

CPYU PARENT PAGE

US 2 E D

HELPING PARENTS
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS
AND THEIR WORLD



WANNA BET?!?

"My 13-year-old says he doesn't want any gifts for Christmas and is asking for \$2,000 cash instead. What should I do?" That question popped up on social media last month, and it caught my eye as an indicator of how the times have changed. I'm guessing that most of us are left wondering who the parents are who can afford to give a child a couple thousand dollars in cash. That's never been an option in our house! It's also a ridiculous ask that would garner an "Are you crazy?!?" response if the 13-year-old was mine!

This 13-year-old's bold request reveals another youth culture change that's familiar to most: For many of today's kids, a Christmas list is no longer a paper filled from top to bottom with items they'd love to find under the tree. Instead, the list is trending shorter, with *gift cards* and *cash* being increasingly popular and normalized objects of youthful yuletide desire.

One recent report tells how a growing number of kids – particularly teenage boys – who accumulate cash gifts are using that money not to buy large ticket items, but to gamble. This is not at all surprising in a world where almost 40 states have legalized sports betting, with

online gambling platforms like DraftKings, FanDuel, BetMGM, Caesars Sportbooks, bet365, and ESPNbet offering easy avenues for by-passing age restrictions. Today's kids, if they want to, can bet anywhere and anytime through that ever-present device known as a smartphone. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, 60% to 80% of high school students report having gambled for money in the past year, with 4% to 6% of high schoolers considered to be addicted to gambling. No doubt, these numbers will be on the rise over the coming months and years, as our vulnerable children and teens get pounded with invitations to beat the odds on just about every televised sporting event they see. One recent study found that during televised NHL and NBA games, viewers were exposed to 2.8 gambling messages per minute! Sadly, gambling is now seen as normalized and acceptable.

But acceptance doesn't mean it's safe. Gambling is dangerous and addictive. Did you know that *Gambling Disorder* is the only non-substance addiction recognized as a diagnosable condition in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and*

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YOUTH CULTURE

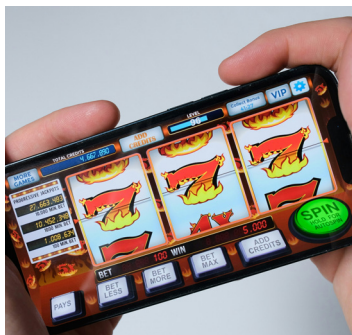
Steven Rosenbaum, Executive Director of the Sustainable Media Center, in an editorial blog writing about social media platforms and how to create new standards for these environments. MediaPost.com. March 31, 2025.

HOT QUOTE

"Social media hasn't just reshaped adolescence – it has reprogrammed it. And we are only now starting to realize how deep the damage goes."



“EVERY TIME WE GAMBLE WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO PROFIT FROM SOMEONE ELSE’S LOSS.”



¹Philip Graham Ryken, *My Father’s World: Meditations on Christianity and Culture*, p. 174f.

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.)? Experts report that many gambling disorders begin, not surprisingly, during the impressionable years of adolescence. Maybe that’s why college students are gambling at higher rates than the general population. Gambling stimulates the reward systems of our God-given brains just like drugs and alcohol.

What can you do to prevent your kids from going down the risky path of gambling? It makes sense that we warn them of the dangers, that we keep smartphone access out of the hands of our kids until they exhibit responsibility, and that we continually monitor their behavior. In addition, theologian Philip Ryken gives us several reasons why gambling is a sin.¹ These are reasons we must share with our kids.

First, gambling denies God’s providence.

God has promised to provide everything we need (Philippians 4:19). However, God doesn’t instruct us to gamble to get it. Rather, we are to work for it (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Second, gambling is bad stewardship of the resources we’ve been given. Ryken writes, “Everything that we are and have belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), and it has been given to us to meet our needs and to bring glory to God.” Our gambling puts what God owns at risk, believing the lie that we might get something of greater value.

