

Helping **parents** understand **teenagers** and their world

## PANDEMIC PARENTING

### YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

*“I thought I would’ve had a little bit more edge or info or intel or something. But I feel like I’m very often just as confused and perplexed as anyone else. I think it’s a lot harder to be a teenager today. I feel like all of the insecurities, the highs and lows, the way that teenagers feel is the same. But there are so many other aspects that aggravate their lives. We didn’t have 24/7 Instagram and other social media. I think that makes things very hard. It makes it harder to focus, so they miss out on a lot of great things.”*

80’s teen icon Molly Ringwald, who has 3 children, on raising teenagers, *HuffPost*, February 2, 2020



WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



Our beginning-of-April-2020 world looks little like the world we knew at the beginning of March. In the course of a matter of days, the Covid-19 virus has changed so many things in terms of how and where we are spending our time. As parents, we are home. Perhaps almost “stuck” at home. . . as we do what’s now called “social distancing.” Your kids are home as well. Let’s be honest. The close quarters are making life difficult for so many. How should we navigate these realities?

Years ago, I was expressing frustration to a friend regarding some trying circumstances. He challenged me to look into the Bible to discover how God uses the challenges we face in life to take us out of ourselves and form us into the people He desires us to be. My friend encouraged me to embrace *difficult providences*. “Providence” refers to the fact that humanity and our world are not ruled by fate or chance, but by God. He directs human history and all creation toward the goal of conforming us and our world to His divinely determined goal. Because God wants to do great work in our lives, He sometimes allows us to endure difficult circumstances to bring about great good.

Think for a minute about the Old Testament story of Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 37-50). When Joseph eventually told his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good”, we see how God used a difficult providence to serve His own redemptive purposes. The Psalmist reminds us of the blessed outcomes of difficult providences when he writes, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (Psalm 119:71).

My friends words to me about choosing to become *bitter* or *better* as a result of my

difficulty have come back to me over the course of the last few weeks, and they have served to remind me that God is at work in my life and in the life of my family through the current health crisis.

We will be more prone to parent well through this pandemic if we embrace these “close-quarter” days as an opportunity to spend our time together as a family well. Why not make a plan to eat dinner together each evening, using these three strategies to foster both spiritual and relational growth?

**Read the Bible together.** One plan would be to read a Psalm, a Proverb, and a few verses from the Gospel of John. Discuss what each teaches you about God, about humanity, about God’s will and way for our lives, and the enemy’s schemes to undo us.

**Pray together.** Go around the table and have each person share something they are thankful for that day, along with something for which they desire God’s help.

**Open the lines of family communication through good discussion.** Be sure to follow the ground rules for good communication, and ask open-ended questions. To help you accomplish both of these goals, you can access our “Quarantine Communication” help sheet (info below).

Parents, don’t waste this opportunity. Today’s social-distancing is affording us an occasion to fulfill our God-given responsibility to grow in our relationship with our kids, and to invest in their spiritual growth! ★

Download the Quarantine Communication *handout* by pointing your smartphone’s camera at this QR code, or visit [cpyu.org](http://cpyu.org).



## Video Games with Highest Intent to Buy Next

Console and PC Versions,  
Week ended March 21, 2020  
Source:  
Nielsen



1. **Cyberpunk 2077**
2. **Resident Evil 3**
3. **DOOM Eternal**
4. **Fortnite**
5. **Animal Crossing: New Horizons**
6. **Marvel's Avengers**
7. **The Last of Us: Part II**
8. **Final Fantasy VII Remake**
9. **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)**
10. **FIFA 20**



### QUICK STATS

Between 2004 and 2017, the age at which teens started drinking alcohol and smoking rose from 16 to 17 years.

(Washington State University, published in JAMA Pediatrics)

Children's average daily time spent watching television or using a computer or mobile device increased from 53 minutes at age 12 months to more than 150 minutes at 3 years.

(National Institutes of Health, the University of Albany, and the New York University Langone Medical Center)

### FROM THE NEWS:

## SUGAR CONSUMPTION

Here's some good news we can celebrate from the world of today's youth culture. It seems that increased awareness and ramped up intervention efforts have led to healthier sugar consumption habits among our children and teens. According to a new study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, fewer children and teens are consuming sugar sweetened beverages. In addition, the calories kids consume from these beverages have declined. This decline occurred between 2003 and 2014. Sugar sweetened beverages are defined as any non-alcoholic drink containing sugar, including soda, fruit drinks, and flavored milks. This is good news on the health front, including issues related to obesity and dental health. But experts are warning that there is more work to be done, as 61% of all children still consume at least one sugar sweetened beverage a day. Parents, the health decisions you make for your kids now, will affect them for the rest of their lives.

