

# LIVING THROUGH YOUR KIDS

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



**YOUTH CULTURE  
HOT QUOTE**

“*...when I found myself with total sexual freedom, I was unhappy.*”

Emily Witt, author of “Future Sex: A New Kind of Free Love” released October 2016



You know them when you see them. They are the parents who scream at their kids from the sidelines, show disappointment when a child brings home an A- grade, and continually post pictures and announcements on social media that trumpet their kid’s good looks and achievements. For parents who live vicariously through their kids, it’s not at all about encouraging kids to quietly go about life doing *their* best, but using their kids to loudly and selfishly showcase themselves at *their* best.

I have never forgotten the first time that I so clearly saw a father admit to seeking his own identity through his football-playing son. After two quarters of screaming loudly at his teenage son from the stands, the father was confronted by a peer who yelled, “Hey Bob! You’d think that was you out there on the field!” Bob didn’t hesitate to issue his enthusiastic reply: “It is!!” God bless Bob’s son.

In his recently released book *Parenting: Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*, Dr. Paul Tripp includes a chapter on the topic of “Identity.” Dr. Tripp states the “Identity Principle” this way: “If you are not resting as a parent in your identity in Christ, you will look for identity in your children.” While expecting our children to be successful and do their best is not a bad thing, far too many of us are harboring parental hearts that are more focused on our children achieving the kind of success that makes us look good, rather than on the child who is required to deliver it. The result is that we crush and embitter our children through the weight of our pressures and expectations. When that happens, God bless our sons and daughters.

The remedy to this is to rest in our identity in Jesus Christ. If we are not finding our identity in Christ, we will attempt to find our identity in something in the creation. . . possessions, vocation, accomplishments, and even our children. Simply stated, this is idolatry. As Dr. Tripp remind us, only Christ is able to give us the identity, peace, and meaning that our hearts seek.

So, how can you know if you are living to find your identity through your children rather than in Jesus Christ? What are the signs that your parenting is driven more by what you need *from* your children rather than by what God wants to do *through you in* your children? Dr. Tripp shares these five “sure indications”:

- **Too much focus on success.** You want your children to succeed because you need them to succeed.
- **Too much concern about reputation.** You rely on your children and their performance to polish your reputation as a parent.
- **Too great a desire for control.** You control situations and people to make sure your children succeed and enhance your reputation.
- **Too much emphasis on *doing* rather than *being*.** You focus on your child’s physical, social, and educational accomplishments rather than on their heart.
- **Too much temptation to make it personal.** You focus not on how their behavior is viewed by God, but on how their behavior affects you.

Parents, take stock of how you’re parenting. Are you putting undue, spirit-crushing pressure on your kids, or are you seeking to find your identity in Christ? ★

## Trending Movie Hashtags on Twitter for 2016

Source:  
Forbes.com and Twitter



1. #StarWars

2. #SuicideSquad

3. #Deadpool

4. #HarryPotter

5. #Batmanvssuperman

6. #CaptainAmericaCivilWar

7. #FindingDory

8. #TheRevenant

9. #Zootopia

10. #Ghostbusters



### QUICK STATS

94% of teens acknowledge the dangers of texting and driving. Still, 35% admit to engaging in this risky practice.  
(AAA)

An estimated 6.8 million people ages 10 to 17 are food insecure, meaning they don't have reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food.  
(Urban Institute)

### FROM THE NEWS:

## COVER BOY

This past fall, CoverGirl announced their latest cover girl face. This time, however, it wasn't a girl. For the first time ever, CoverGirl is using a boy as a make-up model. In this case it's James Charles, a seventeen year old high school senior from New York who has a large social media following, thanks to his popular online makeup tutorials. *The New York Times* reports that the selection of James Charles by CoverGirl comes amid a broader societal questioning of traditional gender boundaries in fashion and beauty. Parents, the cultural landscape is changing. What your kids are learning about gender is loaded with a seemingly endless array of possibilities compared to the male - female boundaries of your childhood. This should remind us of our need to understand and teach about gender issues from a biblical perspective. The culture is reshaping our understanding of gender. You must use the Scriptures to faithfully shape your kids.

## TRENDS: SLEEP DEPRIVATION EFFECTS

Once again, we're going to address teenagers and their need for sleep. Teens need nine hours and fifteen minutes of uninterrupted sleep for normal growth and development.

When they lose sleep, their mental, physical, and emotional health will suffer. That reminds us that God made our bodies for a rhythm of work and rest. Now, new research published in the journal *Pediatrics* is adding more evidence regarding the dangers of being a teenage night owl. They discovered that teens who don't get enough sleep tend to have the hardest time with self-regulation during the following day.

These students have more memory problems, are more impulsive, and get irritated and frustrated more easily than their peers who are getting enough sleep. Researchers also found that getting to bed earlier is important, as it is a factor in how well the brain functions the next morning. Parents, sometimes you need to think for your kids, setting borders and boundaries that leads to improved physical health.



