



MAY 26

HELPING PARENTS  
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS  
AND THEIR WORLD

It's reasonable to assume that all 24,362 of them will be panting, gasping, and out of breath. A good number of them will eventually collapse with exhaustion, and they all will have voluntarily done this to themselves. As with most marathon runners, all of them will need at least three to seven days of rest and recovery in order to be rejuvenated. Experts tell us that running 26.2 miles impacts a person in a variety of ways, including cardiovascular strain, musculoskeletal damage, metabolic exhaustion, temporary immune system suppression, and mental fatigue. Even I'm getting tired just sitting here thinking about this as at this very moment that I'm writing, those 24,362 registrants are struggling to make it to the finish line in the 2026 Boston Marathon.

It's not a stretch to think that our children and teens are running a kind of never-ending marathon that's leaving them physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually exhausted and even deprived. The pace of life for kids growing up in today's world has become frantic. Like the plate-spinners that used to appear on television variety shows, our kids are struggling to keep pace with a host of competing priorities. There's intense academic pressure, a heavy schedule of extra-curricular activities, time spent on

screens and social media, the cancer of comparison, and the sometimes-unrealistic expectations we as parents put on them. All of this combines in a toxic mix that leaves their lives full of activity and void of downtime. Add to all of this the fact that researchers report that when it comes to those overnight hours when our kids should be getting rest, three out of four adolescents report getting insufficient sleep. One neurologist, Anita Shelgikar, who serves as the President of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine says, "It's an epidemic in our country – the epidemic of adolescent sleep deprivation." Could it be that we are now raising Generation Ex(haustion) and we're voluntarily doing this to ourselves?

As this marathon of pressure continues, the toll it's taking on our kids' well-being is mounting. Maybe you see your kids "gasping" for rest as they struggle with anxiety, depression, stress, sadness, feelings of loneliness, and even hopelessness.

Since we as parents are called by God to nurture our children in the faith, protect them from harm, and provide for their well-being, it's imperative that we push back on any cultural narrative or practices that are contributing to this never-ending pace of living that's actually sucking the

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YOUTH  
CULTURE

HOT  
QUOTE

*"Good superiors rebuke those who stir up strife, comfort those of little courage, take the part of the weak, refute opponents, and guard against traps. They teach the ignorant, awake the indolent, put the presumptuous in their place, mollify the quarrelsome, help the poor, liberate the oppressed, encourage the good, suffer the wicked, and love everyone."*

Saint Augustine



“The pace of life for kids growing up in today’s world has become frantic.”



life out of our kids. One first step we can take is to slow down the hurry while ramping up a commitment to Sabbath rest.

In the Genesis creation narrative, we see that after working for six days at the task of creation, God Himself set a pattern for His image-bearers to follow by taking one day to rest. In Genesis 2:2 we read that God ceased from His labor. We are told by God Himself that this day of rest led to being “refreshed” (Exodus 31:17). The Fourth Commandment requires us to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy (set apart from all other days). The translation of the Hebrew word for Sabbath is best translated as “cease” or “desist”, which clearly reminds us of our need to rest. Even here where I live in Pennsylvania’s Amish country, we see the hard-working Amish plow-horses meandering in the fields without work on their Sunday Sabbath!

Let me offer three suggestions for how to get started on experiencing the joy, rest, and refreshment that will come for you and your kids as you take steps to practice Sabbath.

**First, make it a priority to attend worship on the Lord’s Day.** While the Old Testament Jews celebrated the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, Christians have chosen to Sabbath on the first day of the week as a remembrance of the day of the Lord’s resurrection.



**WALT MUELLER**  
CPYU President

Clear your calendar each week to make gathering together as a family to attend worship your #1 priority. Don’t allow youth sports or any other good activity to become so ultimate that you forsake time worshipping and sitting under the teaching of God’s Word week after week.

**Second, eliminate the hurried rhythm of life that tends to fill every other day of the week.** Engage only in those activities that are restful and refreshing. Teach your kids to complete all their schoolwork by Saturday evening in order to keep Sunday study-free. Engage in a family activity. And by all means, make plans to take a nap!

