

TOO

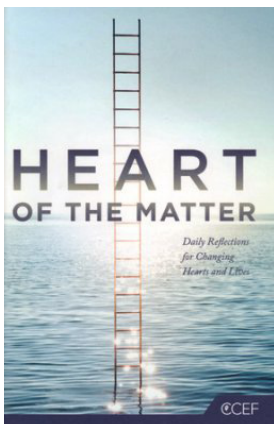
MUCH

ME

WALT MUELLER,
CPYU PresidentYOUTH CULTURE
HOT QUOTE

“God wants to make us people who are more interested in what he wants for us than what we want for ourselves. He will not relent until we are free from our slavery to an agenda of personal happiness.”

Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, in the devotional book *Heart of the Matter: Daily Reflections for Changing Hearts and Lives*, pg. 358.



“Oh, how cute!” I watched as a couple of adoring grandmotherly types stopped in the store to admire the little toddler being pushed by her mother through the aisles. Yes, the little girl was quite cute. But I’m not so sure about the graphic T-shirt she was wearing. Her T-shirt loudly proclaimed, “It’s All About Me!” As I walked away I wondered to myself, “If that’s how that mother is treating her daughter, how will that notion mis-shape and destroy her life?”

Okay, okay. It’s just a T-shirt. But its message is one that we increasingly live out in today’s world. . . and that’s not a good thing. Isn’t that what got us into trouble in the first place? Everything was perfect for our first parents as they inhabited the Garden given to them by God as a place for them to live to *His* glory. But all that goodness came undone as our first parents ushered corruption into the world by giving in to the tempter’s invitation to be like God. By making it all about themselves and bowing to the idol of “me, myself, and I,” our first parents set the course that each of us have followed.

Sadly, when we share with our kids the life-giving corrective offered in the words of Jesus when He invites us to “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24), our kids filter His words through a culture that consistently screams the exact opposite message. Marketing messages foster entitlement by encouraging our kids to satisfy their personal wants and desires without care or concern for others.

The Apostle Paul warned the young Timothy that in the “last days” (using the present tense to indicate the here and now) people would become “lovers of their own selves” rather than “lovers of God” (II Timothy 3). In today’s youth culture, we see this reality encouraged, embraced, and lived out in three ways.

First, there is the emergence of Narcissism. Rooted in the story from Greek mythology about the young self-obsessed Narcissus, Narcissism is defined as self-love, vanity, conceit, arrogance, and self-centeredness. Our children and teens are susceptible to this because of where they’re at in their development. Ego-centrism, if you remember, is a huge reality during our growing up years. This combines with the cultural push to indulge and serve self to push them away from a desire to deny self and follow Jesus.

Second, there is “expressive individualism.” This is the now commonly-held belief that a person’s highest loyalty is to himself or herself. True happiness is achieved through being true to what one feels like at any given moment in time. Consequently, there is little or no regard for Scripture, parental authority, or the call to follow Jesus.

Third, the current cultural focus on self has led to the fluidity of identity. The Scriptures teach us that freedom comes in finding one’s identity and place *in* Christ. . . which leads to a desire to conform to His will and His way. The culture encourages us to place ourselves at the center of our lives and universe. As a result, we have the freedom to choose our source of meaning, free from any outside borders, boundaries, constraints, and influences. We call this “authenticity.”

Parents, to nurture our kids in the faith requires us to know both *Word* and *world*. The *world* is pushing our kids to love themselves with reckless abandon. Sadly, that is *not* the way to life. Instead, the *Word* offers the way, the truth, and the life through self-denial. Are you pointing your kids to a life of bringing glory to God, or a life that brings glory to self? ★

Albums

Issue Date March 4, 2017

Source:
Billboard 2001. *Fifty Shades Darker*

Soundtrack by Various Artists

2. *24K Magic* by Bruno Mars3. *I Decided* by Big Sean4. *Culture* by Migos5. *Starboy* by The Weeknd6. *25* by Adele7. *Trolls Soundtrack* by Various Artists8. *Joanne* by Lady Gaga9. *Lemonade* by Beyonce10. *La La Land Soundtrack* by Various Artists

QUICK STATS

A 2013 study showed that 93.7 percent of adolescents ages 12–14 who drank alcohol got it for free the last time they drank.

(National Survey on Drug and Alcohol Use 2013)

“My friends smoke” and “I thought it was cool” are two of the main reasons those between the ages of 12 and 17 start smoking.

(Canadian Lung Association)

FROM THE NEWS:

COLLEGE LOAN SPENDING

With college debt shooting through the roof, we should be concerned about how college students are spending their college loan money. Are they spending it on tuition, or are they using it to pay for other things? A new survey has found that about half of our college students are blowing some of their school loan money on non-educational expenses. Three percent have spent loan money on alcohol and drugs. Three percent used their loan money to pay for vacations. Thirteen percent used the money to buy meals at restaurants. Fifteen percent bought clothes. And nineteen percent used loan money for car payments. The greatest share, forty-one percent, paid monthly bills, including for their smartphone plans. The cost of living in today's world is high. Going to college is expensive. But shouldn't we be teaching our kids to use their college loan money for school and not for other expenses? Parents, this a reminder to model and teach the highest principles of biblical stewardship.

