

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“Sometimes. And to be honest, I’ve had a week of deleting my Instagram off my phone, so I didn’t have it, and I would have to go to my laptop if I wanted to post something — so that I wouldn’t get caught up in it. You always get wrapped up in it. You look at one image and then you’re on different pages, and then you are 52 weeks in, and it’s just a lot. I don’t know how I can get through it other than to just know that it isn’t real. I have to put my phone down and look up and look at life and know that I’m in this moment that I’ll never have again, and I need to enjoy it and not give in to those people.”

Selena Gomez, answering the questions “How do you deal with the negativity of social media? Are you able to ignore it?” from Yahoo editor Bobbi Brown, Yahoo.com, Sep. 24, 2015



The Camera Usually Lies

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



Parents, this is the kind of stuff we should love! And for those of us looking for teachable moments that allow us to push back on the lies and pressures of today’s youth culture, it’s the stuff worth showing to and talking about with our kids. What I’m talking about are those crazy “with” and “without” make-up photos of celebrities. They’re the photos that expose the lies told by the camera and digital manipulation. They are the photos that expose the body image lies our vulnerable kids are led to believe which have led to a culture-wide epidemic of worry, obsession, image curation, and disordered eating.

What our kids need to learn is that celebrities are real normal-looking people just like us who don’t have super-model looks. Time and gravity do take a toll on their physical shells. . . in the same way time and gravity do the same to the rest of us.

A few weeks ago, celebrity Scarlet Johansson posted a stunning photo on her Facebook fan page. Johansson is the thirty-year-old actress, model, and singer who is also known as one of entertainment’s “sex symbols.” She’s been proclaimed “Sexiest Woman Alive” on two occasions (2006 and 2013) by *Esquire* magazine. The photo was stunning because it doesn’t show Johansson in the stunning light we’re all so used to. Instead, it’s the *real* Scarlet Johansson sans make-up and digital manipulation.

Beneath the photo were these words from Johansson:

“Behind the glamour, behind the make up, behind all those flashy clothes, there’s an ordinary girl who just happens to have an extra ordinary job. I have seen young girls

follow celebrities and try to be one of them. They try to attain perfection, have the perfect body, perfect skin tone. They aren’t fully aware of the fact that behind the looks there are a lot of designers, make up artists, and photoshop/video editing. Their whole sense of beauty is flawed. There is no good to looking good if you are conscious all the time about how you look. You should be care free. Love the real you. The way you are so that even if you are without makeup, you can look into the mirror and with a big smile embrace your imperfections. Just imagine if you don’t even love yourself how do you expect anyone to love you. So first and foremost learn to love yourself by



being who you are and not what the world wants you to be. All you need to do is have a great heart and be compassionate towards others. I hope you spread the message and let the world know that you value inner beauty more than the outer appearance.”

Perhaps you can use Johansson’s photo and post as a starting point for a discussion with your teen about identity, body-image, and the consuming pressures that can take over our lives. Parents, this is a simple and practical way you can shift the cultural identity script to a biblical identity script. . . one that encourages our kids to flourish by finding their identity in Christ. Remember, God is most concerned with our inward character and integrity. But sadly, the world tells our kids to focus on nothing but their outsides. How tragic and destructive that message is. Let’s push back with a vengeance! ✨

TOP 9...

Places Where Teens Hang Out with Close Friends

% of teens who regularly spend time with their closest friends at the following locations

Source: PewInternet.org



1. School - 83%

2. Someone's house - 58%

3. Online - 55%

4. Sports, clubs, hobbies, other

extracurricular activities - 45%

5. Neighborhood - 42%

6. Coffee shop, mall, stores - 23%

7. Church, temple, synagogue, or

other religious institution - 21%

8. Job - 6%

9. Other location - 5%

QUICK STATS

The rates of underage drinking among young people ages 12-20 fell from 28% in 2002, to 22.7% in 2013.

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

87% of driving aged teenagers admit to using their cellphones to talk or text while they are behind the wheel.

(Allstate Foundation)

FROM THE NEWS:

COLLEGE MINDSET LIST

As they've done for so many years now, researchers at Beloit University have released their annual "Mindset List" for this year's incoming college freshman class. It's always fun to scan the list to see just how much culture has changed. The class of 2019 has never licked a postage stamp. They have grown up treating Wi-Fi as an entitlement. Their parents have gone from encouraging them to use the Internet to begging them to get off it. When they were born, cell phone usage was so expensive that families only used their large phone, usually in cars, for emergencies. Splenda has always been an option to sweeten drinks and food. TV has always been available in high definition. First responders have always been heroes. And the *Lion King* has always been a Broadway play. These changes remind us that not only is time flying, but we need to keep up with the changes. As Christians, we need to follow the trends and speak the truths of God's word to the realities that exist.

TRENDS: PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

LATEST RESEARCH: ROLE OF GRANDPARENTS

In recent years, CPYU has consistently sounded the warning regarding the growing number of kids who abuse prescription drugs. Kids are both tapping into the family medicine cabinet, and even abusing drugs that have been prescribed for them by family physicians. One particular class of prescription drugs that are being abused are the stimulants that are prescribed to treat ADHD. For example, research has shown that a quarter of adolescents who have a prescription for ADHD medication share or sell their drugs to other kids. Seven percent have even had their medication stolen. Despite the stereotype that the abuse of stimulants like Ritalin is most common among college students, the reality is that young people are most likely to start misusing prescription stimulants during their high school years. Parents, keep an eye on all prescription drugs in your household. And, be sure to discuss the legal, moral, and health issues of prescription drug abuse with your kids.



