CPYU PARENT PAGE

DEC24

HELPING PARENTS UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS AND THEIR WORLD

THE LIE OF CHRISTMAS

It starts earlier and earlier each year. This year they – retailers, that is - tried to grab our attention, loyalty, and cash long before kids came knocking on the door looking for Halloween candy. The Christmas shopping season starts earlier every year, and pretty soon it will be a year-long event. That means that the promises of redemption and fulfillment through the accumulation of random, largely meaningless stuff won't wait until "Black Friday" to be revealed. Sad, isn't it?

I remember what it was like when I was a kid. In a world void of online and social media marketing, we had *The Wish Book*. I believed that the stuff inside that annual Sears Roebuck Christmas Catalog could *and* would change my life. When it arrived in the mail I would eagerly go through it, circling all the toys I hoped to get for Christmas. Then, on Christmas morning, I would descend the stairs into the Promised Land that sat under our family Christmas tree.

Just as I remember those excited feelings of pre-Christmas anticipation, I also remember the empty and disappointed let-down I felt in the hours and days after the wrapping paper had been ripped off. Don't get me wrong, I was happy. . . but only for a while. Some of the stuff under the tree just didn't look or work like it had in the catalog pictures. It wasn't long before the novelty wore off and everything wound up in the back of my closet or bottom of my toybox. I had believed that all that stuff under the tree would somehow make me feel better, make me happy, or make me complete. It was nothing but a lie. But stupid me, each and every year it was the same thing as my yearning for completeness, peace, and satisfaction led me to buy into the great "lie of Christmas" one more time.

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

C.S. Lewis, "What I Really Believe About Christmas", 1954

"Can it really be my duty to buy and receive masses of junk every winter just to help the shopkeepers?"

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"THE TRUTH OF CHRISTMAS IS THE *ONLY* THING THAT ANSWERS OUR DEEPEST OF LONGINGS AND FILLS THE EMPTIEST OF LIVES!"

In today's world, the pressure to believe that redemption is found under the tree is even greater. Along with a constant feed of marketing messages hitting them during their several-hours-a-day of screen time, the *Amazon Kids Gift Book* shows up in mailboxes as the new version of our old *Wish Book*, this year featuring an invitation to "Share the Joy" right there on the cover.

Even though I know better, I sometimes still find myself falling back into those ridiculously hollow patterns. You think I would have learned by now. But now it's any number of attractive lies floating around in the cultural air we all breathe that are full of nothing but empty promises. Seems like we still believe that "joy" can be found in the accumulation of stuff. Yes, the "lie of Christmas" lives on strong in our culture year-round.

Without a doubt, the greatest inheritance we can pass on to your kids is the truth about the lie. Not only that the "lie of Christmas" is a lie, but that the "truth of Christmas" is *the* truth. For me, it was my parents' annual Christmas wish list that helped me gain perspective. You see, when I'd ask them what they wanted for Christmas, they usually answered by saying, "We don't need anything." When Christmas morning arrived, I'd feel bad for them as they opened boxes of socks, kitchenware, and itchy shirts. Much to my surprise, they were never disappointed. Why? Because they had already been satisfied by the truth of Christmas. And because they didn't want anything, I quickly learned they already had everything.

While the "lie of Christmas" lives on strong, it can't compare to the life-changing power of what Christmas is really about. The truth of Christmas is the *only* thing that answers our deepest of longings and fills the emptiest of lives! *The* Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is the *only* source of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. In Christmas, our joy comes in knowing that God has reached out and come to us. Perhaps as you gather around the tree this Christmas you'll make it your prayer that your kids would behold the same Truth that's filled countless eager eyes and hungry hearts since the day God became man.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President

FROM THE NEWS

THE BENEFITS OF WALKING TO SCHOOL

Today's news story might make your kids angry, but it might also help your kids perform better in school!

