



THE FREEDOM OF BEING ME

Regardless of whether or not you think that Halloween is a celebration of all that's evil or simply a fun night for kids to fill bags with candy, we all know what will be happening in neighborhoods everywhere come October 31st. Kids young and old will dress up in costumes and disguises in preparation to knock on a host of front doors. For many kids, what they choose to wear in order to hide their true identity has been the result of much planning. Neighbors will answer doors and hand out candy to a doorstep full of unrecognizable kids. Some will play the game, trying to figure out the identity of who it is who's under the mask and behind the disguise.

In some ways, this modern Halloween ritual mirrors what's going on for our kids as they navigate those difficult developmental years known as *adolescence*. The rapid change and newness of this stage of life is compounded by the fact that our kids are

struggling to find answers to a variety of developmental questions, one of the most primary questions being this: *Who am I?* Settling on an answer to this question is what developmental experts call the task of *Identity Formation*. In many ways, our kids will try on multiple selves, or "costumes," for size. Sadly, if they don't get the biblically-sound guidance and direction they need, they might wind up putting on some kind of "identity costume" which covers up who they truly are, a disguise that doesn't even come close to helping them live into who they were created by God to be. When that happens, they are destined to live a life of frustration and confusion as they wander further and further away from understanding their true selves and living as they were meant to live. You see, the place they land now in terms of identity will in many ways determine who they are for the rest of their lives.

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Matthew McConaughey speaking about the ongoing conversation he's had with his 15-year-old son regarding social media.

"We tried to look at the upfalls and the downfalls... it's not like sending your kid off to college, but it is sending your kid out with a bunch of strangers into the world. Some you will know, some you won't. Some will be fair, some will not. Some will give a thumbs down no matter what you said, they're just trolling. Does that effect you? It's going to effect you."



The Today Show,
September 12, 2023

"THE DOOR HAS BEEN OPENED FOR A VARIETY OF SOCIAL FACTORS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS TO SEND POWERFUL IDENTITY-SHAPING LESSONS THAT TEACH OUR KIDS WHO THEY SHOULD BE AND HOW THEY SHOULD LIVE."



In the end every teenager chooses to find their identity in something. And it's not just teenagers – it's an important issue for all of us. Because we live in a sinful and fallen world, things are not the way they are supposed to be. The door has been opened for a variety of social factors and cultural institutions to send powerful identity-shaping lessons that teach our kids *who* they should be and *how* they should live. So many of these voices tell lies that are so widespread that they are incredibly convincing, serving to normalize seeking one's identity in a variety of what Tim Keller has called "identity bases." These include finding identity in one's gender feelings, sexual preferences, personal achievements in athletics/academics, money/possessions, relationships, social media persona and approval, momentary emotional whims, and commitments to social causes. The reality is that the cultural narrative our kids hear 24/7 tells the lie that freedom and human flourishing come when our identity is *chosen* as a matter of personal preference, rather than objectively *given* and joyously accepted.

What then, is the truth which we can communicate in order to expose and correct these deadly identity lies? The Genesis creation account is our starting

point. Our children and teens need to learn that they are created in the image of God, male and female (Genesis 1:26-27). Consequently, they are divine image-bearers who are deeply loved by the One who made them. Second, we must remind them of the word of John 1:12... "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Not only are we divine image-bearers, but for those who are in Christ, identity is bestowed as an adopted son or daughter of God! The truth our kids need to hear is this: Peace, freedom, meaning, and purpose only come when you rest your identity in who you are as one made by God, for God, in the image of God. . . and as a beloved child of God through the saving work of Jesus Christ!

In a world where our kids are being pushed and shoved into finding their identity in all the wrong places, there's a simple message we must pound home over and over again. . . that my identity is not something I need to *create*. Rather, my identity is something I have been *given*! As the late Dr. John White has said, "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

NAVIGATING CULTURE'S NEW REALITIES

One measure of cultural change that's been coming out annually since 1998 is *The Mindset List*.

The list tells us what has always been true or not true for incoming college freshmen. Those born in 2005 comprise this year's incoming class of 2027. For them, a cloned human being has always been a thing. The word "sexting" has always been a part of their vocabulary. Videos are not something you rent at a store. Rather, this year's incoming class have only lived in a world where videos are something you upload to YouTube. For them, HIV has always been more or less curable. Sci-Fi and fantasy movies have always been the top-grossing film genres in a single year. And they are growing up in a world where they will always worry about getting a job in which they can be replaced by a bot. Parents, while the world is changing at breakneck speed, God's Word remains unchanged. Help your kids see how God speaks to the pressures, issues, and changes they encounter in today's youth culture.



