

My Kids, My Identity

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“When I initially downloaded TikTok, I saw a lot of really, really negative body image videos. It’s not worth it to keep seeing these posts if it’s worsening your mental health.”

TikTok body positive activist **Brittani Lancaster**, @brittanilancaster, talking about the dangerous diet and exercise regimens promoted on the social media app TikTok, NBCNews.com, July 19, 2020



If it doesn’t happen, who is going to be more disappointed? You? Or your kids? That question haunted me in a personal way as I rode past a high school football stadium during the last week of July. Coaches and players were assembled on the field for workouts in preparation for a season that might or might not happen due to our current pandemic. I rewound 17 years to my own son, and I began to wonder how he would have responded if his last year of high school football had been shut down. Then, I began to wonder how I would have responded as his dad. Truth be told, I don’t know that it would have been easy for me to take it all in stride... which I’m afraid reveals an aspect of my character that’s not very attractive.

The reality is that just about every extra-curricular activity in which our kids engage is in jeopardy. Sports, concerts, clubs, academic competitions, and other areas where our kids have a chance to shine might not happen. And what that means is that our parental opportunity to shine through our kids and their talents might disappear as well. I’m not so sure that’s a bad thing.

In his 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.

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



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? ✨

Netflix Shows Watched So Far in 2020

Based on a point system developed by Forbes reporter Travis Bean (using Netflix's daily Top 10 list)



1. **Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness**

2. **Ozark**

3. **Outer Banks**

4. **Avatar: The Last Airbender**

5. **Love is Blind**

6. **All American**

7. **Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich**

8. **Space Force**

9. **13 Reasons Why**

10. **Dead to Me**



QUICK STATS

49.3% of teens reported smoking cannabis or drinking alone during the COVID-19 pandemic, 31.6% reported doing so virtually, and 23.6% broke social distancing rules to drink and smoke face-to-face with friends. (*Journal of Adolescent Health*)

80% of children ages 11-17 are not getting the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise daily as recommended by the World Health Organization. (*Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*)

FROM THE NEWS:

DIVORCE HURTS KIDS

There are many people who wonder if divorce hurts kids. If you're a child of divorce yourself, you already know the answer. But for those who need to hear the research and hard data, there is mounting evidence that yes, divorce does hurt kids. Researchers at the National Marriage Project have found that many of today's youth problems can be attributed directly or indirectly, to the decline of marriage. This includes high rates of juvenile delinquency, suicide, substance abuse, child poverty, mental illness, and emotional instability. Research also shows that these issues and problems aren't unique to the adolescent years. Kids of divorce carry these problems and their fallout all the way through their adult years. So as our society changes, husbands and wives are becoming more committed to being uncommitted. The result is that more and more kids are suffering. We need to hold to a high view of marriage that reflects God's priorities for the family. It's good for the kids.

TRENDS: MATERIALISM

Somehow, some way, materialism is always able to sneak into our lives to steal our time, our thoughts, our energy, and our resources. Our contemporary culture encourages the worship of material things. Your parental example sends a loud and clear message to your kids about what's most important in your life and what they should hold near and dear to their hearts. Proverbs warns about the dangerous trap of materialism: "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be

discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven." The message that we need to send to our kids through our words and example is that all that we have, are, and ever hope to be is a gift entrusted to us by

God. Our responsibility is to steward these gifts to his glory to further his work on earth. Why not take some time to examine your check book and credit card statements. What message do they send about your treasure?



LATEST RESEARCH:

INEXPERIENCED TEEN DRIVING

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently completed a study that reminds us that the number one cause of death among teenagers is car accidents. The study reports that while teenagers are fairly well-informed regarding driving laws and safety practices, they get into accidents for two main reasons: inexperience and risk-taking. The report says that the most common

driving mistakes made by teenagers are driving too fast, driving too close to other vehicles, and distracted driving. Recommendations made to parents of teen drivers include monitoring their driving during the time when they have a probationary license, and reminding them of the teen driving risks and dangerous behaviors. We would add to that the need to teach our

kids to integrate their Christian faith into their driving, which is also good advice for us as adult drivers. We need to see our time behind the wheel as another opportunity to bring glory to God. Our driving should be an act of worship.

CPYU'S DIGITAL KIDS INITIATIVE



www.DigitalKidsInitiative.com

Social Media and Disordered Eating



by Walt Mueller

Earlier this year, during a conversation I had with Dr. Leonard Sax, author of the book, *The Collapse of Parenting*, Dr. Sax emphatically stated that no child should have their own smartphone and social media accounts before the age of thirteen. Now, new research looking at middle school students and their use of social media affirm Dr. Sax's recommendation. You see, most social media platforms used by kids use imagery including photos and videos to communicate. These images powerfully communicate and affirm body-image ideals that, in turn, lead kids to engage in disordered eating.

The study found that due to the pressure to look a certain way, 52% of girls and 45% of boys were engaging in behaviors indicative of disordered eating. These behaviors include skipping meals and excessive exercise. Parents, the Gospel is clear: our identity cannot be found in the idolatrous pursuit of a particular appearance. Rather, our kids must learn that their identity must be rooted in who they are in Christ.

New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a long-format podcast from CPYU co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek.



Listen at www.cpyu.org/podcast.

Be sure to check out Episode 109 titled "Suicide Prevention" with Karen Mason

FROM THE WORD

One of the great lessons we should have all learned now that we're into the sixth month of the pandemic is this: we are not in control of our own lives. David recognized this fact in the opening two verses of Psalm 16: "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'" David tells us that God is the only one we can rely on for our well-being.

But what if our present circumstances don't seem like a good thing? How can I believe that God is working out His best for my life when my life is increasingly filled with the kind of fear, disappointments, frustrations, and unknown future occasioned by our present conditions?

With David, we must state – to ourselves and to our kids – that if God is truly our refuge and there is no good apart from Him, then we are to *choose* to be content with our God-ordained portion, cup, and lot. In other words, we are to *choose* to accept and embrace what God Himself has *chosen* for us, His *chosen* people who He loves. He will not abandon us (v. 10) as He leads us in "the path of life" (v. 11).

"THE LORD IS MY CHOSEN PORTION AND MY CUP; YOU HOLD MY LOT. THE LINES HAVE FALLEN FOR ME IN PLEASANT PLACES; INDEED, I HAVE A BEAUTIFUL INHERITANCE."

PSALM 16:5&6

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Philippians 3:10 (ASV)

If we follow Jesus, we will experience pain. It comes with the territory. We might face hardship because of our Christian commitment, or we may have challenges just from living in a fallen world. Either way, Christians follow in the footsteps of our suffering Savior and participate in his suffering.

But that's not the whole story. In *The Fellowship of the Suffering: How Hardship Shapes Us for Ministry and Mission*, missionary Paul Borthwick and pastor Dave Ripper show how transformation through our personal pain enables us to minister faithfully to a hurting world. They candidly share about their own struggles and how they have seen God's kingdom advance through hardship and suffering. Though we naturally avoid suffering, Christians throughout church history have become powerful witnesses to Christ as a result of their brokenness.

Life is painful, but pain need not have dominion over us. Instead, it can propel us in missional solidarity with our suffering world. Come find comfort and renewed purpose in the fellowship of the suffering.

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