



LET THEM GO?

I remember coming home from school on a cold and dreary February 1968 afternoon, opening the back door, and walking into the kitchen to see my red-faced mother quietly crying while working at the sink. At the kitchen table sat my little brother, playing a board game with Marilyn, a young woman who was living with our family at the time. It was evident to me that she, too, had been crying.

My 6th grade-self stood there trying to make sense of what I had just walked in to. “What’s wrong?”, I asked. My mother pulled me into another room, explaining to me that they had just received the news that Marilyn’s sister, a missionary serving as a nurse in a Vietnamese leprosarium during the height of the Vietnam War, had been captured by the Viet Cong as part of the Tet Offensive. I remember it being a horrifying innocence-crushing punch in my 12-year-old stomach.

As you can imagine, the next few months were lived under a dark cloud as we joined those who were praying while waiting every day for news of Betty Olsen’s whereabouts and fate. Later that year we received the news that she had remained alive for ten months of captivity, enduring beatings, near starvation, day-long

marches, and no medical attention. She died a slow three-day death as a result of being poisoned by her captors. Her fellow missionary captives buried her body in the jungle. As a kid, Betty Olsen’s death hit hard, causing me to think about the price of giving one’s life for the sake of the Gospel and the potential cost of serving Jesus Christ.

When I got older, I set out to learn what I could about Betty Olsen and what it was that drew her to serve Jesus Christ in such a dangerous place. I found these words she wrote about her calling and commitment: “Most of the people that I have told about going to Vietnam are greatly concerned, and I appreciate this; however, I am not concerned, I am very much at peace. I know that I may never come back, but I know that I am in the center of the Lord’s will and Vietnam is the place for me.”

I’m guessing that many of you reading this have kids who are serving near and far through your church’s short-term summer missionary trips. If so, not only will the Lord be working *through* your kids as they serve in this way, but you will see the Lord working *in* your kids, taking them deep

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YOUTH
CULTURE

HOT
QUOTE

Abigail Shrier, in her book *Bad Therapy: Why the Kids Aren’t Growing Up*

“Smartphones are not the only force luring teens into a vicious cycle of negative self-focus, but they are perhaps the most ubiquitous and most persuasive.”



Bad Therapy
pg. 243

“SO NOW I GIVE HIM TO THE LORD. FOR HIS WHOLE LIFE HE WILL BE GIVEN OVER TO THE LORD.”

- I Samuel 1:28



in their faith, fueling their passion for God’s work in the world, and perhaps even hearing God call them, like He did Betty Olsen, to full-time missionary service. And if that happens, how will you respond? Will you release them into God’s hands, trusting Him to work out His will and way in their lives for their good and His glory?

As you think about how you will answer those questions, consider the story of the first foreign missionaries sent out from the United States. Their names were Adoniram and Ann Judson, and they embarked for Burma on a harrowing four-month sea-crossing, casting off from Derby Wharf in Salem, Massachusetts in 1812. When young Adoniram wrote to Ann’s father, John Hasseltine, to ask for her hand in marriage, he wrote these words: “I have to now ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure for a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and suffering of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death?”

It’s not at all surprising that one of John Hasseltine’s friends told him that he would tie his own daughter to the bedpost rather than let her go on such a risky adventure.

But John Hasseltine, concerned as he was over his daughter’s well-being, blessed and released his daughter on account of her calling from God. Fourteen years later, Ann died in Burma from smallpox.

If you’re like me, you’re now pondering how difficult it would be to give up your child to the Lord in this way. But when our children hear and answer the irresistible call of Jesus to “go into all the world to make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:16-20) regardless of what it might cost them personally, it is then that we must come to terms with the fact that our children were never truly ours to begin with. Rather, they’ve been given to us to steward while we raise and nurture them in the Lord. And like the childless Hannah who prayed fervently for the Lord to give her a child who she promised she would give in service to the Lord, we must say, “So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord” (I Samuel 1:28).

