

# ARE YOU A BULLS-EYE PARENT?

A friend of mine is an expert archer. He once told me about the big difference between pulling the trigger on a shotgun, and pulling back on a bow to shoot an arrow. Shotgun shells are filled with pellets that spray out in a wide pattern, allowing the one who faces in the general direction before pulling the trigger to have at least a chance of hitting the target. You might hit it, and you might not. With an arrow, you are careful to focus in on the target, even looking to the center of that target with single-minded care and precision for the purpose of hitting the bulls-eye. With a bow and arrow, there's intentionality. With a shotgun there's simply chance.

As I look back on my own journey as a Christian parent, there are times when I was actively parenting with bulls-eye intentionality, and times when I would get a bit lazy, hoping that what I see now to be passive half-hearted "shotgun efforts" might yield a love for the Gospel, new life, a commitment to Jesus Christ, and a lifetime of discipleship in my kids. Granted, any of these changes in our kids is reliant on the grace and saving work of God through Jesus Christ and the cross, but we *are* called to be instruments in the Redeemer's hands, intentionally nurturing our kids in the Christian faith, bringing "them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"

(Ephesians 6:4). God desires, chooses, and wills to do His work through us!

I recently read something that prompted me to walk up to the "spiritual bulls-eye" in order to look more closely at just what it is we are called to be targeting. Researchers looking to help 4-H in their efforts to develop young leaders identified six core strengths that need to be developed in children and teenagers if they are to grow into respectful and responsible adults. I was struck by how each of these six core strengths mesh so clearly with the marks of a mature disciple of Jesus Christ. Stepping up for a closer look at the spiritual "bulls-eye", here's some insight on six of the core *spiritual* strengths we should be aiming for.

**We want to raise *competent* kids.** Kids need to be taught to act effectively in various settings, including social, emotional, cognitive, and academic settings. This requires the development of skills and abilities that allow our kids to succeed in life. As Christian parents, we know that the Bible speaks to all of life, and those who are truly living the life of discipleship will integrate their faith into *all* areas of their lives. The Christian faith is not just one category of life alongside all others, but the umbrella over *all* other areas of life.

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## YOUTH CULTURE

## HOT QUOTE

Dr. Justin Lang, Adjunct Professor with UniSA and the Public Health Agency of Canada, speaking about the results of a study he co-authored about teens, physical activity, and the involvement of their parents, [MedicalExpress.com](https://www.medicalexpress.com), April 15, 2025.

*"We found that teenagers who exercise daily with their families are twice as likely to meet activity and screen time guidelines—and four times more likely to report stronger mental health and greater life satisfaction. The message is simple: when parents get active with their teens and lead by example, everyone wins. Teens feel better, move more, and their mental health is stronger."*



**"AS CHRISTIAN PARENTS, WE KNOW THAT THE BIBLE SPEAKS TO ALL OF LIFE, AND THOSE WHO ARE TRULY LIVING THE LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP WILL INTEGRATE THEIR FAITH INTO ALL AREAS OF THEIR LIVES."**

The Apostle Paul reminds us that all of us, our kids included, need to develop competence in knowing the Scriptures as they make us wise for salvation and guide us into how to live our lives in willful obedience to Christ (2 Timothy 3:14-16).

**We want to raise *confident* kids.** This means our kids will have a sense of their self-worth, a belief in their abilities, and a positive outlook for the future. But where is confidence to be found? In Jeremiah 17:7 we read words that echo throughout Scripture, telling us that "blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him." It is God who has created us and established our identity. It is God who gives us our gifts and abilities to use to His glory. And, it is God who gives us future hope for a life with Him in eternity! Our confidence should not be placed in ourselves, but in God alone.

**We want to raise *connected* kids.** Our kids need to find positive relationships with a sense of belonging in community with family and friends. God has made us for relationships, first and foremost with Him through faith in Jesus Christ, and then with each other. I Corinthians 12 gives us guidance on where true connection is found in the Body of Christ, where each of our kids is a contributing member.