**And third, shut down the electronics.** With the statistics on daily amount of screen time heading off the charts, put the social media and smartphones away. Turning off the television in order to be quietly in the presence of God and each other is a step that might be difficult, but transformative.

Parents, as you set the tone for embracing the celebration and keeping of Sabbath rest in your family, you will be setting a counter-cultural rhythm that honors and obeys God, while nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of each member of your family. You will be inviting your kids into establishing the habit of tethering themselves with great joy to a sacred anchor that will build their faith – refreshing mind, body, and spirit - both now and in the future!

## FROM THE NEWS

### Digital Violence

Recently, the Center Against Sexual and Family Violence in El Paso, Texas, began raising awareness among their constituency about a new type of dating violence they were seeing among teenagers.

It’s being called digital violence, a name that captures the changing realities of life for children and teens as they grow up in a smartphone and social media saturated world. Using the digital tools they have at their fingertips, along with the growing number of artificial intelligence options, teens as young as middle schoolers are creating and distributing images of their dating partners which compromise and undermine trust. In addition, there is the creation and spread of rumors, both visually and textually. Parents, we are living in the Wild West when it comes to life on the digital frontier. Pay attention, and always look for ways to teach your kids to live counter-culturally to the glory of God. As Paul says in Romans 12, this is the spiritual worship to which we are called.

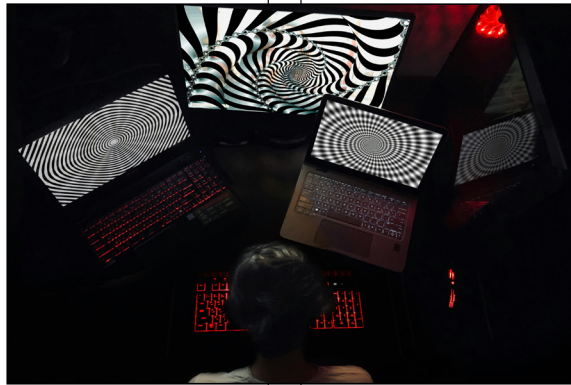


## TRENDS:



## Hustle Culture

One of the cultural pressures that's trickling down quickly from our adult world into the world of children and teens is what's become known as hustle culture. Hustle culture is a fast-spreading mindset and lifestyle that glorifies non-stop work and constant productivity in an effort to achieve professional success. One's self-worth easily gets tied to this, leading to a relentless pursuit of what for a long-time has been called the "American Dream." The version of hustle culture evidencing itself in the world of our kids is known as "grind culture." With it's spread fueled by peer pressure and social media, grind culture has our kids pursuing academic perfection, the need to have one's entire life mapped-out, choosing activities that make one's college applications look good, and posting one's achievements online. We need to hustle our kids out of grind culture, as it fuels the sin of pride, sacrifices God's plan for sabbath rest, and hijacks their hearts away from finding their identity in Christ.



## LATEST RESEARCH:

## Problematic Screen Use

Parents, some new research on the effects of social media, screen time, smartphone use, and videogaming on 11-12 year-olds warrants our attention. Reported in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, the study set out to examine associations between problematic screen use, and behavior and mental health outcomes one year later. Problematic screen use occurs when kids can't control their online time and it starts to cause conflicts, stress, or problems at home and school. The study found that problematic mobile phone and social media use were prospectively associated with higher depressive, attention-deficit, and conduct problems. In addition, there were higher instances of suicidal behaviors, sleep disturbances, and substance use initiation. This data is just part of the growing amount of research that should cause us to wake-up to the fact that our kids are way too attached to their screens. Set strict time limits in order to facilitate good mental, relational, and spiritual health.

## QUICKSTATS

68% of parents to Gen Alphas are more likely to make online purchases driven by their children, while 64% are more likely to use social media to look up product reviews.

(eMarketer)

80% of Gen Z reported being worried their generation was too dependent on technology. 75% were concerned about social media's impact on mental health. And 60% wished they could return to a time before everyone was plugged in – a time they never actually lived through!

