



A weekly resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

## ENERGY CRISIS? TEENAGERS AND ENERGY DRINKS

**BY: Brett Wirebaugh**, CPYU Research Fellow and Associate Pastor for Youth and Families at Harvest Presbyterian Church, Medina, OH

*Energy drink companies promise alertness, focus, and increased physical performance for those who consume their products. They are packaged in brightly colored containers with eye-catching slogans. Their marketing is global in scale in the most popular of sports. The advertising is slick and the message is conveyed through clever cartoons. It is no wonder that teenagers are drinking up the message. It is estimated that a full one-third of kids ages 12 to 17 consume energy drinks regularly. So, does Red Bull really give today's teenager "wiiiings?" Are Monster drinks really "Unleashing the Beast?"*

### What is Happening?

Because energy drinks contain large amounts of caffeine, added sugars, and legal stimulants such as B-vitamins, guarana, ginseng, and taurine, guzzling one does, in fact, boost one's alertness, attention, and productivity. Therefore, for the average sleep-deprived teenager who is stretched thin by the demands of school, work responsibilities, extra-curricular activities, and an active social life, reaching for a can of alternative energy is not just a temptation, but unfortunately, is proving to be the norm.

- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, adolescents are the fastest-growing population of caffeine users in America, with 83% of teens drinking caffeinated beverages regularly, and 96% admit to drinking caffeinated beverages occasionally.
- Energy drinks are the fastest growing beverage product on the global market, with a projected \$85 billion in sales by 2025, a figure that is estimated to approach \$115 billion by 2030.
- In 2016, teens consumed \$16 billion worth of energy drinks.

Teenagers widely perceive that energy drinks are a healthy and safe alternative to soft drinks. But is that the reality?

- 40% of teens report adverse effects from consuming energy drinks. Among these negative effects are headaches, abdominal pain, chest pains, heightened anxiety, and insomnia. Other documented side effects include increased blood pressure, digestive issues, and dehydration.
- In 2011, 1,499 adolescents aged 12 to 17 visited the emergency room for an energy drink-related emergency.
- One 12 ounce can of Coca-Cola contains 34 mg of caffeine. The same size Red Bull can contains more than three times that amount with a whopping 111 mg. Not to be outdone, a 16-ounce RockStar boasts 300 mg of caffeine.
- Researchers also discovered that about 15% of teens mixed their energy drinks with alcohol, adding to the danger.

It becomes clear as the results flood in that it is more accurate to say that for teens, energy drinks neither unleash the beast nor give them wings.





## WORD

### What Does God's Word Say?

The advertising and marketing of energy drinks are so pervasive in our society, that it would be easy for one to conclude that there are no down sides to filling up our bodies with caffeine-laden and stimulant-rich beverages. So prevalent are these energy drinks in stores and gas stations, it would be easy to conclude that since everyone drinks them, that there's no danger for the Christian to also consume. But the Word of God reminds us of something different.

**Students are called by God to be good stewards of the bodies He has given them.** The God who declared after creating Adam and Eve that it was very good (Genesis 1:31), cares deeply about our physical well-being and invites us, as part of the creation mandate, to take care of His creation. This, of course, includes being good stewards of our own physical bodies. That is why God makes clear in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

**Students are called to pursue health as part of their worship of God.** The better one takes care of their physical body, the better equipped he or she is to serve the King and the Kingdom. We can bear much more fruit in His service if we are strong of body and mind. As Paul urges the Roman Christians, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).





## Conversation Starters and Questions:

Because there are no age restrictions to limit sales of energy drinks to a young person, any child or teen can purchase these products without parental knowledge. Ask any youth pastor and you will hear stories about students consuming multiple energy drinks throughout the course of a lock-in, retreat, or mission trip. You will also find out that the more one drinks, the more the cause for boasting and, often, the more elevated their status becomes among friends. So, what is a parent to do?

- Before broaching the topic with your teen, take stock of your own beverage consumption. Are you often seen by them drinking an energy drink? Is your coffee intake sending the wrong message about your own need for caffeine to make it through your day?
- Ask your child if they consume energy drinks and if so, to what extent. Have a heart-to-heart discussion about the very real dangers of someone their age including energy drinks as part of their day-to-day lives. Mention such side effects as heart and blood pressure problems, increases in anxiety, sleep problems, digestive issues, etc.
- Discuss with your child how to get better and longer sleep so they don't feel the need to reach for caffeine so quickly. Are there ways to achieve better sleep habits? Ask if being on the phone late at night is a contributor and if so, take steps together to remove that temptation.
- Suggest that they take advantage of alternative energy-boosting snacks such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains and yogurt when they feel the need for a jolt of energy.

***Finally, remember that unlike other global energy crises complicated by politics, this is one energy crisis that we can all do something about!***

*“God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.”*

*(Psalm 46:1)*



Phone: (717) 361-8429  
E-Mail: CPYU@CPYU.ORG  
Web: WWW.CPYU.ORG

Mail: PO BOX 414,  
ELIZABETHTOWN  
PA 17022, USA