A study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* found that a student's cognitive performance may be improved if they walk to school, rather than be driven to school in a car or on the bus. It seems that God has wired our bodies in such a way that teenagers who engage in physical activity early in the morning wind up stimulating their brains in ways that contribute to increased cognitive performance during the school day. And because adolescent females are typically less active than their male peers, that early morning walk is especially helpful to our girls. While researchers do say that there are actually a multiplicity of factors that could be at work here, one thing is sure: this research reminds us that God made us as integrated beings. To be balanced, our kids need to get enough exercise. Make sure your kids are active and not dormant.

CPYU's **TRENDALERT**

TRENDS:

Grind Culture

Imagine a factory where the workers come in for eight hour shifts. At the end of each shift, a whistle blows to signal that it's time to pack up and go home. It's eight hours of work and then time to punch out. There's a new and different working trend among young adults that's been labeled as "grind culture" or "hustle culture." Work days are marked by a work hard and *don't* go home mentality, all in an effort to increase production and climb the ladder. The World Health Organization reports that 488 million people around the world are putting in more than 55 hours a week at work. As Christians, we are to work as unto the Lord. We are to be hard workers who pursue excellence. But if the motivating factor to our hard work is about bringing glory to something or someone other than God, then we are engaging in idolatry. Teach your children to see work as an act of worship, without sacrificing time with family, and time with the Lord.

LATEST RESEARCH:

Girls, Fragrances, and Precocious Puberty

Precocious puberty, also known as early puberty, takes place when a child's body begins to change into an adult body too soon. In today's world, puberty usually begins for girls around age eight, and around age nine for our boys. In recent years, there has also been research showing that in general, our kids are reaching puberty at earlier and earlier ages. There have been lots of different theories put forward regarding what's causing this. Researchers tell us that one factor which triggers early puberty in girls are the fragrance producing chemicals that are in the commercial beauty and skin-care products that flood the market, and that have become especially popular among pre-teen and younger girls in recent years. Research indicates these fragrances have the potential to stimulate parts of the brain that trigger early puberty, risks of psychological problems, heart disease, and breast cancer associated with early puberty. Parents, keep an eye on the products your kids are using.

QUICKSTATS

94% of children ages 10-18 reported experiencing happy emotions at some point during the prior day. 45% said they had felt stress. 38% had reported feeling anxiety, and 23% had experienced sadness.

(Gallup)

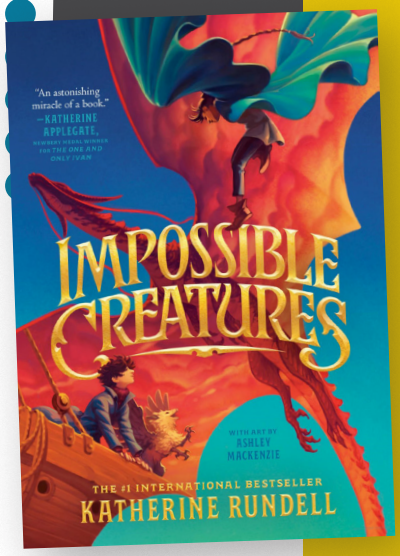
2 in 5 parents say their teen consumed protein supplements in the past year. Teen boys were more likely to take protein supplements every day or most days. About 1 in 10 parents also indicated that the protein supplements their teens take were to help with weight loss.

(University of Michigan Health C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health)

TOP 10

CHILDREN'S MIDDLE GRADE HARDCOVER BOOKS

Best-selling books in the Children's Middle Grade Hardcover category
Source:
The New York Times



1. Impossible Creatures by Katherine Rundell
2. The Complete Cookbook for Young Chefs by America's Test Kitchen Kids
3. The Complete Baking Book for Young Chefs by America's Test Kitchen Kids
4. The Last Dragon on Mars by Scott Reintgen
5. The Bletchley Riddle by Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin
6. The Millicent Quibb School of Etiquette for Young Ladies of Mad Science by Kate McKinnon
7. Wonder by R.J. Palacio
8. Heroes by Alan Gratz
9. Odder by Katherine Applegate
10. When We Flew Away by Alice Hoffman

WHEN DOES ADULTHOOD BEGIN?

by **WALT MUELLER**

As a baby boomer, I'm part of a generation that believed that adulthood began at age 18, which usually coincided with the time a teenager graduated from high school and went into the work force or off to college. For Generation Z – those born between 1997 and 2012 – there's the belief that adulthood doesn't begin until sometime around the ages of 27-30.