TRENDS:

SELFIES, SELF-ESTEEM AND SATISFACTION

The word selfie wasn't even a part of our vocabulary fifteen years ago. Now, selfies, selfie-taking, and selfie-curating are taking up huge amounts of our time. For our kids who have been born into our self-obsessed culture, taking and posting selfies is a part of their daily routine. Researchers are now discovering that we are spending lots of time viewing other people's selfies. The result is not benign. It seems that the more a person views their own and other's selfies, the lower their level of self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Of course more research needs to be done on why this is, but we can speculate that we are basing our value

and worth on how our selfies and the online response measures up to the amount of likes and comments posted on other people's selfies. Why is it that we are so obsessed with comparing ourselves to others? Parents, we must teach our kids to live to the glory and honor of the audience of one.

That would reduce so much pressure.



LATEST RESEARCH:

DATING ABUSE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

As our children and teens integrate smartphones and other devices into their lives at younger and younger ages, we must become increasingly diligent in not only monitoring the way they use these devices, but in setting borders and boundaries. In effect, it is our

parental responsibility to both protect our kids from being harmed, and from harming others. Researchers at the University of Texas have found that fifteen percent of sixth graders report that they have perpetrated at least one form of abuse toward a dating partner through technology. Of course, the fact that sixth graders even have dating partners is cause for concern in and of itself.

The most common form of dating abuse was using a partner's social media account without their permission, and instilling fear in the partner if calls or messages were not answered and returned. Our Christian kids need to learn that they are to follow Jesus onto the digital frontier. Are you monitoring your kids and teaching them how to be digital disciples?

SEXUAL INTEGRITY
INITIATIVE

A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

www.SexualIntegrityInitiative.com

Sexual
Integrity over
Virginity

by Jason Soucinek



For too many years the church has responded to the culture's definition of sex by saying "No!" Collectively we have failed to look at God's definition of sex, which is intended to bring unity and oneness, and rather limited the conversation to a matter of, "How far is too far?"

Research has proven that when the commitment to wait is attached to something beyond themselves, like a desire to follow Christ, people are more likely to find success in waiting (and they are also more likely to recover well if things don't go as planned.)

That is why our identity in Jesus Christ is so important.

He makes us completely whole again so that we might fully love without shame. This is why virginity is not important, but living with sexual integrity (being wholly obedient to Jesus with our sexuality) is. In Christ the old has gone, the new has come, and we are a new creation created in Christ Jesus to give ourselves in love as He did. That is our identity. That is what really matters.

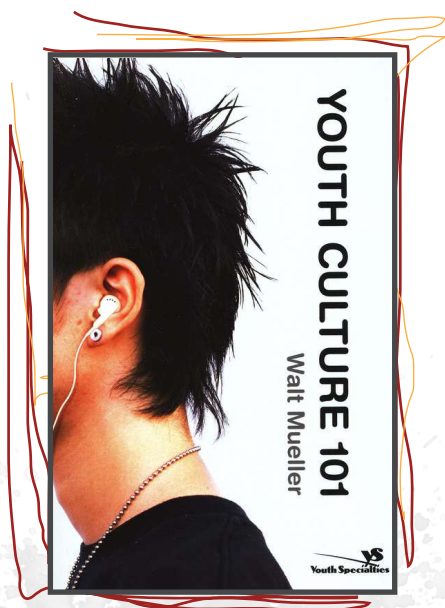
Virginity should only be the by-product of a devotion to God and His design for sex, not the identifier.

New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a 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.



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



FROM THE WORD

What is our purpose in life? We discover our true purpose and identity when we see ourselves as individuals made in the image of God for a relationship with God. The way into that relationship with God is through following Jesus. Have you ever paused to ponder the wonder of God's grace? Isn't it amazing that He has provided a way back into relationship, purpose, and identity through Jesus Christ? Following Jesus is the path to life and salvation.

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and "follow" Him. When Jesus called His first disciples to "follow" it was not a suggestion, but a command (Matthew 4:19). One Bible scholar says that the word "follow" is "the Disciple's word." It's the word that's the key to life. It's the word used to describe a soldier who follows their leader or commander. It's also the word used to describe attaching one's self to someone, or to "stick to" someone.

Parents, Jesus uses the word "follow" to summon you and your children to Himself. It involves an act of self-denial and surrender that includes both a cost and a cross. But ultimately, it is the only way to freedom in this life and the next.

**"THEN JESUS TOLD HIS
DISCIPLES, 'IF ANYONE WOULD
COME AFTER ME, LET HIM
DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP
HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME.'"**

MATTHEW 16:24 (ESV)

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Even though we once were teenagers, we'll never fully understand them. Times and cultures change and the world of today's teenagers is far different than it was for us. But there's hope - we can understand them better and minister to them more effectively and meaningfully. In *Youth Culture 101* by Walt Mueller you'll learn about media and music that matters to teenagers, their struggles with substance abuse and depression, pressures they face, teenage faith and much more. No youth worker or parent should be without this resource. Use it to stay current with the changing teenage culture and become equipped in understanding the world in which your kids live.

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