From time to time, the results of research validate common-sense assumptions we can make about kids. A study recently published in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* confirms a common-sense reality we know about the role that grandparents can play in the lives of their teenaged grandchildren. The study found that teens who form close, loving-relationships with a grandparent are more likely to have fewer behavioral and emotional problems than less-attached teens. This is especially true for teens who may not have an especially close relationship to their parents. God made us to be in relationship. The family is the primary institution God made to provide love, guidance, and direction. In a world where family breakdown and negative cultural influences are on the rise, grandparents are especially important. Grandparents, you play a powerful role. Enter in your grandkids' lives, and point them to Jesus and the life of discipleship.

COLLEGE TRANSITION INITIATIVE

a resource of CPYU



www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com

College Isn't For Everyone

by Walt Mueller



Because we were raised in a day and age where the unspoken expectation for life after high school was four years spent at college, it's easy for us to default into having the same expectations for our own kids. But rising college costs, a struggling post-college job market, and a changing culture have combined to wake us up to the fact that college isn't for everyone.

Parents, have you taken the time to consider other post-high school options for your son or daughter that might be best suited to where they're at developmentally along with their unique gifts and abilities? It's a good thing that in today's world, college is no longer seen as the only worthwhile option for kids to pursue after high school. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how God has made and gifted your son or daughter. Then, talk to them about what post-high school options they think are best suited for them. Besides college, here are three wonderful paths kids can choose in an effort to serve and glorify God through the exercise of their gifts and abilities.

1. **Move immediately into the work force.** This allows our kids to gain experience, save money, and begin to test and discover gifts and abilities they never knew they had.
2. **Attend a trade school.** All work matters to God and is an act of worship. There are no jobs or vocations that are more important than others. God has created and prepared some of our kids to serve Him and others through the trades.
3. **Enroll in a Gap Year program.** These in-between programs are designed to equip students for life after high school by helping them discover their calling and prepare them for the next step in life.

Host a Seminar

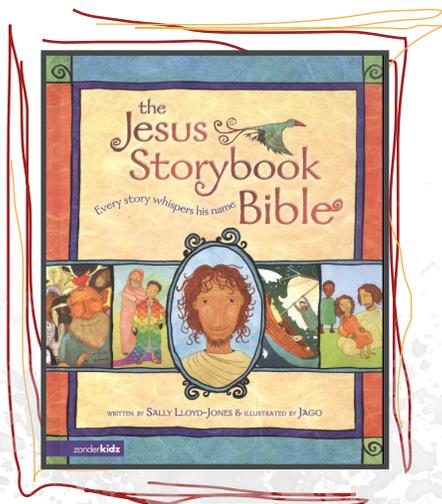
Would your church be interested in hosting a

Tackling the TOUGH STUFF

Seminar?

Presented by Walt Mueller and Marv Penner, this seminar will tackle the tough teen issues of **suicide, depression, self-injury, narcissism and pornography.**

Learn more about hosting at www.cpyu.org/toughstuff.



FROM THE WORD

As they journey from childhood to adulthood, our kids (both girls *and* boys) are forming convictions on what to value, believe, and pursue in life. The voices of contemporary culture shout loud and convincing messages that not only shape who our kids are now, but who they will be and what they will believe for the rest of their lives.

Perhaps no message comes through more loud and clear in today's youth culture than the message that says *it's your outward appearance that is most important and praiseworthy.* Consequently, our kids are spending an exorbitant amount of time obsessing over and tending to what they look like and how they present their appearance to the world. Of course, social media has only served to magnify this pressure as kids carefully curate themselves in an effort to catch the affirming eye of the watching world.

Sadly, what gets lost in the adolescent identity shuffle is the one voice that clearly and rightly defines what's most important and praiseworthy. Towards the end of the book of Proverbs, we find descriptors of what a man should value most in his wife. The clear message is contrary to what today's culture leads our kids to believe. As the chapter comes to an end, we read these words: "Charm is deceptive and beauty does not last, but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised" (Proverbs 31:30). When understood in a general way within the entire message of the Bible, it's clear that when both men *and* women pursue and value outward appearance in themselves and others, they are engaging in idolatry. Instead, we need to pursue and value that which is enduringly beautiful: a deep and growing relationship with God.

**"CHARM IS DECEPTIVE
AND BEAUTY DOES NOT
LAST, BUT A WOMAN WHO
FEARS THE LORD WILL BE
GREATLY PRAISED."
PROVERBS 31:30**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

As the holiday gift giving season approaches, CPYU suggests a perfect gift for children. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* written by Sally Lloyd-Jones tells the Story beneath all the stories in the Bible. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. The author notes that at the center of the Story, there is a baby, the Child upon whom everything would depend. From Noah to Moses to King David, every story whispers his name. Jesus is like the missing piece in a puzzle – the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together. From the Old Testament through the New Testament, as the Story unfolds, children will pick up the clues and piece together the puzzle. A Bible like no other, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* invites children to join in the greatest of all adventures, to discover for themselves that Jesus is at the center of God's great story of salvation—and at the center of their Story too.

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