Third, gambling is stealing. Every time we gamble we are attempting to profit from someone else’s loss. Yes, people win from time-to-time, but there are also losers. . . who lose a lot more than the winners win. This is why the dictionary defines “gamble” as taking “a risky action in the hope of a desired result,” along with “a risk of loss and a chance of profit.”

Fourth, gambling is rooted in coveting, which is forbidden in the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:17) and addressed by Jesus (Luke 12:15). If you’re in it for the money, you’re coveting what you don’t already have.

Finally, gambling is both fueled by and fuels that love of money, a thirst which the Bible says will never be satisfied (Hebrews 13:5; Ecclesiastes 5:10). Jesus warns us that in the attempt to gain the whole word, one may lose their soul (Mark 8:36).

All of us need to have conversations with our kids about gambling. It’s going viral and it *will* be something they’ll face. But there’s an even bigger conversation we need to have. It’s the conversation about the God-shaped vacuum inside all of us that gambling tries to fill. . . but never can. Rather, it’s God’s gift of sending Jesus Christ into our world that is the only thing that will answer our yearnings.



WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

A recent survey by Wired Research, asked 1,000 parents of kids ages 14-18 if they thought their children were prepared to manage their finances in adulthood.

The survey found that only 8% of the parents surveyed believe their teenagers are “extremely prepared” to handle their finances in adulthood. What’s interesting is that this is a large drop from last year, when 18% of the parents reported the same. This declining confidence reminds us that as Christian parents, we need to go out of our way to teach our kids biblical principles of good financial stewardship, to teach them about saving, to teach them about tithing, and to teach them to recognize and push back on the constant flow of marketing messages seducing them to spend, spend, and spend. I Timothy 6:10 tells us that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”



TRENDS:



College Acceptance, Anxiety, and Identity

School has been back in session for a couple of months now and you can be sure that there are a host of high schoolers thinking about where they are going to attend college. Members of SheKnows Teen Council were surveyed regarding their approach to college applications. When asked to use one word to describe how they were feeling about the application process they used a variety of words, including uncertain, overwhelmed, anxious, nervous, stressed, competitive, terrified, ready, excited, and restless. We have found that our culture along with peer and social media pressure has made the college application process stressful for both students and their parents. As Christian parents, we need to lead our kids into understanding that college acceptance is not to be pursued as a mark of their identity. Rather, they are to lean into the peace given by God as He directs the process, and they are to approach college as vocational prep for a lifetime of serving and glorifying God.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Decline in Reading

For the last 20 or so years, educators, parents, and researchers have lamented what they believe is a decline in reading for pleasure among adults. The concern is that the increase in daily screen time, including time with TVs, computers, and smartphones, would cut away at the practice of reading. A new study published in *iScience* found that leisure reading,

also known as reading for pleasure or fun, had declined by 40% from 2003 to 2023. More specifically, the percentage of people who daily read for pleasure dropped from 28%, to 16%. We can assume that adults who are not readers will mostly raise kids who aren't readers. We applaud the growing movement to get our kids reading more, which requires that

we adults be reading more as well. Reading improves literacy skills and prevents cognitive decline. For the Christian, reading the Bible, both alone and together, feeds our spiritual growth. Is your family reading?



QUICKSTATS



26% of Gen Z respondents want to climb the corporate ladder, fewer than 40% believe they'll be more successful than their parents, and more than half (57%) say money worries are affecting their mental health.

(Citizens Financial Group, Inc.)

More than half of adults aged 18-29 (56%) have used online dating sites or apps, and this youngest group of adults is also the most likely to be current users (13%). 61% of all adults nationally believe that relationships that begin on dating sites or apps are just as successful as those that begin with people who meet in person.