## LATEST RESEARCH: SUICIDE CLUSTERS

The word suicide is not a pretty word. For those who know someone who has attempted to take their own life or completed a suicide, the word conjures up feelings and memories of horrible pain. But teen suicide is something that we must address. Research has shown that among teenagers, suicide, like other behaviors, can actually be contagious. Kids are especially susceptible as they obsess over fads and fashion trends, and they copy the behavior of their peers, even if those behaviors are known to be dangerous. Researchers at Columbia

University have found that when it comes to suicide, the element of contagiousness comes directly when someone knows a suicide victim, or indirectly through word of mouth or news reports. Parents, be aware of the contagious nature of suicide, which is especially strong among fifteen to nineteen year olds, and where there has been a suicide cluster. Monitor your kids, and get them the help of a hope-filled, Christian counselor.

### COLLEGE TRANSITION INITIATIVE

a resource of CPYU



[www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com](http://www.CollegeTransitionInitiative.com)

## The Post-Truth Campus

by Walt Mueller



In case you missed it, the *Oxford Dictionary* 2016 Word of the Year is "Post-Truth." It's an adjective defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." Certainly, much of the post-election social media banter was filled with factual errors upon which people built strongly held opinions and arguments. Some would say that living in a "post-truth" world is the reason why the President-elect was voted into office in the first place. Those opposed to his election have been accused of spreading non-truths that resulted in a wave of ill-informed opinions and emotions.

The reality is that our kids *are* growing up in a "post-truth" world where individual preference and in-the-moment emotions are seen as the most viable and trustworthy final arbiter of truth. Increasingly, that's the reality they will encounter and find promoted on the university campus and classroom.

While effectively responding to this cultural trend is complex, our starting point is rather simple: Parents must seek out, know, embrace, live, and speak biblical truth to their children from the time they emerge from the womb. That task should continue through all of life. And if you're getting a late start on the task, don't fret. It's never too late to tell your kids that not only is there truth, but what that truth actually is.

## New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a new long-format podcast from CPYU. Co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek, each episode features an interview with an expert in a youth culture related field.



Listen at  
[www.cpyu.org/podcast](http://www.cpyu.org/podcast).

## FROM THE WORD

New Year's is a time when we make resolutions. Typically our New Year's resolutions include the addition of something to our schedules and lifestyles that was never a part of our life, or if it was, it's long since been forgotten. This year, why not resolve to take some things away, rather than add something new? And why not resolve to take something away from your own busy parental lifestyle, and to do the same for your teens? By clearing things from your schedules and constant engagement with technology, you'll be providing your family with the gift of much-needed time for silence, reflection, and thought.

All of us, including our kids, need a place to decompress. Jesus invited those who were burdened, heavy-laden, and weary to come to Him for rest. Invite your kids into an understanding and experience of the "peace that passes understanding" that is theirs in Christ as they take their anxiousness to Him (Philippians 4:7). Their childhood and adolescent experience should not be all about busyness, activity, social media, and the anxiety that has become "normalized" as a part of their lives. Rather, it should be a period of life that includes peace and rest. Give them opportunities to spend lengthy amounts of time in conversation with you and other adults by giving them a chance to talk about life and blow off steam. Invite them into the quiet of God's presence by lowering the noise – both literal and figurative – that tends to characterize so many of our hectic family schedules and lives. Lead them to listen to God through your teaching and as they meditate on His Word. Silence is golden. We need it. And our kids crave and need it too.

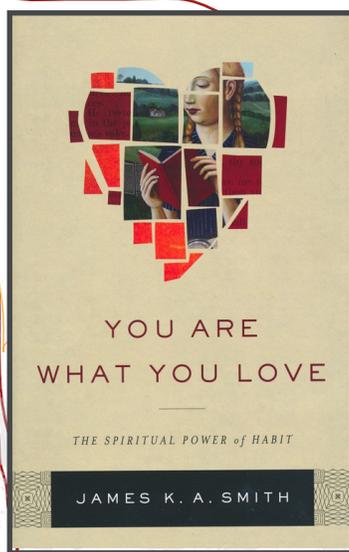
**"THEN JESUS SAID, 'COME TO ME, ALL OF YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND CARRY HEAVY BURDENS, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.'"**

**MATTHEW 11:28  
(NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)**

## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

In *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, award-winning author James K. A. Smith shows that who and what we worship fundamentally shape our hearts. And while we desire to shape culture, we are not often aware of how culture shapes us. We might not realize the ways our hearts are being taught to love rival gods instead of the One for whom we were made. Smith helps readers recognize the formative power of culture and the transformative possibilities of Christian practices. He explains that worship is the "imagination station" that incubates our loves and longings so that our cultural endeavors are indexed toward God and his kingdom. This is why the church and worshiping in a local community of believers should be the hub and heart of Christian formation and discipleship.

The author creatively uses film, literature, and music illustrations to engage readers and includes material on marriage, family, youth ministry, and faith and work. He also suggests individual and communal practices for shaping the Christian life.



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