



GENDER GYMNASTICS

With the gender issue ramping up last month and hitting the mainstream in big ways next month, Christian parents need to be thinking about how to converse with their children and teens in ways that answer the current cultural narrative with a rich and informed combination of grace and truth. Why do last month and next month necessitate a conversation on gender with your kids?

Last month, transgender social media influencer and activist Dylan Mulvaney stepped front and center on the cultural stage when the brands Bud Light and Nike both decided to collaborate with the 26-year-old TikTok star by sponsoring Mulvaney with their brands in sponsored Instagram posts and videos. Born biologically male, Mulvaney came to fame and a growing fortune by documenting his transition to transgender female through a series of daily TikTok videos titled *Days of Girlhood*. An October 2022 White House visit with Joe Biden followed by all the free publicity from the backlash to last month's Bud Light and Nike support has resulted in Mulvaney's almost 11 million TikTok

followers and over 1 billion *Days of Girlhood* views. Chances are your kids are aware of Dylan Mulvaney and Mulvaney's transgender message.

Next month, it's this cultural narrative on gender that will be trumpeted through marketing, media, schools, peers, social media, shopping malls, and even some churches as what's become known as "Pride Month" promotes and celebrates LGBTQ+ ideologies.

For me, the most sensitive and confusing youth culture shifts of the last decade are the beliefs and behaviors related to gender. How should I respond? Because gender is one of the most foundational realities of our lives as human beings, we must teach our children to understand and embrace the design of the Creator of gender, rather than the ever-changing cultural narrative.

At its roots, the cultural narrative on gender tells us that our gender has nothing at all to do with our biological sex. Rather, your gender identity is what you *feel* about yourself. Gender is not a binary of male and

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE →

YOUTH
CULTURE

HOT
QUOTE

Jennifer Garner, speaking about how she has kept her children off social media without her teenagers resenting her.

The Today Show, April 11, 2023.

"I just said to my kids, 'Show me the articles that prove that social media is good for teenagers, and then we'll have the conversation. Find scientific evidence that matches what I have that says that it's not good for teenagers, then we'll chat.'"



“FREEDOM DOES NOT CONSIST IN DOING WHAT I WANT TO DO BUT IN DOING WHAT I WAS DESIGNED TO DO.”



Dr. John White

female, but rather a spectrum. This means that you can change your understanding of where you land on the spectrum day-to-day, and even minute-to-minute. Nobody – not your parents or even God himself – can tell you who or what you are. Only you are sovereign over your gender identity.

What does the Bible tell us about God’s plan, purpose, will and way for gender? Here are a few basic starting points for conversing with your kids about God’s design for Gender.

God has revealed His grand and glorious plan for humanity in the Creation account which is found in Genesis 1&2. If we want to know what it means to be human. . . to be *fully* human. . . we find that plan and purpose “in the beginning.”

What He created and pronounced as very good was male and female. . . the binary genders. He designed and assigned. . . male and female *only*, that are both fully human and equal in dignity. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were given complementary biological forms and purposes so that they might work together to care for God’s good creation, to be fruitful, and to multiply. God gave each of us anatomy and sex organs (and even genes in our DNA!) that tell us what gender we are, either male or female. This is the way things are supposed to be. Jesus affirms this in Matthew 19:4 when He says, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?”

Just like he did with our first parents in the Garden of Eden, the wrecker of this world (Satan) comes to us desiring to keep us from understanding and pursuing things as they are supposed to be. Satan wants us to cooperate with him in the destruction of God’s good order and design wherever that exists. . . including our understanding of gender. And just as he did in Genesis 3:1, Satan continues to get us to question, doubt, and turn from God’s order and design by convincing us to distrust God’s authority. On gender and everything else he poses this doubt-inducing question: “Did God really say. . . ?” Ultimately, Satan will do anything he can to undo us and get us to join him in his rebellion against God.

