CPYU PARENT PAGE

NOV26

HELPING PARENTS UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS AND THEIR WORLD



BEFORE THE FIRST BITE

I thought I had finished my breakfast. My grandmother disagreed. Sliding my plate back under my nose, this elderly child of the depression pointed to one left-over crumb of scrambled egg that was about half the size of a raisin. "You have to eat everything," she kindly said. "God has given you this meal and you need to receive it with thanks!" I remember my 10-year-old self trying in vain to stab that last tiny morsel with my fork. I also remember a lesson in gratitude from a wise old woman who knew that everything she had, including that miniscule bit of food, was a good gift from God.

Looking back, I can't help but realize that I grew up in a family that understood that it is out of His steadfast love that God "gives food to all flesh" (Psalm 136:25). Because my parents and grandparents recognized that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17), we never wavered from pausing to thank God for our food before every meal, whether eaten at home, on a roadside picnic table, or at a restaurant. I'm so grateful for that legacy of gratitude!

Sadly, we live in a self-centered culture that is sometimes thankless. . . evidenced by the fact that we've forgotten the practice of saying grace. Researchers tell us that fewer and fewer Americans are praying daily, and only 33% say grace before meals often or always. Our kids are missing out, which means that we have to go out of our way to nurture them into understanding that all they have is a gift from God, and we are dependent on Him for everything. I would suggest that there are three main reasons for this decline in gratitude, each one worthy of our consideration as we think about why we might be forgetting or forsaking the practice of thanking God for our food.

First, there's the **pace** of our lives. We are more hurried and harried than ever before, running here, there, and everywhere as we try to keep up with our busy schedules. Researchers at the Harvard Graduate School report that only about 25% to 30% of families eat dinner together every single day. In addition, a third of families with children ages 11 to 18 share only one or two meals a week.

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE ⟶

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

Marc Ferrer, head of child and adolescent psychiatry at Vall d'Hebron Hospital talking about the addictive design of social media and the mark it leaves on maturing adolescent brains, on betevé (Barcelona Public Television) as reported by APD, August 29, 2026.

"It's addictive. It's exactly like consuming a drug. You get immediate pleasure and well-being, and therefore, you want more. This causes you to start neglecting other activities or experiences that provide you with more delayed pleasure."



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"Every daily meal is impossible without God's providential care."

- Brad Littlejohn





WALT MUELLER
CPYU President

When a meal is grabbed on-the-go or alone, it's easy to not even think about having or expressing gratitude.

Second, there's the cunning and numbing spirit of **privilege** and entitlement that has led us to simply expect our food to always be there. Having never done without, we lose our sense of gratitude within. That which is always there becomes unconsciously expected rather than consciously appreciated. Next time you're in the grocery store, quietly walk up and down the aisles, taking stock of everything that is at your fingertips just waiting to be put in your cart. It's unbelievable!

Third, there is the age-old problem of **pride**. This is the problem that got our first parents into trouble (Genesis 3). Thinking they knew better than God and that they could live their lives on their own strength, they fell into sin. It's the same thing we've all been doing ever since. Our pride leads us to believe that we live not with dependence on God, but on our own strength. As Brad Littlejohn has written, pride leads us to forget that "every daily meal is impossible without God's providential care." Charles Spurgeon once said, "The healthiest state for a Christian is always to be empty of self, while constantly depending upon the Lord for supply." We need to remember this in a world which encourages self-dependence.

During this month in which we celebrate Thanksgiving, I would suggest that we pause to take stock of just how thankful we should be for all that we've been given, including the food we consume each and every day. All of our food and everything we have is a gift from God. These are truths that our children need to hear! Perhaps this is the perfect time to appreciate and rekindle the family habit of saying "grace" at our meals. The term "grace" comes from the Latin phrase *gratiarum action*, which literally means "act of thanks." In the Bible, our Jewish ancestors, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul among others would pause to give thanks for food they were about to eat, knowing that it was ultimately from the hand of God that this gift of sustenance came (Deuteronomy 8:10, Luke 24:30, John 6:11, Acts 27:35). God's hand is still giving!