TRENDS:



Grind Culture

Journalist and mother Jennifer Wallace recently released a book looking at the roots and effects of putting pressure on kids for high academic achievement. Specifically, she was pushing back on the pressure kids face to engage in what's been called "grind culture" - where kids have to grind

it out academically in the hope that they would get into the most respected and high quality institutions of higher education. Her book is titled *Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic, And What We Can Do About It*. Parents who give in to this pressure may push their kids into the twenty-five percent who believe that they are looked upon fondly by their parents more for what they do and how they perform, rather than for who they are. This is not the way it's supposed to be.

Parents, we are to love our kids for who God has made them to be. Love based on performance undermines their well-being. When it comes to academics, expect them to do their best, and celebrate with them when that happens.

LATEST RESEARCH:

Latest on Concussions

With fall's football season in full swing everywhere from our youth fields to the professional gridiron, it's once again time for us to pass on to you some of the latest findings from the Concussion Legacy Foundation on the effects of exposure to repeated impacts to the head. For those of us who love football, it can be easy to ignore what's being learned about the effects of concussions, especially if it threatens our views on the



game and even our own children's involvement. The latest research has found that among a sample of 152 young athletes exposed to repetitive head impacts who died before the age of thirty, just over 41% had neuropathological evidence of Chronic Traumatic Encephelopathy, or CTE. Included in the study was the brain of Meiko Locksley, the deceased son of University of

Maryland Head football coach Michael Locksley, who is warning parents to use caution and wisdom, as his son started playing tackle football at age seven.

QUICKSTATS

Every day, almost 2,500 children under 18 years of age try their first cigarette, and more than 400 of them will become new, regular daily smokers. Half of them will ultimately die from their habit.

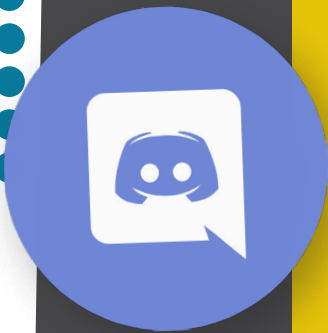
(American Lung Association)

In 2019, the average US smartphone user spent 93% of their app time on only 10 platforms (although those 10 differed for each user). In fact, nearly half (44%) of time spent was in their top app alone. All evidence points to this still being broadly true today.

(Comscore Mobile Metrix/Insider Intelligence/eMarketer)

III TOP III

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SOCIAL PLATFORM APPS USED BY 11- TO 12-YEAR-OLDS

1. TikTok
2. Snapchat
3. Discord
4. Facebook
5. Instagram
6. Pinterest
7. WhatsApp
8. Twitter
9. BeReal
10. Facebook Messenger
11. sendit
12. Reddit

*Source: 2023 Constant
Companion: A Week in the
Life of a Young Person's
Smartphone Use
by Common Sense Media*



“WHY DIDN’T WE SEE THIS COMING?”

by WALT MUELLER

One of the questions I field from frustrated youth workers just about everywhere I go is this: “How can I get parents to sit up and take notice of the many dangerous cultural trends influencing their children and teens today? They just don’t seem to care. They know these things are out there, but they believe that these things just won’t ever effect their kids.”

Truth be told, I share the frustration of these youth workers. I tell them that I typically find that parents sit up and take notice after something negative happens

to their kids and they find themselves in crisis. It’s then that I hear parents ask, “Why didn’t we see this coming?” while saying “I didn’t think this would ever happen to us.”

Parents, take note of what’s happening in the world in terms of the pressures, challenges, and choices your kids are facing. Exercise prevention rather than ignorance. And heed the words of Proverbs 22:3: “The prudent sees dangers and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”

FROM THE WORD

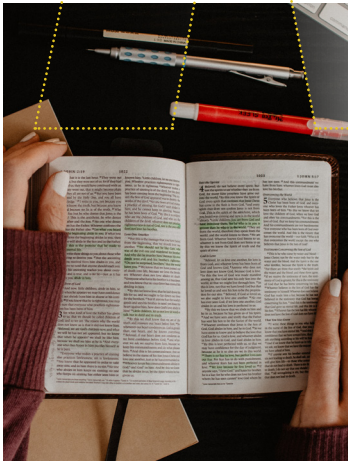
t the very core of the Gospel is the message of grace. God loved us so much that He sent His Son into the world on a mission to rescue us from the consequences of our sin. It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we come to be rescued. The reality is that we are adopted into God's family as His sons and daughters. Ponder that reality for a minute. . . or more. When you think about it and "see" the depth of God's love, it is really beyond imaginable that the sovereign God of the universe would not only initiate a way to salvation, but that this salvation results in our being adopted as His beloved children. As John says, "and so we are."

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

1 John 3:1

The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563, was written as a tool for instructing children and adults in the basics of the Christian faith. The Catechism begins with this question: "What is your only comfort in life and death?" The answer should spark wonder and joy in us as we see whose we are and where we find our identity: "That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him."

This is who we were created to be and who we are when we come to faith in Jesus Christ. This is our identity.



