



# RAISING “WEAK” KIDS

Like most adolescent boys of my generation and all generations since, I was caught up in a culture where physical strength was an idol to be pursued with a passion. We believed that muscles and demonstrating feats of athletic strength were of the highest value. Visible evidence of the way in which this belief still exists today will be on display when over 100 million people tune in to watch two teams of muscle-bound football players go at it this month in Super Bowl LVIII. I have no idea which team is going to win the game, but I can accurately predict that when the goal line is crossed, a quarterback is sacked, or a defensive player makes a big stop on third down, there will be muscle-flexing galore which screams, “Look at me! I am strong!”

But bigger muscles aren’t the only mark of strength pursued in today’s world. Regardless of age or gender, we pursue the “strength” of independence, self-sufficiency, self-sovereignty, intellectual one-upmanship, social media followers, job status, physical beauty, and influence (among other things) as pathways to the joy of being able to pound

our chests and say, “I’ve made it! . . . and I’ve made it on my own strength!”

Truth be told, if we and our kids are living our lives in pursuit of the culture’s widespread understanding of what makes someone strong, we’re missing out on experiencing our true source and definition of strength. In the upside-down-world of the Gospel, human strength is not the ultimate mark of our value and worth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world who was prophesied by Isaiah 700 years in advance of His birth, was described as one who “had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2).

It should come as no surprise that the Apostle Paul went out of his way to help us understand that followers of Jesus need to live into a source and definition of strength that is completely counter-intuitive and counter-cultural. In fact, Paul’s words on strength, if embraced and lived out, will put us on the wrong side of history. . . but on the right side of God’s Word, will, and way!

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## YOUTH CULTURE

## HOT QUOTE

MIT neuroscientist, John Gabrieli, a leading expert on reading and the brain, sharing with an audience about his skepticism of educational technology, big tech and its salesmen. The Teachers College symposium, September 2023.

*“I am impressed how educational technology has had no effect on scale, on reading outcomes, on reading difficulties, on equity issues. How is it that none of it has lifted, on any scale, reading? . . . It’s like people just say, ‘Here is a product. If you can get it into a thousand classrooms, we’ll make a bunch of money.’ And that’s OK; that’s our system. We just have to evaluate which technology is helping people, and then promote that technology over the marketing of technology that has made no difference on behalf of students . . . It’s all been product and not purpose.”*



**"HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOUR LIMITATIONS, YOUR DISAPPOINTMENTS, AND YOUR WEAKNESSES ARE NOT DETRIMENTS TO EFFECTIVENESS BUT TRUE ASSETS, AND THEY BRING YOU TO LEAN ON HIS STRENGTH?"**



Alistair Begg

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, Paul tells us that God has providentially allowed Paul to experience a "thorn in the flesh" that exists "to keep me from becoming conceited." While no one really knows what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" actually was, we do know that it was used by God to increase Paul's dependence on God's strength, rather than his own. When God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," Paul came to understand that as God's people, we cannot idolize and rely on our strength to carry us through life. He went on to say the exact opposite of what we've come to believe today: "For when I am weak, I am strong." Alistair Begg writes, "Have you considered the possibility that your limitations, your disappointments, and your weaknesses are not detriments to effectiveness but true assets, and they bring you to lean on His strength?" Not only are we saved by grace alone and not on our own strength (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our whole lives are to be marked by resting in God's strength in the midst of our ongoing weakness.

So, what's the lesson for us as we parent our kids in a world that puts high value on and encourages the pursuit of dependence on one's own strengths, rather than on the strength of the Lord? Are there steps we can take to foster a "holy weakness" and dependence on God? Here are three first-step ideas.

First, look for opportunities to point out how the world's message of strength pushes self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-effort.

Commercials, advertisements, movies, tv shows, and other media depictions of these lessons abound. Point them out when you see them, asking your kids, "What's the message here?" Use these as teachable moments to raise their skills of cultural critique so that they can spot the lies, and then to counter those lies with biblical truth.

Second, walk them through the Bible's message on our need for dependence on God's graceful gift of His strength, rather than our own efforts. Teach them to spot the Truth! Exercise by reading, discussing, and "weight-lifting" these passages: Joshua 1:9; Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 6:10; Deuteronomy 31:6; I Chronicles 16:11; and Isaiah 40:29. Tell and re-tell the Bible accounts of God's miraculous actions in history where His strength prevailed, including the message of the life-giving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, where sin and death were conquered (2 Corinthians 13:4).