**We want to raise kids of *character*.** This includes having a strong sense of morality, the desire to take on responsibility, showing respect, and being accountable for one's actions. Christians are called to live counter-cultural lives marked by willing and eager obedience to God's will

and way fueled by gratitude to God for His mercy and saving grace shown to us through Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

**We want to raise kids who are *caring* and *compassionate*.** Researchers define this as having empathy, sympathy, and working to make a difference in the lives of others. God is a God of compassion, and for those who are raised with Christ, we are to put on and wear Christlike compassion (Colossians 3:1-17).

**We want to raise kids who *contribute*.** This means they are to learn to live a life of making a positive impact on their world. What better way is there to do this than through living out the Christian version of the previous five core strengths through the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God! We are to fulfill the mission of God, living out both the greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-34) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

"You used a shotgun! How'd you miss?!?" That's a question I heard one TV cop ask another when the shotgun wielding officer failed to hit and deflate the tires on a criminal's getaway car. That scene came to mind as I was thinking that there's a day coming for all of us when our kids will have passed through childhood and adolescence to launch into the independence of adulthood. Are we stewarding them well, aiming carefully and actively working with intentionality to parent them into a lifetime of living as strong and well-equipped followers of Jesus Christ? This is the high calling and high privilege of Christian parenting!

**WALT MUELLER**  
CPYU President



## FROM THE NEWS

### Bird Watching

**Recent news stories out of Florida indicate that teenagers in the state have become interested in bird-watching.**

Here at CPYU, we can't say we ever assumed that bird-watching would become a hobby growing in popularity among teenagers. But it appears that for this group of kids, taking walks outside during the Covid epidemic had them paying more attention to the world of nature, with many of them accumulating notes and photos on the birds they were seeing. This sounds like a positive outcome from Covid, as kids were spending less time inside with their eyes focused on screens, and more time outside looking at the created order. Perhaps all of us need to provide opportunities for our kids to get outside to see and understand what Psalm 19:1 tells us: "that the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the works of his hands." God's glory is all around us, screaming the reality of His presence, mercy, and love. Let's encourage our kids to see it!



## TRENDS:



## Body Dysmorphia

Fifty years ago there was little or no knowledge among teenagers about eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. In today's image-obsessed and social-media saturated world, the great majority of our kids not only stress over their appearance, but many are struggling with body dysmorphia, which is defined as a mental health condition in which you can't stop thinking about one or more perceived defects or flaws in your appearance.

New data from a study of 39,000 adolescents ages 14-18 reports that the dominant factor raising the risk of self-harm, including suicide, is one's perception regarding their weight. Our kids are being hammered by a constant diet of marketing images and social media posts which leave them feeling inadequate and less than. As Christian parents, we must affirm their standing as loved divine-image bearers, emphasizing the fact that God looks on the inside, not the outside. Our identity is not to be found in appearance.



## LATEST RESEARCH:

## Hours Spent on Social Media

The latest report from the Pew Research Center not only helps us understand where our teens ages 13 to 17 are spending time online, but should light a fire under us to exercise diligence and regularity about

helping our teens practice what we call digital discipleship. It's not surprising that YouTube is hands down the most used online platform for kids, with nine out of ten saying they use the site. 73% of our 13 to 17 year olds say they visit YouTube daily. Six in ten say they visit the TikTok video site daily. With our kids consuming so much video content on a daily basis, we need to teach them

to use wisdom and discernment regarding what they see, along with limiting the amount of time they spend scrolling through videos. Ask them about what they are seeing. Ask them to share what they see with you. And train them to embrace content that furthers their faith, while avoiding that which is not good, true, and honorable.



## QUICKSTATS



Teens self-reported annual spending of \$2,388, a slight increase from last year. 37% of teen survey respondents said they work part time. Average annual teen spending in the beauty category hit a record high of \$370.

*(Piper Sandler)*

1.2 million kids applied to college this year. 76% of high schoolers say that the college admissions process is a life-defining event.