(SSRS)

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CATEGORIES WHERE TEENS HAVE THE MOST INPUT INTO HOUSEHOLD SPENDING

Source:

The Teen Consumer: A Field Guide for Brands
TeenVoice.com

1. Clothing/shoes
2. Snacks
3. Restaurants
4. Household items
5. Personal care
6. Tech/gadgets
7. Food delivery
8. Streaming
9. Toys/hobbies
10. Video games



REDEEMING POOR CHOICES

by WALT MUELLER

How will you respond to your children when they make a mistake or do something wrong? What will you say if your daughter turns her back on all that you taught her and winds up sexually active and pregnant? What will you say if your son gets suspended from school for fighting? What will you do if you find drug paraphernalia in your teen's room? What will you do if your daughter gets arrested for shoplifting?

Remember that just like you and me, your teen's sinfulness is the greatest problem they face. All teens will encounter temptation and all teens will make sinful choices. The determining factor in whether or not a bad choice turns into a situation that gets better or worse will depend on your response. Let me suggest that your goal should be to redeem these situations by turning a mistake into an opportunity for your teen to become a more Godly and Christ-like person. Treat them with the same grace your Heavenly Father treats you when you are the offending party.



FROM THE WORD

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Whether we know it or not or know how to verbalize it or not, all human beings have, as the Psalmist writes, a soul that thirsts for God (Psalm 42:2). We are all divine image-bearers who have been made *by God for* a relationship with God. Since sin has broken that relationship with God, all humanity has hungered for restoration. . . to be “fixed” as it were. Because we are unable to restore that original relationship by our own efforts, God instituted a rescue plan which culminated in the Incarnation. This is what we will be gathering to celebrate on December 25th. God came to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is through faith in Jesus Christ that this relationship is restored.

“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”

John 1:14 (*The Message*)



In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read about the Incarnation. John tells us that all who believe Him and receive Him are adopted into God’s family. (John 1:12) The sin-broken relationship is once again restored! What an amazing act of grace. . . that “the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14, *The Message*)!

All of us, our kids included, will look for ways to fill the emptiness we feel because of our broken relationship with our Creator. In his book, *The Unknown God*, theologian Alistar McGrath writes, “*There is a God-shaped emptiness within us that only God can fill. We may try to fill it in other ways and with other things. Yet one of the few certainties of life is that nothing in this world satisfies our longing for something that is ultimately beyond this world.*”²

Thanks be to God for the gift of salvation, a gift that is ours through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! Celebrate the gift of the Incarnation this month!

²Alistar McGrath, *The Unknown God*, p. 120.