(The Harris Poll)

III TOP III

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## MOST STREAMED ARTISTS OF ALL TIME ON SPOTIFY

Source:  
*Spotify at 20: The Most Streamed Music, Podcasts, and Audio-books of All Time*  
April 23, 2026  
(released on the 20th anniversary of Spotify)

1. Taylor Swift
2. Bad Bunny
3. Drake
4. The Weeknd
5. Ariana Grande
6. Ed Sheeran
7. Justin Bieber
8. Billie Eilish
9. Eminem
10. Kanye West



## COUNT IT ALL JOY

by WALT MUELLER

Raising children in the Christian faith is not an easy job. In fact, the more intentional we are about pointing our kids to Christ and equipping them to live to His glory, the more we become a threat to the enemy of God and his kingdom of darkness. Spiritual oppression, opposition, and trials will come. Satan does not like what intentional Christian parents are doing.

I was thinking about this recently while reading James 1:2-3:

**“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”**

Notice that James does not say *“if you meet trials.”* Rather, he says *“when you meet trials.”* Family turmoil and difficult situations with kids are realities for all Christian parents. We are told to “count it all joy” when we face these trials. The joy we are to feel is not happiness, but the assurance that God will use these things for our good and His glory.

Parents, God is at work parenting you, while you parent your kids.

# FROM THE WORD

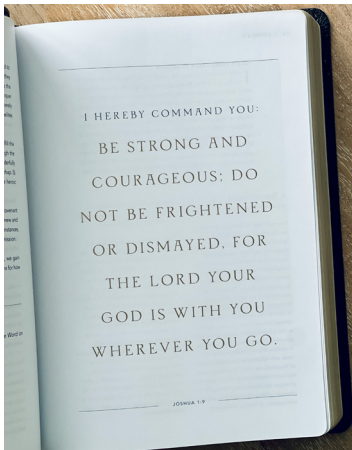
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ig shoes and a big job. . . it's what Joshua had to fill and it's what Joshua faced. The book of Joshua begins with the death of Moses and God handing the leadership of His nation of Israel over to a new leader. Joshua faced the daunting job of leading Israel into the promised land, a formidable task to say the least. But with the charge comes an imperative and a promise. The imperative is repeated twice as God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:6&9). Nor is Joshua to be discouraged or terrified (1:9). Why? Because the sovereign God of the universe promises to be with Joshua wherever he goes.

**“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”**

**Joshua 1:9**

Parenting in today's rapidly changing world is a daunting task. Just as God called Joshua to lead the Israelites, our calling to parent is not by error or mistake. God has willed it. And just as He was with Joshua, He is with us. . . calling us to be strong and courageous, and encouraging us to trust in Him as He walks through life with us. . . a fact that should squelch our discouragement and terror! Embracing, meditating on, and living this reality can be transforming. Not only will it transform us, but it provides our kids with a powerful model of what it means to trust and rest in God. You see, someday. . . God willing. . . they will be raising your grandchildren and will need to rest in God's presence and promise. But even before then, they are passing through the difficult and confusing years of adolescence. When we are faithful and obedient, the sovereign God of the universe is with us!