Our primary identity as followers of Jesus is not to be found in our gender. In fact, it should rest in nothing other than who we are as adopted and dearly loved sons and daughters of our Rescuer, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:15-17).

When it comes to all matters in life – including gender – we must heed and teach our kids these words of wisdom from Dr. John White: “Freedom does not consist in doing what I want to do but in doing what I was designed to do.”

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

HOW TO EMBARRASS YOUR TEEN

Parents of teenagers. . . few if any of us haven’t experienced the embarrassment a child feels when we show up to drop them off at school or pick them up at an event.

It’s even worse if we throw out a kiss goodbye or a loud “I love you!” in earshot of their friends. Recently, a video posted on TikTok by Lindsey Helms, the mother of a middle school daughter, went viral. Helms began filming the crowd of middle schoolers waiting to be picked up from a school dance as she pulled up in her minivan. Helms had rolled down her windows and was deliberately blasting the song “Pretty Girls Walk” by Big Boss Vette at high volume. Heads begin to turn and pretty soon her own daughter is shown completely mortified as she spots and hears her mom arrive. But the best part of it all is that her daughter’s friends find it totally cool and they are laughing as they joyfully pile in for a ride home. Parents, have a sense of humor. Yes, your kids might be embarrassed by you now, but it *will* pass!

TRENDS:

Safetyism

It's very easy to get swept up into the spirit of the times. Because we live in the midst of culture, we can easily live into the values of that culture without taking the time to consider whether those values are good values, or bad values. One aspect of the spirit of our current times is what has been called safetyism. The term was first coined by writers Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff in their book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*. They use the term to describe a belief system in which safety has become a sacred value. We tend to avoid any risk or danger, whether emotional or physical. Safety is a good thing, but when we shield our kids from any kind of difficult circumstance, we undermine their ability to develop the kind of positive resiliency that grows through experiencing healthy stress. Parents, let's help our kids become strong by allowing them to experience the kind of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges that allow them to flourish both now and into adulthood.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Delay of Driver's License

Many members of Generation Z are either delaying getting their driver's license, or not getting a driver's license at all. Generation Z includes all those born between 1997 and 2012. When most of us think back

to our own teenage years, we couldn't wait to get our driver's license, as it represented a move from dependence to independence, and it served as a marker that we were moving closer to adulthood. But things have changed. In 1997, 43% of sixteen-year-olds and 62% of seventeen year-olds had driver's licenses. In 2020 those numbers had fallen to 25% and 45%. Why is this happening?

Kids are concerned about the higher cost of driving and driving's impact on the environment. Ride-sharing, e-scooters, and e-bikes are transportation alternatives. But there's one additional reason kids are choosing not to drive: fear and anxiety. This reminds us of our need to address anxiety through the peace, presence, and promises of Jesus Christ.

QUICKSTATS

College freshmen who get fewer than 6 hours of sleep a night see a drop in their final grades and GPA.
(Carnegie Mellon University)

1 in 3 young people aged 12-20 reported drinking alcohol in 2019. 11% reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. 6 in 10 12th graders have had an alcoholic drink in their lifetime while 25% have done so by 8th grade. Individuals who begin drinking at an early age have 5 times higher odds of developing an alcohol use disorder than those who wait until 21.

(Partnership to End Addiction)

III TOP III

10



ENERGY DRINKS

1. Red Bull
2. G FUEL
3. Monster Energy
4. Reign Body Fuel
5. Red Bull USA
6. Rockstar Energy Drink US
7. Bang Energy
8. NOS Energy Drink
9. ZOA Energy
10. Kill Cliff

*Not by sales, but by social
media engagement
Comscore
March 2023*



DETANGLING FROM DEVICES

by WALT MUELLER

In my home office I've got one desk drawer that's become a tangled mess of charging wires and obsolete devices that are doing nothing more than collecting dust. I recently went through the drawer and started pulling out a collection of old cell phones that reveal a bit of my own tech history.