To pray before a meal is a deliberate pause that will slow the pace of our busy lives. To pray before a meal is a reminder of just how privileged we are. To pray before a meal is to recognize that our food is a good gift from God. To pray before a meal is to teach our kids that God deserves all the gratitude and glory for all that we have and all that we are, including every single bite.

FROM THE NEWS

Teen Takeovers

Have you heard about the youth culture trend known as teen takeovers, and a related trend among teens known as mall takeovers?

These are planned events advertised over social media, where teenagers flock en masse to a designated place, all at the same time. But unlike the flash mobs that come together for an in-the-moment song or dance, these gatherings can quickly get out of hand and even turn violent. For example, one such mall takeover took place at the end of August at the North Shore Mall in Peabody, Massachusetts. Over 200 juveniles gathered and the police had to disperse the disruptive crowd. Some of the takeovers escalate into violence. In some ways, these teen takeovers are reminiscent of the all in good fun type of pranks past generations of teens would play, but with greater danger and malicious intent. We now live in a different world. Perhaps we should instruct our kids in the words of Psalm 34:14: "Seek peace and pursue it."

CPYU's TRENDALERT

TRENDS:

Uncertain Futures Lead to Risky Behavior

There's some interesting new data out on Gen Z that requires us to sit up and take notice. To remind you, Gen Z is that demographic group born between 1997 and 2012. According to the marketing research firm VML, members of Gen Z are choosing to live in the now as a result of facing uncertainty about their futures. VML reports that these older teens and young adults are embracing immediate and intense pleasures, including drinking more, using drugs, tanning without concern for skin damage, and smoking real cigarettes. We need to teach our kids that while God does call us to live our lives to His glory in the now, we are also to live for eternity. In Titus 2:11-13 we read, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."



LATEST RESEARCH:

Sports Gambling

Fall is often a time that sports lovers absolutely yearn for. Yes, the baseball season just wrapped up, but we also have games in the National Football League, the National Hockey League, and the recent start of the NBA season. Embedded in all the televised sports that will have you channel-surfing in order to miss nothing, will be countless ads for online gambling apps. One bit of research says that viewers see a gambling prompt about every 13 seconds during a televised sporting event. Do you know who's watching with you? You kids. One recent survey found that one in every three young adults bet on sports before turning 21. That number is sure to rise as our kids come of age. Parents, the first line of defense against teen gambling are your efforts at the Christian education and nurture of your kids. Provide a good example, and preach the words of I Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil."

QUICKSTATS

$5,000. That's how much a 19-year-old college student paid to enroll in the controversial online influencer Clavicular's 'Camp Looksmax,' a bootcamp for young men trying to improve their appearance. Camp enrollment is now up to $6,500.

(USA Today and Camp Looksmax*)*

High sugar intake among teenagers was linked to 34% higher odds of having an anxiety disorder.

(Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics)

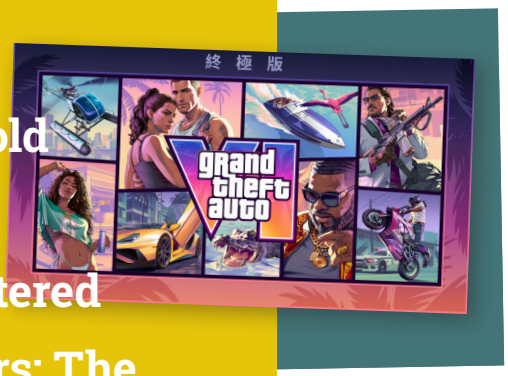
TOP 9

HIGHLY ANTICIPATED VIDEO GAME RELEASES

1. Grand Theft Auto VI
2. Ace Combat 8: Wings of Theve
3. Star Wars: Galactic Racer
4. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time
5. Rayman Legends Retold
6. Football Manager 27
7. The Witcher 3: Remastered
8. Dragon Quest Monsters: The Withered World
9. Xenoblade Chronicles 3

2026 4th quarter releases, in no particular order, though *GTA VI* is the "most" anticipated. Some titles were already released in October. Source: *Shattered.io*





ARE YOUR KIDS SUFFERING WELL?

