



HABITUS & THEIR HEARTS

I can honestly say that profanity was never a battle for me. . . until the summer after my senior year of high school. Growing up in a home where I never once heard a profane word pass through the lips of my parents, coupled with the expectation that I was to never dishonor the Lord with my speech, made it easy for me to avoid even the temptation to curse. But when that post-high school summer job landed me on a construction crew with a group of guys who had experience and expertise in the use of expletives, I suddenly found my mind defaulting to thinking obscenities, which in turn I would sometimes utter both under and over my breath.

Every one of us knows firsthand the tendency we have to become like those who we spend our time with. As we watch our kids grow up through childhood and adolescence, we see how the influence of their friends and larger social groups shape how they think, believe, and behave. This influence is especially strong during the teenage years, when our kids feel a deep need to fit in. This reality which we see through observation and understand by our good parental intuition is something that sociologists call "habitus." Explained simply,

habitus is the way we learn to live in the world based on the personal habits everyone around us is living, and which we adopt and do habitually, over and over again. Habitus is how we fit in to our social setting as we conform to our surroundings in the ways we think, believe, and behave. And, the more we live this way, the more entrenched living this way becomes for us as it becomes our second-nature default setting. Our habitus forms us, for better or for worse.

As Christian parents, our high privilege and calling is to see the habitus of our kids transformed and shaped by the Gospel, as they learn to seek, embrace, and live out a counter-cultural habitus that conforms to God's will and way for their lives, rather than conformity to the way and will (habitus) of the world. How do we do this in a world that increasingly is opposed to the Gospel?

I recently found some great directives for Christian parents while reading about how the Christians living in the pagan society of ancient Rome worked to change the habitus that was so prevalent in their day. In his book, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, Alan Kreider tells us that the Christians in

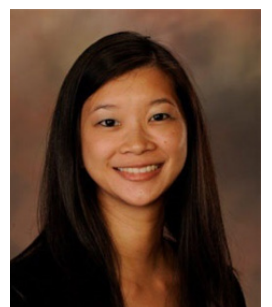
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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Kelly Tu, researcher for University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and lead author of a study looking at youth responses to advice from their mothers, in a press release statement, May 23, 2024

"The kids are at an age where they're maturing and wanting to make their own decisions. Their immediate response may be resistance or reluctance, but the advice about how to reframe the problem, consider other explanations or think about what they are learning from the experience is sticking with them. They may need time to process and evaluate it. Maybe they didn't find it useful in that specific situation they were discussing. But perhaps they came across new experiences in middle school and now they have some strategies to pull from their toolbox because mom gave them different ways to think about academic challenges."



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Rome, a very small minority, worked to transform and “re-wire” the habitus of those who were not believers primarily through teaching biblical truth in the context of relationship. . . and God used this to draw individuals to Himself and to grow His church! As parents, we too must leverage our relationship to them, time with them, and consequent influence on them to teach our kids the truths of the Gospel and what it means to live life to God’s glory.

The habitus taught to our kids by our world today is very similar to the habitus which was pervasive in ancient Rome. The Christians in Rome purposed to address this habitus, teaching young and old alike a “Christian counter-habitus” focusing on sexuality, idolatry, material things, and bigotry. Determine to diligently address these four issues with your kids through your Christian education in the home.

First, the early Christians taught what the Bible says about God’s good gift of sexuality. The Roman habitus, like ours, emphasized sexual license and freedom without borders or boundaries.

Second, the early Christians were living in a Roman world where the occult and magical arts were celebrated and practiced. Consequently, they taught dedication to God rather than to other gods or magic. They addressed the sin of idolatry head-on.

Third, the Roman world was built on the selfish accumulation of wealth and possessions, and the Roman habitus

promoted the pursuit of personal gain. The Christians celebrated and taught a willingness to steward wealth through gracious generosity and the sharing of one’s resources.

Finally, the Roman world was built on dislike and prejudice towards those who are different, an attitude that justified and resulted in bigotry, discrimination, and violence against others, including violence towards women and children. The Christians taught that the teachings of Christ call for living amongst those who are different, praying for one’s enemies, and showing kindness to those who hated them.

When Jesus calls us to “come and follow me,” He calls us to come as we are. He doesn’t, however, call us to stay as we are. After laying out the beautiful plan of the Gospel, Paul tells the Romans and each of us today, that because of God’s great mercy in granting us adoption into new life, we are to no longer be conformed to the *habitus* of this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). Parents, teach your kids a habitus that God will use to transform their hearts as they live counter-culturally with their sexuality, their first love, their handling of wealth and possessions, and their love for neighbor. Parents, be patient. As the old saying goes, “Old habits die hard.” We must faithfully live and proclaim truth, trusting God to do his habit-forming work in His time.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

DELTA-8 THC and OUR KIDS

Imagine
walking
today into a
12th grade
English
class at
your local
high school.

You stand in the back of the room, undetected, and look around at the 20 students who are seated at their desks. According to the latest research, you can correctly assume that 2 out of these 20 students have admitted to using what’s known as Delta-8-THC in the last year. Delta-8 is a psychoactive substance that is derived from hemp, which is a variety of the Cannabis plant. Delta-8 products can be purchased online and over the counter, with products including oils, gummies, capsules, disposable vapes, and more. They are marketed aggressively to our kids, and the FDA reports adverse health issues related to this psychoactive substance. These Delta-8 products have intoxicating effects, and they are often manufactured using potentially harmful chemicals in order to increase the concentration of THC. Parents, monitor your kids, and warn them about the spiritual and physical dangers of substance abuse.