Finally, model and teach the humility that comes with self-awareness of your own weakness and need for dependence on God's strength. Help them to see that in the midst of difficult times and circumstances they must not see their weakness as a pathway to certain failure, but as an opportunity to increasingly rely on God, serving God in the power of His strength. Pray Paul's prayer with your children, "Lord, make us strong in You and Your might" (Ephesians 6:10).

**WALT MUELLER**  
CPYU President



## FROM THE NEWS

### MONEY AND HAPPINESS

**How much money would you need to be happy?**

That's the question The Harris Poll asked over 2,000 Americans over the age of 18 from multiple generations, and the results are surprising... or maybe not! The survey found that almost six out of ten respondents think that happiness can be bought, and that the average person believes that they would have to have 1.2 million dollars in the bank to be truly happy. In addition, the average respondent thinks they would need to earn – fasten your seatbelt! – \$285,000 a year to be happy. Millennials, the generation born between 1981 and 1996, believe they would need to earn \$525,000 a year to be happy! Experience tells us the truth: that those who have a lot, are never happy and always want more. Ecclesiastes 5:10 reminds us, "Those who love money will never have enough." Let's tell our kids to pursue Christ and not money.



## TRENDS:



## Girls and Pornography

The folks at Defend Young Minds have released a list of the three top reasons why more girls are seeking out and engaging with pornography. To know the reasons is to know how to push back on this trend.

First, our girls are feeling a growing pressure from boys to watch pornography. Girls are feeling compelled to conform to these expectations. We must respond by helping them understand the immoral nature of these expectations, along with encouraging them to feel the freedom to come and talk to us when they encounter the expectations. Second, many girls accidentally discover pornography, often times through social media feeds and chat groups. Borders and boundaries are needed, along with parental oversight, and again, the encouragement to talk openly with us as parents. Finally, they go to pornography out of curiosity. Parents, remember that your child's sex education needs to be rooted in Scripture, along with what you are teaching them in the home.



## LATEST RESEARCH:

## Generational Differences

It's fascinating to read reports that deliver data on how values, attitudes, and behaviors have changed from one generation to another. The American Enterprise Institute recently released a report that

had some discouraging and some encouraging news. Among Baby Boomers, 54% reported drinking alcohol or smoking pot or cigarettes occasionally during their teen years. For Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, that number has decreased to 32%. This is encouraging news that should drive us to keep our prevention efforts moving forward. The discouraging news is that while 71% of Baby Boomers attended religious services during their teen years, that number has dropped to

52% for those from Gen Z. Parents, our greatest desire for our kids is to see them grow up to become faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Being an active member of a church should be part of their teen experience.

## QUICKSTATS

In 2023, it is estimated that social media companies collectively made over \$11 billion in U.S. advertising revenue from minors. YouTube derived the greatest ad revenue from users 12 and under, while Instagram derived the greatest ad revenue from users aged 13-17.

*(Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health)*

Surveyed adolescents slept for an average of 7.8 hours per night. For every hour throughout the day that they used screens to communicate with friends, they fell asleep about 11 minutes later on average. For every hour that they used screens to play video games, they fell asleep about 9 minutes later. Those who talked, texted or played games on a device in the hour before bed lost the most sleep: their sleep onset was about 30 minutes later.

*(Journal of Adolescent Health)*

# TOP 10



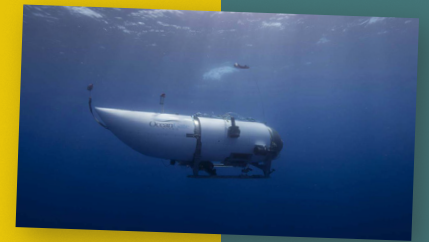
Google Trends



## GOOGLE SEARCH TRENDS IN 2023

Source:  
Google Trends  
United States

1. War in Israel and Gaza
2. Titanic submarine
3. Hurricane Hilary
4. Hurricane Idalia
5. Hurricane Lee
6. Maine shooting
7. Nashville shooting
8. Maui fire
9. Idaho murder trial
10. Canada wildfires



## LIVING IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY

by WALT MUELLER

There are two phrases in Scripture that we must pay attention to, understand, and teach to our kids. They are, "In this life", and "In the end." These two phrases are so helpful in giving us a proper perspective on the difficult things we will face in this world.

When we read the Bible we learn that in this life there will be pain, sorrow, disease, discord, decay, death, and a host of other realities. This life is filled with all kinds of things as a result of human sin and the world not being the way it's supposed to be. But we do not live as those who have no hope.