by **WALT MUELLER**

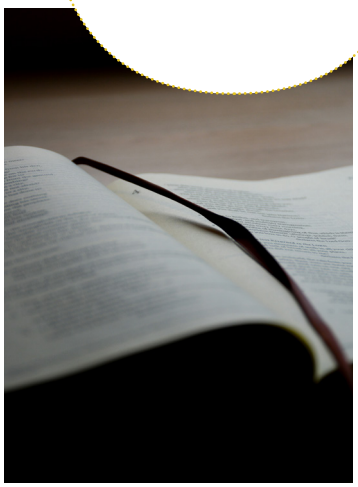
It hurts to watch our kids suffer. In a youth culture pervaded by bullying, our kids may sometimes suffer injustice at the hands of others. Sometimes, their suffering is brought on by choices they've made. At other times, circumstances related to illness or accidents are the cause of their suffering.

The Scriptures teach us that because of the flawed nature of ourselves and our world, we should not be surprised by difficulty and suffering. In fact, times of difficulty, pain, and suffering are what God uses to draw us to Himself, to conform us to His likeness, and to whittle off all that extra "fluff" that keeps us from maturing in our faith.

The Psalmist knew this to be the case. In Psalm 119:71 we read, "My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees." When our teens suffer, it might actually be good for the simple reason that God is at work in their lives. While we want to see them thrive in a life free of hurt and pain, suffering can be good.

FROM THE WORD

One of the Old Testament names for God is *Jehovah-Jireh*, A Hebrew name combining the name of God (*YHWH*), and the word *Yireh*, which is translated as to see or to provide. The name is first encountered in the account of Abraham taking Isaac up on the mountain at God's instruction to sacrifice his son. Abraham tells the puzzled Isaac, who wonders where the lamb for the sacrifice is, that "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8). If you know the story, that's just what God does, which actually serves as a foreshadowing of God's offering up His only Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial lamb for our sins.



Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded that is our sovereign God, the Creator and Ruler over all things, who provides everything for our good and His glory. In his final instructions to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 5:16-17, Paul reminds us that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are to be rejoicing and praying constantly, while living into God's will for us to give thanks in *all* circumstances.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

During this month of Thanksgiving, we should be thinking about Paul's instructions, and teaching them to our kids. Granted, we oftentimes forget to thank God for all the good gifts He gives which sustain us (food, water, health, shelter, education, and so much more). But Paul also reminds us that *all circumstances* includes even the difficulties and suffering we face in this life, which are oftentimes the things we are not thankful for. Paul knows that God allows us to face these difficult providences and that He will always use them for our good and His glory. With this mindset, we can sing these words with the hymn writer Horatio Spafford: *"When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul."*