Among the varied old phones were a couple of flip-phones, which I now believe I might have to hold on to as they could be rising in value. It seems that a growing number of kids are realizing just how addictive their smartphones have become.

Feeling that their smartphones are undermining their emotional, physical, and relational well-being, these kids are opting to relegate their smartphones to mothballs while choosing to use those old vintage flip phones. We think it's good news that kids are choosing to unglue from their devices to be present with others. Parents, God made us for relationship with Him, and then with flesh-and-blood others. Help your kids detangle from their devices.

FROM THE WORD

Everyone of us can remember a time during our childhood when a parent would hammer a message home by repeating it over and over again. Now that we're parents ourselves, we've no doubt used repetition to be sure that the message we are communicating is one of importance. We repeat those things which need to be heard and heeded!

It's not an editorial mistake that the writer of Proverbs tells his listeners that "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" in Proverbs 14:12, and then says the exact same thing again just two chapters later in Proverbs 16:25. Think of "the way" as the path we choose to walk. Every decision regarding direction is a response to some authority. For the Christian, that authority is never to be anything other than God's Word. But in today's world, even those of us who are Christians are often tempted to choose the path that "seems right" or "feels right." But there is a warning here. The reality is that the way that "seems" or "feels" right is not some kind of benign dead-end road, but rather a road that leads to destruction and demise. Just a few verses earlier in Proverbs 13:13&14, we learn that we are to lean into the wisdom of God's will and way so that we might avoid "the snares of death."

"There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way to death."

Proverbs 14:12, 16:25

More often than not, our kids are following a narrative for life which encourages them to "feel" their way into truth. Rather than relying on the trustworthy authority of the very One who designed and made them, they opt for a kind of self-sovereignty where feelings become the ultimate map and guide for life. Yes, God has given us emotions, but we are to submit those emotions to the evaluative lens of God's Word. Somebody once said that "if I had a best friend who lied to me as often as my feelings lie to me, I would get rid of that friend." Let's model and teach the life-giving lifestyle of following God's lead as put forth in the Bible, rather than the death-destined lifestyle of being tossed to-and-fro by our own feelings.



PODCAST



The Word in Youth Ministry

is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 49:
"SCHOOL AS MISSION FIELD"
WITH TRAVIS DEANS**



LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM



**The WORD
in Youth Ministry**

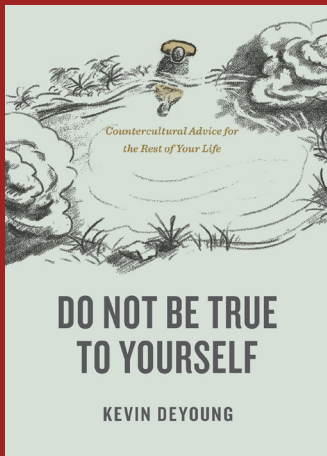
A CPYU PODCAST

“You should not be true to yourself, unless you have died to your old self and your new self is raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places. The real you is worth letting out if the real you is dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.”

- Kevin DeYoung



HELPFUL
RESOURCES



BOOK

Most speeches addressed to high school and college students follow a similar theme: march to the beat of your own drum. This may sound encouraging on the surface, but Scripture exhorts believers to submit their lives to the will of God, not their own desires. Christian students need gospel-centered truth to guide them on their journey toward independence.

In this collection of inspiring sermons and graduation speeches, Kevin DeYoung delivers a motivational, biblical call to young people: serve God faithfully—and if necessary, counter-culturally—in the next season of your life. *Do Not Be True to Yourself: Countercultural Advice for the Rest of Your Life* includes practical advice for cultivating a Christ-centered worldview in every area of adult life, including relationships, work, church participation, and spiritual growth, making it a transformational resource for mentoring students.

Concise and engaging chapters make it perfect for graduation gifts, birthdays, or small group discussion. DeYoung suggests 12 classic Christian books every person should read, from writers including John Calvin, G. K. Chesterton, and R. C. Sproul.