

Looks, Looks, Looks

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“Let’s not get distracted by the technology, and realize that technology is showing us what’s happening in kids’ lives, and use that as an opportunity to make a difference in their lives, as opposed to thinking that if we make the technology go away we can solve problems. Because that is not at all the way this works.”

danah boyd, Microsoft principal researcher and author of *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, Fast Company, February 18, 2014



Adolescence is a time when our kids need to be encouraged and built up. But by setting standards for beauty and body image that are largely unattainable, the media can mentally, emotionally, physically, relationally, and spiritually rip our kids apart. Sadly, when we as parents allow ourselves to succumb to the same pressures and standards, we may be overtly and covertly reinforcing the media’s ridiculous and unhealthy messages.

Consider what our kids see during their several hours a day of screen time. Whether it’s the TV, movie, computer, or smartphone screen, they are bombarded with images of “beautiful people” who don’t look anything like the people we see in the mirror. And the images they see define their notion of what they should see when they look at themselves in the mirror. Sadly, these culturally-defined images become what our kids obsess over, leading them to funnel their time, money, efforts, and very hearts into achieving these unrealistic standards.

A few years ago a middle school girl came to me in tears over her looks. “I’m too short. I don’t like the color and texture of my hair. And my face looks funny.” When I asked her why she wasn’t happy with the way she looked, she began to describe each feature she’d like to change and gave me an example of someone who had the particular characteristic she coveted. Sadly, each person she mentioned was one of the “beautiful people” she had seen on a screen.

As cultural standards of beauty change, we need to monitor those standards and come to an understanding of how those standards are shaping our kids’ obsessions. . . with their own appearance, and with the appearance of others. For example, in today’s world, our girls

are feeling the pressure to pursue what’s known as the “thigh gap.” As absurd as it sounds, having a visible gap between your thighs when standing upright with both feet touching is now considered to be attractive, desirable, feminine, and the ideal body shape. It’s no wonder that disordered eating is now epidemic in both the female and male populations, both young and old alike. We are appearance obsessed.

Parents, you are the first line of defense against these and other cultural lies that run counter to the truths of God’s Word. Here are some suggestions on how to counter the pressure.

First, recognize and talk about these unrealistic standards from a biblical perspective. When you are engaging media with your kids, point out and discuss the ways in which media promotes body image standards. Counter those messages with the message that God is concerned with our hearts, not our appearance.

Second, take a long look into your own mirror. . . not to see if you measure up to culture’s body image standards, but to see if you might be obsessed with and promoting those standards yourself. Remember, your actions will speak louder than your words. And if you are spending lots of time, money, and energy looking out for your looks, your kids will get the message about what’s really important.

And third, act on any unhealthy body image manifestations your kids might have by securing competent professional help. Anorexia, bulimia, extreme dieting or exercise. . . these and other types of disordered eating are extremely serious physical, mental, and spiritual health issues that require professional counseling and help.★

TOP 16

Notable Music Streaming Platforms

as compiled from:
MediaPost.com, About.com
and TheNextWeb.com



1. Pandora
2. Spotify
3. Google Play Music All Access
4. iTunes Radio
5. Beats Music
6. Rdio
7. Songza
8. Sony Music Unlimited
9. Deezer
10. Xbox Music
11. SoundCloud
12. Grooveshark
13. Slacker Radio
14. TuneIn Radio
15. MySpace (Music)
16. Last.fm



QUICK STATS

The number of children in the U.S. ages 12 to 19 having obesity surgery has tripled in recent years.

(Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine)

Research shows that one 1 in 8 individuals show signs of problematic Internet use.

(CNS Spectrums: The International Journal of Neuropsychiatric Medicine)

FROM THE NEWS:

STEROID ABUSE

Doctor Ali Mohamadi, a medical officer for the Food and Drug Administration was recently interviewed about steroid abuse among teenagers. When asked, "What would you say to a teen you knew was tempted by steroids?", Doctor Mohamadi said this: "I would emphasize both the short and long-term potential for serious harm to their health. Rather than making you look or perform better, steroids will more likely cause unfavorable results that could affect you for life. I would also remind them that there are a number of ways to increase muscle mass and athletic performance, including a sensible regime of exercise and diet, without resorting to extreme and dangerous therapies." Doctor Mohamadi also recommends that parents talk to their kids about steroids, while looking for some of the telltale signs of steroid abuse, including mania, depression, mood swings, acne, and a surprising sudden gain in muscle mass.

TRENDS: ENERGY DRINKS

Is your teen having trouble sleeping or concentrating? The cause could be a combination of caffeine, sugar, and other stimulants – all ingredients in a growing number of drinks that promise to increase energy, boost metabolism, and improve stamina. With one can including 54 grams – or 13 teaspoons of sugar – it's no wonder that kids' minds are racing, they can't sleep, and they're having trouble paying attention. The situation only gets worse as kids look to answer their cravings for caffeine by downing more than

one of these drinks a day. While the drinks are popular among overworked and stressed out high school and college students, the packaging and marketing makes them especially appealing to younger kids. As Christian parents, we should always be concerned about the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of our kids. If you need to, set limits.



