start reading.



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