Researchers found that only 11% of Gen Z-ers say they feel like adults. One reason for this is that they don't have the financial stability they believe they need to be considered adults, including being able to pay all their own bills, contributing to a retirement account, and having a life insurance policy. In fact, 40% of those surveyed don't think they'll ever be financially stable.

Perhaps we need to be more intentional about raising our kids to take on responsibility, coddling them less, requiring them to learn the value of work, and teaching them principles of biblical stewardship.

FROM THE WORD

One of the most helpful prayers in Scripture that models how we should pray is what's known as the "Prayer of Agur" in Proverbs 30. Known as a humble man, Agur prays to have his life marked by those things that flow out of a Godly character, while asking God to spare him from those traps that endanger one's character. Agur's humility is occasioned by a kind of self-knowledge that we all must seek and embrace: that we are frail, weak, and easily tempted to put our trust in the idol of material prosperity.

All Agur begged for was to speak the truth, and to have just what was necessary for him to remain committed and obedient to his God. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the same. Agur understood human nature and he knew his weakness. In wisdom, he prayed to be rich in faithfulness. It's a challenging prayer that shakes up our prevailing attitudes and reflects God's will, way and Kingdom priorities. It's a God-centered prayer that focuses on *thy* will and not *my* will, as we ask God to bless by giving *and* withholding as He pleases.

> "Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."
>
> **Proverbs 30:7-9**

We'd do well to heed the warning C.S. Lewis issues in *The Screwtape Letters*. He writes, "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him."

Think about. . . and talk about. . . and pray Agur's prayer as we countdown the days to December 25.

PODCAST

YOUTH CULTURE TODAY
CPYU RADIO
with Walt Mueller

Youth Culture Today *with Walt Mueller is a one-minute daily radio show and podcast from CPYU.*

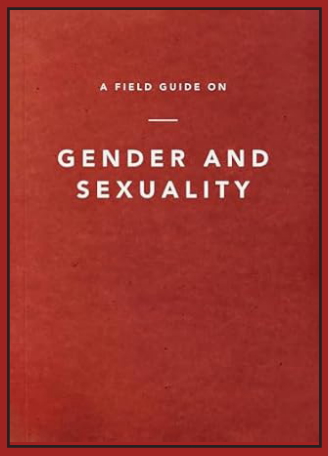
A NEW SHOW IS POSTED EVERY WEEKDAY!

LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/YOUTHCULTURETODAY

"True repentance doesn't necessarily mean that a Christian will never fall into the same sin again, but it does entail a genuine hatred for the sin and a resolve to turn from that sin and to walk in new obedience."

- A Field Guide on Gender and Sexuality

HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

The world around us is rapidly changing. Rejection of the Bible's teaching on what it means to be human has created widespread confusion about gender and sexuality. Many Christians now face questions that seem to pit love and truth against each other.

Should we attend the LGBTQ weddings of our family members and friends? May we address people by their preferred pronouns? And are we unloving if we do not do what the culture demands?

God is not silent on these matters. His unchanging and authoritative Word provides the truth we need to face today's challenges. Do we have the resolve to speak the truth in love amid the mounting pressure to compromise?

A Field Guide On Gender and Sexuality from Ligonier Ministries offers biblical answers to questions about gender, sexuality, and identity. Each answer seeks to help Christians stand firm in their convictions, navigate relationships with true compassion, and proclaim the liberating hope of the gospel.

CPYU

© 2024 All rights reserved. The CPYU Parent Page is published monthly by the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, a nonprofit organization committed to building strong families by serving to bridge the cultural-generational gap between parents and teenagers.

(717) 361-8429 | CPYU@CPYU.ORG | PO BOX 414, ELIZABETHTOWN, PA 17022 | WWW.CPYU.ORG