LATEST RESEARCH: DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

The adolescent years have always been a complex time for kids. Add to that the confusing barrage of our culture's new pressures, challenges, choices, and expectations, and the burden can become difficult for some to handle. Perhaps it's not surprising that one study of students in grades six, eight, and ten found that 18 percent of our kids report feeling symptoms of depression. Teen depression has reached epidemic

proportions, and a growing number of kids are at risk for being more than down in the dumps. In addition, some kids are considering suicide and making attempts to take their own lives. Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among teenagers. Depression and suicide don't play favorites. Like it or not, teens of every age, socioeconomic group, geographic area, and type of family situation are at risk.

COLLEGE TRANSITION INITIATIVE

a resource of CPYU



Combatting “Senioritis” and Preparing Students for College

by Derek Melleby



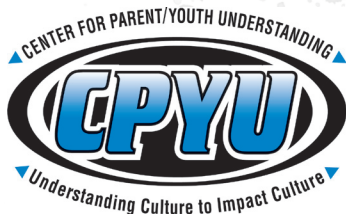
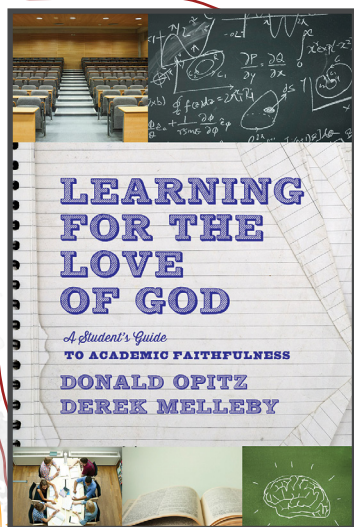
It's that time of year. “Senioritis” is kicking in at school and at youth group. Some students are ready to coast to the finish-line and make their way to the next chapter of their life story. For many graduating seniors (but not all), the “next step” will be college in the fall. According to recent research by the Fuller Youth Institute only 1 in 7 high school seniors report feeling prepared to face the challenges of college life. How can we engage seniors during the last few months of high school so that they are better prepared for the challenges ahead?

Here are three suggested activities: First, host a panel discussion with college students and have soon-to-be graduates ask them questions about how they can be better prepared. Have students ask people 20+ years removed from college this question: “If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently? Second, have an open and honest conversation with students about faith after high school. Allow students to voice their own doubts and questions. Third, help students connect with Christian community before they arrive on campus. Be sure to contact local churches and campus ministries.

Want more information about your kids and their world? Visit us on the web at WWW.CPYU.ORG or scan the code below with a smartphone to subscribe to our free weekly e-Update!



Available in the CPYU Resource Center at www.cpyuresourcecenter.org.



FROM THE WORD

We are an approval-obsessed culture. In a world that values outward appearances over and above inward character, virtue, and beauty, we live in fear of not measuring up to the standards set by our culture. Spending our lives in pursuit of the approval of other people is actually a form of idolatry. We compromise ourselves and we wind up being less than we were created to be.

God's deep desire for us is that we would pursue Him. We must find our life's purpose in knowing God, loving God, and following God. This is, in fact, what we've been made for. If we allow ourselves to be consumed with people-pleasing and approval-seeking, we are putting ourselves on a fast track to brokenness.

The best avenue to keeping our lives in balance is to fill ourselves with a knowledge of God's Word. Regularly reading and meditating on Scripture serves to change and transform us by giving us a truthful perspective from which we can look at and evaluate the messages of culture that bombard us 24/7. This is especially true when we allow God to speak to us through His Word about what He sees when He looks at us. In Isaiah 43:1 God says to us, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine." In the midst of our brokenness, the God who made us and loves us acts on that love by calling us, delivering us, and making us His own. This is what God sees when He looks at us. That is truly beautiful!

**"FEAR NOT, FOR I HAVE
REDEEMED YOU; I HAVE
SUMMONED YOU BY NAME;
YOU ARE MINE."
ISAIAH 43:1**

PARENTING RESOURCE ←

Most Christian college students separate their academic life from church attendance, Bible study, and prayer. Too often discipleship of the mind is overlooked if not ignored altogether. In the lively and enlightening book, *Learning for the Love of God: A Student's Guide to Academic Faithfulness*, Don Opitz and CPYU's Derek Melleby, two authors who are experienced in college youth ministry, show students how to be faithful in their studies, approaching education as their vocation.

This revised edition of the well-received *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness* includes updates throughout, two new substantive appendixes, personal stories from students, a new preface, and a fresh interior design. Chapters conclude with thought-provoking discussion questions.

"This book addresses numerous timely issues related to college transition... Nothing I have seen yet addresses these particular issues with the combination of theological depth and easy accessibility that marks this book." – Walt Mueller, president, CPYU

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