PODCAST

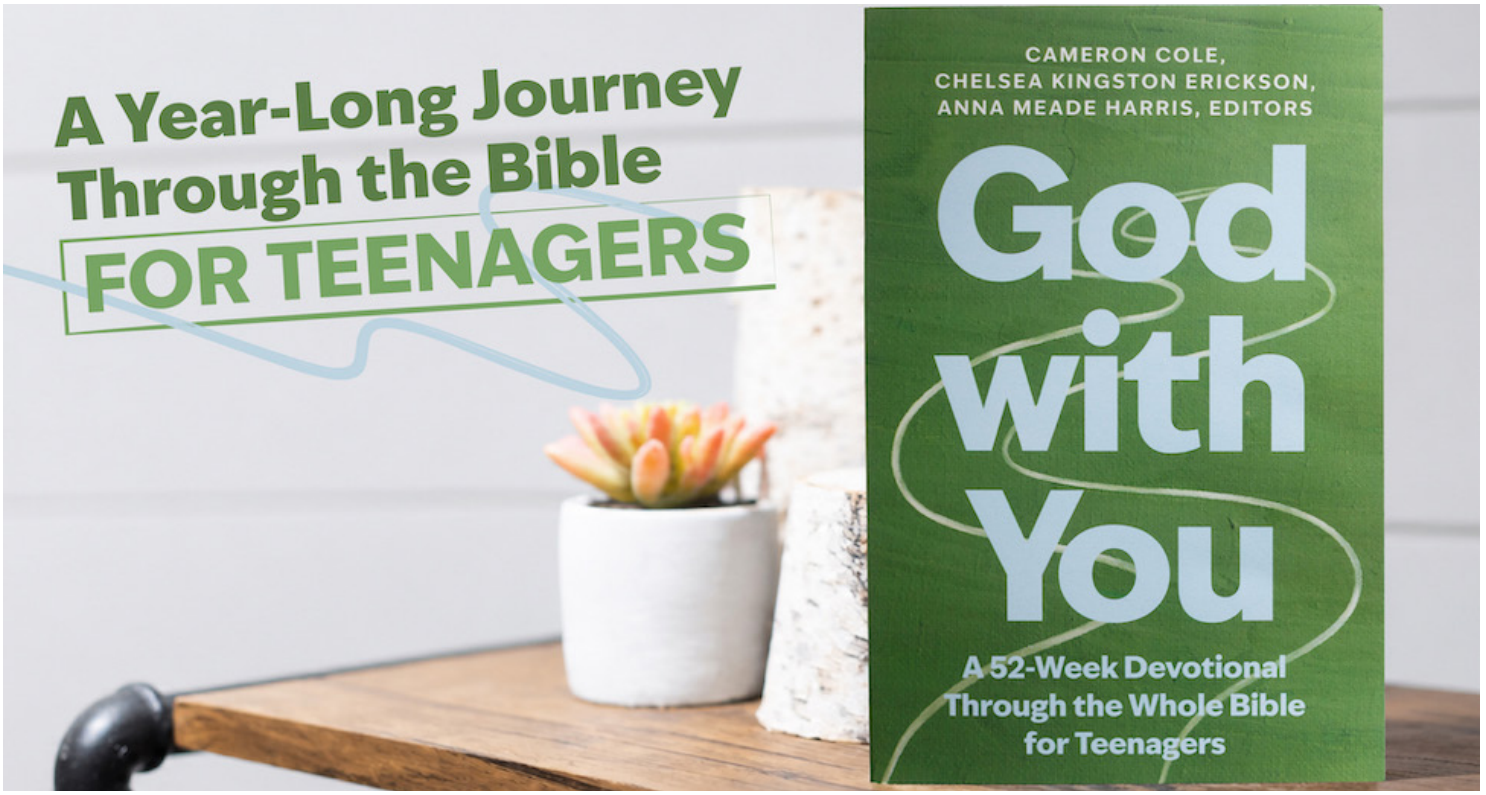
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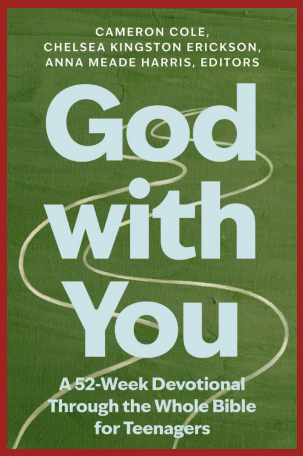
The Word in Youth Ministry
is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 103:
"KNOWING THE WORD AND MAKING DISCIPLES" WITH PETER KROL

LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM



HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

Find God's peace in today's anxious world with this year-long journey through the Bible.

Today's teenagers are all too familiar with fear, anxiety, polarization, and performance pressure. The demands of an increasingly virtual world coupled with the instability of a culture of outrage and angst has left our teens anxious and vulnerable.

Crafted with this reality in mind, *God With You* is a 52-week chronological exploration of God's story in Scripture. Teenagers will experience Jesus as the lifter of their burdens and the source of their rest and hope.

Each of the fifty-five contributors is a youth minister, teacher, or parent skilled in communicating the gospel to teenagers. Daily entries are filled with warmth and reassurance--as if the writer is talking with a teenager about the Bible over coffee or pizza.

Included in each of the 260 entries are:

- **Bible Learning**
- **Gospel Application for Today**
- **Deep Reassurance of the Goodness of God**

To see Jesus in the pages of Scripture is to know him; to know him is to love him. The *God With You* devotional encourages teenagers to place their hope in the steadfast love and trustworthy character of Jesus, our Immanuel, God-with-us.

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