PODCAST



Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

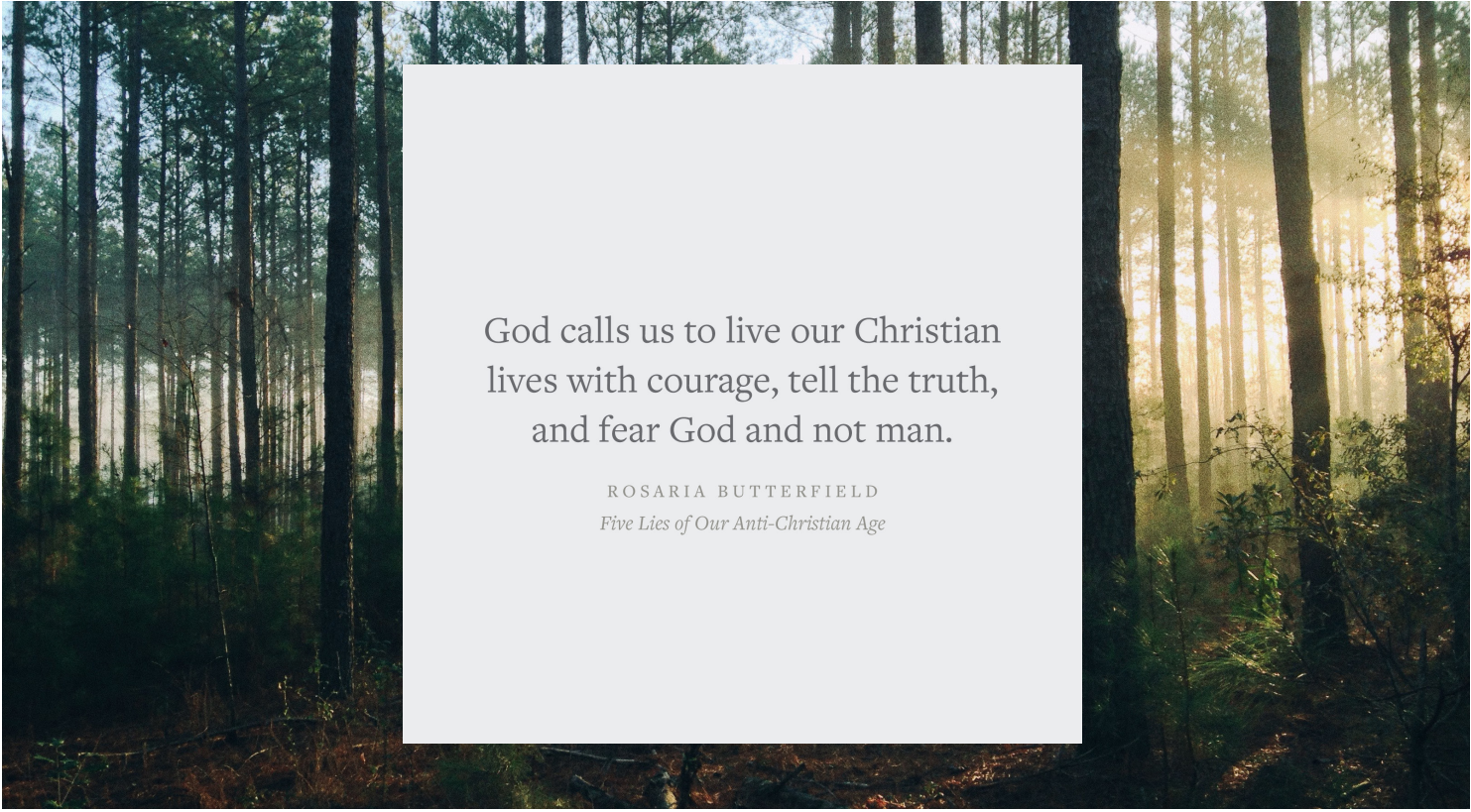
Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU hosted by Walt Mueller.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 171:

**"HOLY SEXUALITY" WITH
CHRISTOPHER YUAN**

LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST



God calls us to live our Christian
lives with courage, tell the truth,
and fear God and not man.

ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD
Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age

HELPFUL
RESOURCES

Five
Lies of Our
Anti-Christian
Age



Rosaria
Butterfield

BOOK

Bestselling Author Rosaria Butterfield Confronts 5 Cultural Lies She Once Believed

Modern culture is increasingly outspoken against a biblical understanding of what it means to be a woman. Even some Christians, swayed by the LGBTQ+ movement, have rejected God's word on issues of sexuality and gender in favor of popular opinion. In light of these pressures, it's more important than ever to help women see the truth about who God created them to be.

In *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*, Rosaria Butterfield uses Scripture to confront 5 common lies about sexuality, faith, feminism, gender roles, and modesty often promoted in our secular culture today. Written in the style of a memoir, this book explores Butterfield's personal battle with these lies—interwoven with cultural studies, literary criticism, and theology—to help readers see the beauty in biblical womanhood, marriage, and motherhood.