TRENDS:



Influencer as Vocation

What did you want to be when you grew up? Why did you want that particular career? A recent survey revealed what the most desired career options are among kids in today's world. Are you wondering what job sits at the top of that list? It's a job that wasn't even an option just two decades ago: Social media star or influencer. We now live in a world where there is what is called a "Creator Economy," an industry now valued at over \$250 billion, with some influencers making well upwards of six figures a year, just for posting videos and photos of themselves on social media while using certain products. Parents, kids are typically attracted to the fastest track to income. Let's teach them to discover their God-given gifts and abilities, and use those gifts and abilities in a lifetime of faithfully serving the Lord. Point them to these words from the Apostle Paul: "So whatever you do, whether you eat or drink – do it all to the glory of God." It's not about us!



LATEST RESEARCH:

Phones and Emotions

Nearly half of today's teenagers say that they are on their phones and online almost constantly. The Pew Research Center surveyed a cohort of teens, ages 13-17, along with parents, back in the fall of last year. The findings are interesting and helpful as we consider how to best help our kids live to God's glory on the digital frontier. You might be surprised to learn that

72% of our teens say that they often or sometimes feel peaceful and/or happy when they have de-tethered and disconnected from their smartphone. That's a good thing, and it reminds us that we should encourage and even require time limits for our kids. But many kids also say that disconnecting makes them feel anxious, upset, or lonely. Take time

to talk to your kids about how they feel when they detach, and encourage them to use their time wisely and to God's glory. Build your relationship with your kids so that time spent with you is valued, time that will be a positive alternative to screentime!



QUICKSTATS



Simple awareness that parents are monitoring their behavior wound up cutting teens' use of alcohol or drugs by 40%.

(Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs)

17% of teenagers said they've experienced weight-related bullying online. Further, each additional hour of social media use brought with it a 13% increase in this type of bullying. Though only 22% of teens say they use the platform, X, formerly known as Twitter, was the most toxic site, with 69% of teens who use the platform experiencing bullying about their weight.

(PLOS One)

III TOP III

9

FAVORITE BRANDS OF GEN Z

1. YouTube
2. Amazon
3. Band-Aid
4. Oreo
5. KitKat
6. Febreze
7. Hershey's
8. Nike
9. Apple

Source:
Collage Group
May 2024



THE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

by WALT MUELLER

Parents, what are you teaching your kids about the presence of pain and suffering in their lives? Are you preparing them to face whatever difficulties life may bring by immersing themselves in what the Scriptures teach about the formative role adversity plays in our lives?

In Psalm 119:71, the Psalmist writes, "My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees."

Theologian J.I. Packer writes these words about suffering: "The fact is that God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other sorts of affliction, as his chisel for sculpting our souls. Weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away." Those are good words that reflect the truths of Scripture, that we must not only embrace for ourselves, but teach to our kids. The fact is, suffering is redemptive.

FROM THE WORD

The Book of Acts recounts the growth and spread of the early church following the resurrection of Jesus. If you read the 4th chapter of Acts, you will get a taste for the kind of pushback the early Christians received because of their commitment to Jesus and their great desire to preach the truth about Jesus and the Resurrection. Opposition came from both the religious leaders of the time and those in political leadership. In Acts chapter 4, we see a specific example of this pushback as it came to Peter and John. When ordered to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus, they replied, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

Acts 4:29

We are told that all the believers began to pray for the boldness they needed to speak in the midst of opposition from those who embraced a different "habitus" and narrative about life than the message of the Gospel. God was faithful in answering their prayer for boldness so that the Gospel could continue to advance, and we read that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."

While we may be presently spared from facing sanctioned persecution as followers of Jesus, opposition does come as those who believe and choose to live in opposition to the Gospel pushback on us as we communicate God's will and way for living. Increasingly, many of us face this opposition even in our homes as our children embrace a cultural narrative (habitus) which mocks the Gospel. We must never cease reading, studying, and meditating on the truths of God's Word. And, we must pray for a boldness to faithfully and lovingly proclaim truth to our children, asking the Holy Spirit to do whatever it takes to draw them out of lies, and into the truth of new life in Jesus Christ.



PODCAST



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Examining 10 Claims about the Bible & Sexuality

Does
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HELPFUL RESOURCES

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BOOK

You may have heard the claim that the Bible, when read correctly, is not against believers entering monogamous, faithful same-sex relationships. The arguments sound quite compelling. "Jesus never talked about same-sex relationships." "Paul was only condemning exploitative relationships, not consensual ones." "We don't keep the Old Testament food laws, so why would we keep the ones on same-sex sex?" "If God is love, he can't be against relationships of love." And more. Have Christians through the ages just been getting this one wrong?

In her concise book *Does the Bible Affirm Same-Sex Relationships? Examining 10 Claims about Scripture and Sexuality*, Rebecca McLaughlin looks at ten of the most common arguments used to claim that the Bible affirms same-sex sexual relationships. She analyzes the arguments and associated Bible passages one by one to uncover what the Bible really says.

For Rebecca, as someone with a lifelong history of same-sex attraction, this is not just an academic question. But rather than concluding that the Bible does affirm same-sex marriage, she points readers to the gospel purpose of male-female marriage, a different kind of gospel-centered love between believers of the same sex, and God's life-and-love-filled vision for singleness.