Are you willing to release your children into the hands of the Lord for the sake of the spread of the Gospel? Pray now for your children and teens, asking God to use them as He wills, while preparing you to willingly accept whatever risks and costs that might bring. After all, they are His and not ours.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

SHOULD PHONES BE BANNED IN SCHOOL?

In his recent book, *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt recommends that our schools ban smartphones.

It’s a common-sense move that at the very least would answer the concerns of just about all teachers regarding how smartphone presence has diminished the willingness and abilities of our kids to pay attention in class and to each other. In Norway, the ban on smartphones in schools has allowed researchers the opportunity to gauge whether or not a ban is helpful. The results are compelling. Banning smartphones has led to a significant decline in seeking out treatment for psychological symptoms and diseases. In fact, it’s a 60% drop! Educational performance improves. And, bullying has decreased significantly, with a drop of 46% for girls, and 43% for boys. While our smartphones are great tools when used correctly, we need to limit their use in terms of time and place, in order to facilitate our kid’s health.



TRENDS:



How Music has Changed

Do you lament the decline in the quality of popular music since the days when you were a teenager? There's actually some new research indicating that your lament is not simply based on your personal listening preferences. Rather, there has been a change in popular music that's not something we should be celebrating. European researchers recently took on the task of analyzing the words in more than 12,000 English language songs from the years 1980 to 2020, all from a variety of genres including pop, R&B, country, rap, and rock. What did they discover? Not only are songs becoming simpler and more repetitive in their construction, but there has been a decrease in positive messages, and an increase in lyrics that are self-centered, angry, and sad. Here at CPYU we say that music is both a map and a mirror. As a mirror, it tells us what's happening in the lives of our kids. As a map, it tells them how to live. Once again, we learn that our kids need the hope of the Gospel.



LATEST RESEARCH:

The Benefits of Free Play

In this day and age where we are hearing more and more about the declining mental health of our kids, we need to come to an understanding of how changes in the nature of childhood are contributing to this epidemic. One of the clear causes has been the move

from kids engaging in what's called "free play," to kids engaging in only adult-supervised organized sports, or remaining sedentary by spending so much time on screens. The Aspen Institute tells us that the benefits of childhood play are immediate and long term. Kids who physically play are physically and mentally healthier, they perform better in school, they

are less likely to engage in drug use and other risky behaviors, and wind up being more productive as they move into the adult years. Additional research tells us that going outside to engage with friends in free play leads to greater resiliency for kids, as they learn how to relate with others and solve problems. Make it possible for your kids to play in this way.

QUICKSTATS

Among US digital video viewers under 12, 97.3% will be YouTube viewers this year, 61.4% will watch Netflix, and 47.1% will be users of Disney+.
(eMarketer)

Nationally, vaping rates among high schoolers dropped from 28% in 2019 to 10% in 2023. However, among adults ages 18-24 national vaping rates increased from 7.6% in 2018 to 11% in 2021.
(Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey)

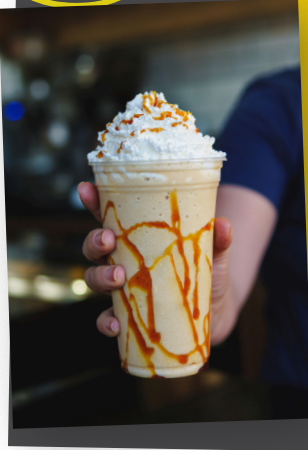
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REASONS PARENTS THINK TEENS DRINK CAFFEINE

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2024

1. Caffeine is in their teens' favorite products
2. Peers drink them
3. To stay awake
4. Early school start
5. To help study/focus



TEACHING DISCERNMENT

by WALT MUELLER

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to develop the skill of knowing, understanding, and applying the truths of God's Word to all of life, so that we might distinguish truth from error, wisdom from foolishness, and right from wrong. And, as we develop discernment, we must also guide our impressionable young children and teens into doing the same, teaching them a skill which is desperately needed in a world where the winds of culture are furiously blowing our kids around in ways that so easily lead to shipwreck.

The Psalmist prays these words:

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments."