You see, in the end will be the glorious restoration of all things to the way they are supposed to be. And so, we will find ourselves living now with both heartache and hope as we groan with all creation for that day when our mourning will be turned into dancing!

Are you teaching your kids to live their lives in light of eternity? Or, are you leaving them to a cultural narrative which encourages them to live as they wish for the moment?

# FROM THE WORD



Sometimes Scripture is about Scripture. That's the case in Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the Bible. The Psalmist delights in God's Word in ways that should inspire and prompt us to do the same. Because our families live in a world that tugs on our hearts and calls for us to place our allegiance in a variety of false gods, erroneous beliefs, and immoral behaviors we must pursue the resolve the Psalmist shows in the Psalm's opening verses.

The Psalmist recognizes that God calls us to a lifestyle characterized by an undivided heart. An undivided heart is one that relentlessly pursues deeper understanding of the truths of God's word, believing them to be true. Then, the heart pursues a life of passionately and wisely living out those truths in every nook and cranny of life. It is a weaving together of one's belief *and* one's behavior. Our overwhelming desire in life should be to keep God's commandments "diligently" (v.4) and to act in ways that "may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!" (v.5).

Always remember – the way in which you live speaks louder than your words. Your teenagers are watching. Live as God has called you to live and your watching children will be given the gift of a clear example of what it means to do the same.

**"You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!"**

**Psalm 119:4-5**

## PODCAST



The **WORD**  
in Youth Ministry

A CPYU PODCAST

*The Word in Youth Ministry*

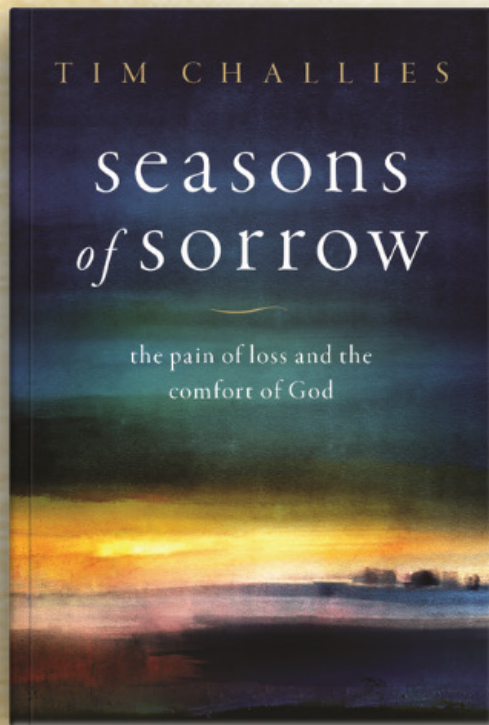
*is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.*

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 61:**

**"LEARNING HOW TO REACH THE NEXT GENERATION FROM BILLY GRAHAM" WITH RICK MARSHALL**

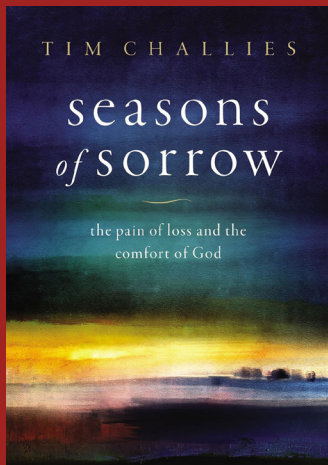


**LISTEN AT [WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM](http://WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM)**



# discover the goodness of God in the darkest of days

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



### BOOK

An honest look at grief and fears, faith and hope. Combining personal narrative, sound theology, and beautiful writing, this is a book for anyone who has loved and lost. On November 3, 2020, Tim and Aileen Challies received the shocking news that their son Nick had died. A twenty-year-old student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he had been participating in a school activity with his fiancée, sister, and friends, when he fell unconscious and collapsed to the ground.

Neither students nor a passing doctor nor paramedics were able to revive him. His parents received the news at their home in Toronto and immediately departed for Louisville to be together as a family. While on the plane, Tim, an author and blogger, began to process his loss through writing. In *Seasons of Sorrow: The Pain of Loss and the Comfort of God*, Tim shares real-time reflections from the first year of grief—through the seasons from fall to summer—introducing readers to what he describes as the “ministry of sorrow.”

*Seasons of Sorrow* will benefit both those that are working through sorrow or those comforting others:

- See how God is sovereign over loss and that he is good in loss
- Discover how you can pass through times of grief while keeping your faith
- Learn how biblical doctrine can work itself out even in life's most difficult situations
- Understand how it is possible to love God more after loss than you loved him before