## PODCAST



*The Word in Youth Ministry*

*is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.*

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 105:**

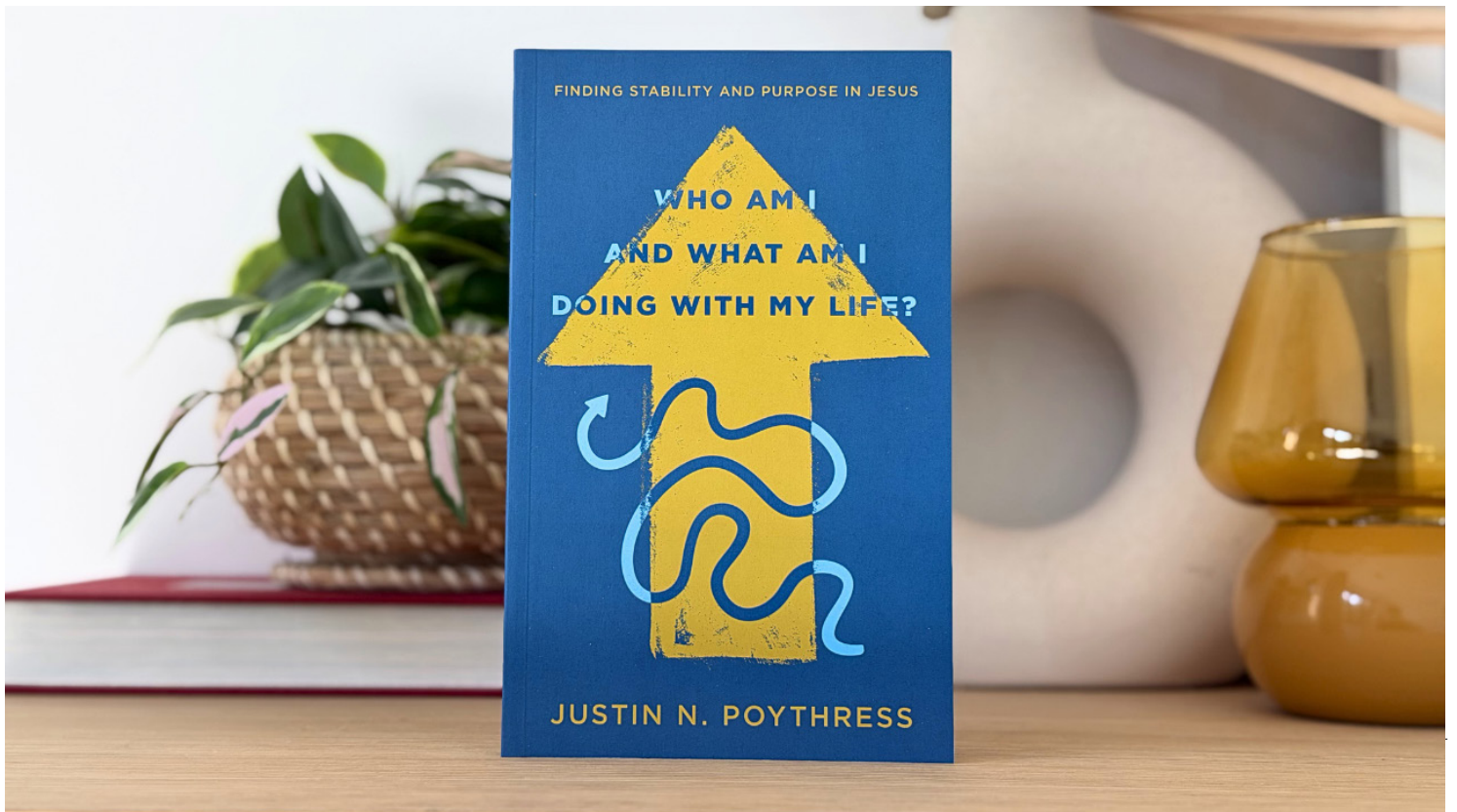
**“BIBLICAL IDENTITY IN THE MIDST OF MANIFESTING” WITH JASON ENGLE**



  
**The WORD**  
in Youth Ministry

A CPYU PODCAST

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



# HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

“Identity crisis” might be too strong a phrase for what you’re feeling, but it’s close. Life isn’t going how you hoped, and you’re not sure of what to expect anymore. The core of who you are feels unstable, and you probably can’t even pinpoint why.

What you’re experiencing is identity pressure.

With wit, wisdom and clarity, in *Who Am I and What Am I Doing with My Life? Finding Stability and Purpose in Jesus*, Justin Poythress helps you make sense of what you’re feeling and offers a biblical path to lasting identity confidence by explaining...

- How philosophy has impacted the modern understanding of self
- Why your identity feels shaky
- How the Bible can transform your sense of self
- Three principles for living in the identity Jesus gives you

When you build your identity in Christ, you’ll experience clarity, discover your unwavering purpose, and move forward with confidence.



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