Parents, look for and use the teachable moments everyday life brings to practice biblical discernment with your kids. When they become teenagers, we need to respect their developing cognitive abilities by thinking with them, so that we are preparing them for a lifetime of thinking with biblical discernment for themselves.

FROM THE WORD

In a social media-saturated world where our kids are sucked into playing the comparison game, where should we point them to find their *true identity*?

You see, when they are constantly comparing themselves to others, they fall into the sin of envy, which leads to ignoring God's divinely-given identity, and instead turning to themselves to somehow create their own identity. In her book *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung writes this: "The envious thus expend all their efforts usurping God's role: founding their self-worth on their own claims to excellence" and "creating their own superior status by engineering the downfall of their competitors."

One place to find the answer is in Isaiah 43:1. The spiritual solution to the spiritual problem of envy is discovered as we realize that God has unconditionally loved us, his divine image-bearers, creating us with dignity, value, and worth. Do you see the beauty of that reality in Isaiah 43:1?

He has *created* and *formed* us. . . each one a unique creation of God! He has *redeemed* us!

Since we have the New Testament perspective, we know that God came in the flesh as the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, to give his life on the cross to atone for our sins. And, the icing on the cake is this: He has *called* us! Not as a group or as a massive crowd. Rather, he has called each of us individually *by name* to be His own!

Created, formed, redeemed, and called! Be sure your kids know that when they enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, they are a new creation and that their true identity is one that gives freedom from the sinful trap of living into our culture's identity lies.

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'"

Isaiah 43:1



PODCAST



Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

Youth Culture Matters

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

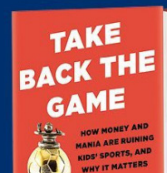
BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 185:

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WITH RICO TICE**

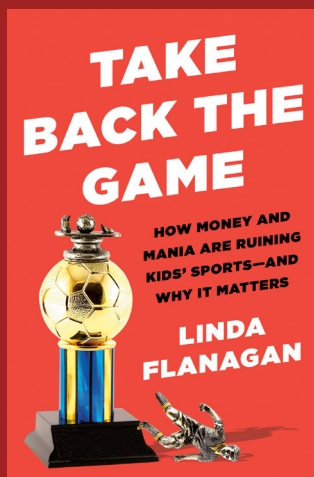
LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST

“Flanagan has the guts and the experience (and the talent) to take on the youth sports ‘industry.’
A MUST-READ BOOK FOR EVERY PARENT WHO HAS A KID IN SPORTS OR IS JUST BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT IT.”

—Madeline Levine, PhD,
author of the *New York Times*
bestsellers *The Price of Privilege*, *Teach Your Children Well*, and *Ready or Not*



HELPFUL
RESOURCES



BOOK

A close look at how big money and high stakes have transformed youth sports, turning once healthy, fun activities for kids into all-consuming endeavors—putting stress on children and families alike.

Some 75% of American families want their kids to play sports. Athletics are training grounds for character, friendship, and connection; at their best, sports insulate kids from hardship and prepare them for adult life. But youth sports have changed so dramatically over the last 25 years that they no longer deliver the healthy outcomes everyone wants. Instead, unbeknownst to most parents, kids who play competitive organized sports are more likely to burn out or suffer from overuse injuries than to develop their characters or build healthy habits. What happened to kids' sports? And how can we make them fun again?

In *Take Back the Game: How Money and Mania are Ruining Kids' Sports—and Why It Matters*, coach and journalist Linda Flanagan reveals how the youth sports industry capitalizes on parents' worry about their kids' futures, selling the idea that more competitive play is essential in the feeding frenzy over access to colleges and universities. Drawing on her experience as a coach and a parent, along with research and expert analysis, Flanagan delves into a national obsession that has:

- Compelled kids to specialize year-round in one sport.
- Increased the risk of both physical injury and mental health problems.
- Encouraged egregious behavior by coaches and parents.
- Reduced access to sports for low-income families.

A provocative and timely entrant into a conversation thousands of parents are having on the sidelines, *Take Back the Game* uncovers how youth sports became a serious business, the consequences of raising the stakes for kids and parents alike—and the changes we need now.