PODCAST

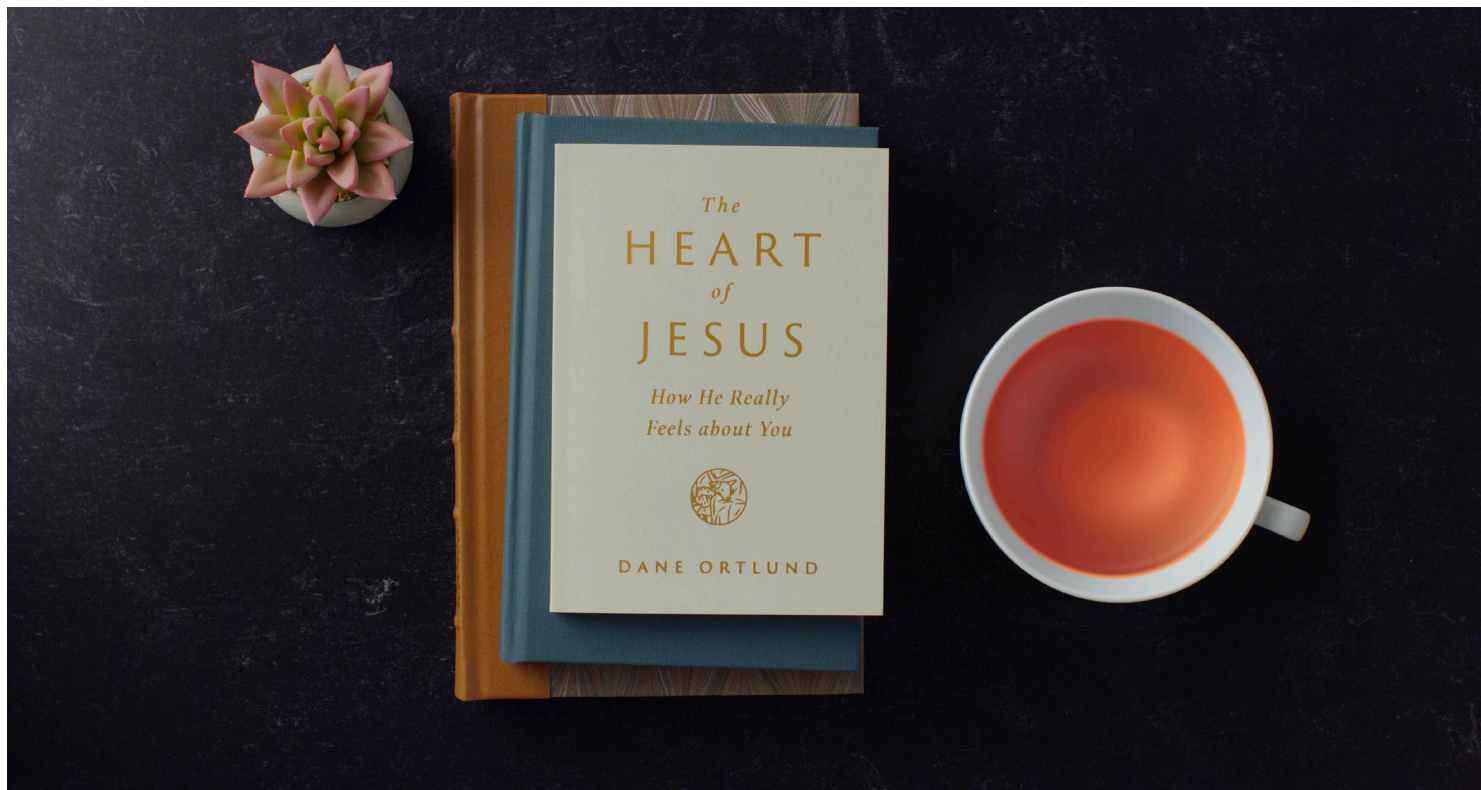


Youth Culture Today with Walt Mueller is a one-minute daily radio show and podcast from CPYU.

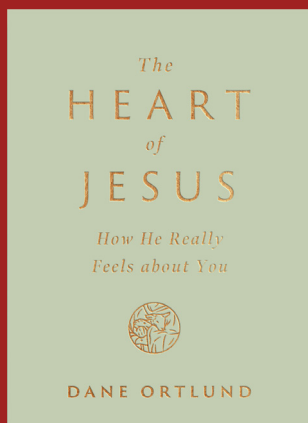
A NEW SHOW IS POSTED EVERY WEEKDAY!



LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/YOUTHCULTURETODAY



HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

When Christians struggle with sin, they can easily feel that God is close to giving up on them. But in Matthew 11, Jesus describes himself as “gentle and lowly in heart,” longing for believers to find rest in him. The good news of the gospel flows from God’s deepest love for his people.

The Heart of Jesus: How He Really Feels about You is a concise adaptation from the bestselling *Gentle and Lowly* by Dane Ortlund. In it readers will encounter Jesus’s tender heart for sinners and sufferers. Written for a wide audience—including younger readers, new Christians, and anyone who struggles with reading—it features easy-to-read terms and helpful explanations. The chapters are also short enough to read at bedtime, around the dinner table, or during lunchtime. *The Heart of Jesus* dives deep into Bible passages that speak of who Christ is, comforting and sustaining readers with the affections of Christ for his people.

This book provides a unique perspective by confronting readers’ typical thoughts on God’s heart. *The Heart of Jesus* is Scripture-based and explores passages throughout the whole Bible to give readers a full picture of God’s heart for sinners.