*(Common App/National Association for College Admission Counseling)*



# TOP 10

## VIDEO GAMES SOLD ON THE STEAM PLATFORM

Source:  
VGChartz  
Sales during the  
week ending on  
April 29, 2025

1. The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion Remastered
2. Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
3. Steam Deck
3. Schedule I
5. MahjongSoul
6. R.E.P.O.
7. RuneScape: Dragonwilds
8. Forza Horizon 5
9. Last Epoch
10. Monster Hunter Wilds



## SPIRITUAL HUNGER

by WALT MUELLER

I often find that when I'm with a group of parents teaching them about today's youth culture, many wonder if their kids have any interest at all in talking about the Christian faith, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. There's a commonly held belief that with all the attractive things the world has to offer, kids just don't want to have anything to do with conversations about God.

But because we know that all of these other distractions offered by the world can never fulfill one's created purpose to know God, our kids are left feeling empty. I often say that a youth culture landscape littered with brokenness is a landscape ripe for the Gospel.

New research from the Barna group should be encouraging to parents who want to see their kids come to know and serve Jesus Christ. In fact, 77% of teens are open to having conversations about God. Should we be surprised? A child's spiritual hunger will continue to grow if they are not filled by experiencing new life in Jesus Christ!

# FROM THE WORD

If you're familiar with the historical Calendar of the Church Year, you know that later this month, on May 29th, the thirty-ninth day after Easter, Christians celebrate what has come to be known as "Ascension Day." At the end of the Gospel of Mark, we read Mark's recounting of Jesus giving His "great commission" to the disciples. Immediately following, he was taken up into heaven, an event which is known as "the Ascension." The same event is recounted in Luke and then again in Acts. It is also mentioned again and again throughout the New Testament.

Have you ever thought seriously about what the Ascension means for us? It means that the resurrected Christ is sitting in the presence of the Father, advocating and interceding for us as we live in expectation of that day when Christ's followers will not only be with Him, but when God makes all things new, ushering in the new heaven and the new earth. Because Jesus lives, we live in great hope, with our lives hidden with Christ (Colossians 3:1-4).

**"So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God."**

**Mark 16:19**



Parents, teach your kids that the here and now is not all there is. The cultural narrative wants us to believe that since there is no future beyond our lives on this earth, we should live for today. Instead, teach them to live for the glory of God, with each day they are granted on earth as a day to live in the light of the eternity secured for us through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When May 29th arrives, talk to your kids about Ascension Day. Use your evening meal as a time to pray this short Ascension Day prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*:

"O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen."

## 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 85:**

**"NOT IGNORING THE OLD  
TESTAMENT IN YOUTH  
MINISTRY TEACHING"  
WITH CHELSEA KINGSTON  
ERICKSON**



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

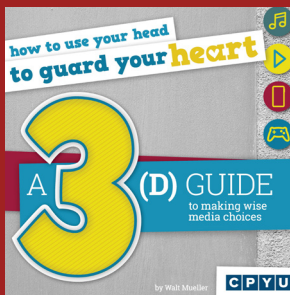
# use your head to guard your heart

Wise media users take the **"mindful critique"** approach by making a conscious decision to go deeper – listening and watching both carefully and critically. Instead of mindlessly allowing the media to shape our worldview, we mindfully engage the media and its worldview by viewing and listening through the eyes, ears and mind of a Christian worldview.

In this way, we can discern both the positive and negative aspects of the media piece and make ourselves less vulnerable to its adverse effects on who we are and how we live. With this approach, we "control" the media rather than letting the media "control" us.

**How have you been using media lately?**

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



Written and developed by CPYU's Walt Mueller, *How to Use Your Head to Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide to Making Wise Media Choices* is a unique and easy-to-use tool that is designed to help students develop media discernment skills.

Researchers tell us that the average teen spends nearly 9 hours a day engaged with media! We encourage parents, youth workers, Christian School teachers, and other adults to get a copy in the hands of students and regularly employ the 3(D) steps in all the various media settings your children and teens encounter.

This tool will not only help you stay informed as to the media your students are consuming, but will also help those students become more media literate.

Students walk a piece of media through the 3 Ds of Discover - what is the message or worldview?, Discern - how does it stand in light of a biblical worldview?, and Decide - what do I do with it?

The *3(D) Guide* also provides an introduction to the ideas of authority, worldview and media use habits.

Order your copies of CPYU's most popular resource of all time by visiting [cpyu.org/shop](http://cpyu.org/shop) or scanning the QR code.