## TRENDS: MEDIA USE ON THE RISE DURING PANDEMIC

Early reports indicate that media use has drastically increased over the last couple of weeks. When you're with your kids and engaging media together, why not use the things you see and hear as an opportunity to offer biblical correctives to the messages the media gets wrong? Here are three categories of messages to look for and answer with biblical truth. First, there are the *ideologies*. This is the stuff of worldview formation. In today's world the message is one that convincingly tells us that our highest and most noble goal in life is to be true to yourself. Second, there are the messages about *identity*. We now choose to be self-defined rather than Creator-defined. Today, we develop our identities based on what we choose rather than on the givenness of our God-made humanity. We believe we can find rest in who we choose to be rather than in who we are as image-bearers in Christ. Third, there is the pressure to fabricate, curate, and promote our *image* that is seen by the world. This pressure wrongly convinces kids that "I am what I look like. . . and what people think of me."



## LATEST RESEARCH: LASTING FAITH

With so many of our young adults graduating from high school and walking away from the faith, what can we do to lead them to embrace a lasting faith? We get some great answers to this question from David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock in their book *Faith for Exiles, And The Five Ministry Practices Churches And Families Must Pursue To Lead Kids Into Life-Long Faith*. The research indicates that we must lead our kids into experiencing intimacy with Jesus. This is best done by clearing what they call the religious clutter that so easily sidetracks us. We've been complicit in presenting a Jesus to compete at the same level as our other affinities and affiliations. In addition, we've expected way too little from our kids. They are more willing to be challenged than The Church is willing to challenge them. And, parents must be living a life of spiritual vitality where they give everything they have and are over to Jesus. Let's lead our kids into a deep and lasting faith.

### COLLEGE TRANSITION INITIATIVE

a resource of CPYU

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



### After High School

by Walt Mueller



Today I want to talk to you about how my beliefs have changed over the years regarding high school graduates and higher education. When I graduated from high school, I lived in a culture where it was assumed that the next step for anyone who hoped to be responsible was to go immediately on to college, and then to graduate in four years. But a changing culture, economic realities, college debt, and a more clear understanding of work and calling have led me to a new understanding of what happens after high school. We no longer live in a one size fits all higher ed environment.

I believe that far too many of our kids head straight off to college with no idea regarding their giftedness and calling. Parents, maybe we should require our kids to hold off from college enrollment. Pray with them regarding their giftedness and calling. Then, send them in the right direction, to the right place, at the right time in order to prepare them for a lifetime of service to God.

## 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](http://www.cpyu.org/podcast).

Be sure to check out  
Episode 101 titled  
"Turning to Christ with our  
Anxiety" with Ed Welch

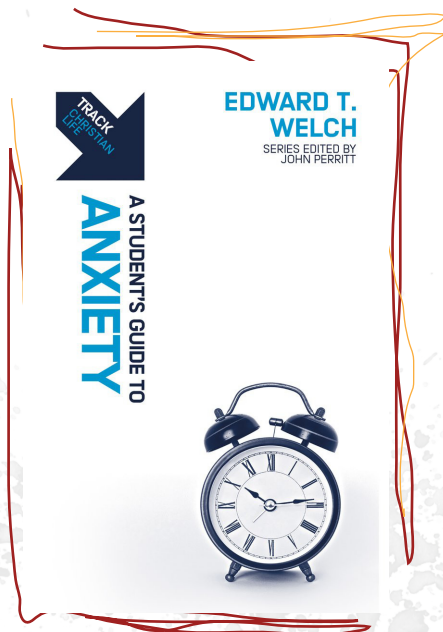
## FROM THE WORD

In his first letter addressed to followers of Jesus, the Apostle John issues a six-word parting statement that is extremely direct and powerful. These six words remind us of just how easy it is to fall prey to ideas, habits, and things that become so important in our lives that they take the place of God. John writes, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

There is a fundamental incompatibility between the worship of God and the worship of idols. Idolatry has been defined as turning good things into "ultimate" things. How easy it is to do that in a world that pummels us daily with ads marketing all kinds of ideas, goods, and services. . . all promising to make our lives better. . . maybe even "complete." And even for followers of Christ (as John surely knew), we are easily tempted, deceived, and capable of worshipping other gods. This is a basic fact of our sinful and fallen human nature.

Realizing this ever-present reality is the first step in helping our kids understand that they too are easy prey for willingly falling into idolatry. Perhaps the current Covid-19 pandemic has helped you to see the idols you're prone to embrace. Share John's warning with your kids, not just once, but over and over and over again. Teach them to run from idols like the plague. Help them to look for and see the idols that are not easily recognizable. This conflict and temptation will not disappear until the day when Jesus returns and all things are made new. Keeping one's self from idols is a conscious pursuit we must embrace, model, and teach. Our only hope for redemption is in Jesus Christ.

**"DEAR CHILDREN,  
KEEP YOURSELVES  
FROM IDOLS."  
1 JOHN 5:21**



## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

We all know the feeling. That nervous, jittery, tense feeling that tells you that something bad is just ahead. Anxiety can be overwhelming. But the Bible has plenty to say to people who are anxious. This book will help us to take our eyes off our circumstances and fix them on God. In *Anxiety: A Student's Guide to Anxiety*, Edward T. Welch, Counselor & Faculty at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, provides big biblical solutions that get to the heart of the matter and that last. Students will have their lives transformed by the truths in these pages.



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