

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

Kids, TV, and Transgender

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“We already give people ways to tell us that they would rather not see ads based on their interests or on their activities on other websites and apps, such as through controls within our ad settings. But we’ve heard from youth advocates that young people may not be well equipped to make these decisions. We agree with them, which is why we’re taking a more precautionary approach in how advertisers can reach young people with ads.”

Facebook, in a statement announcing a new policy to restrict ads targeting teens. The new policy prohibits ad targeting based on interests and online activity, but still allows targeting based on age, gender and location. Facebook Newsroom, July 27, 2021.

facebook

How do you explain transgender to a 7-year-old... or a 6-year-old for that matter? That was my task last month when two of my grandsons came to me to ask about an announcement made regarding one of their favorite TV shows. And like it or not, today’s rapidly-changing culture is making it necessary for us to find ways to explain complex things and communicate truth to kids at younger-and-younger ages. Reality is, I’m still trying to wrap my head around the transgender ideology myself. I can’t imagine how difficult it is for little kids to understand! But the truth is that we can’t avoid a conversation the culture is already having with our kids of all ages. We must remember that whoever engages them in the conversation first will set the bar for beliefs and behaviors by defining what is *normal* when it comes to matters of gender.

So, what about that TV show for kids, Nickelodeon’s *Danger Force*? One of Nickelodeon’s most successful shows, *Danger Force*, has been running for a bit over a year. The live action comedy for kids is about a group of young super heroes-in-training. Back in June, new episodes in the *Danger Force* series premiered, featuring for the very first time on Nickelodeon, a transgendered teenaged actor in a live-action series. Thirteen-year-old Sasha A. Cohen, born biologically female and now identifying as male, secured the spot after winning a competition started by Michael D. Cohen (no relation), also transgendered, who has a regular part playing Schwoz on the *Danger Force* series.

For those who hold to an historically orthodox biblical view of God’s design for sexuality and gender, this is a teachable moment. As you talk to the kids you know and love... and, as you engage in self-examination... let me offer three suggestions on how to respond.

First, we must always remember that all human beings have been made by God and in the image of God. Dignity, value, and worth mark *all* humanity. Our tendency has been to look at others who believe and behave differently from ourselves and see them as somehow *less than*. To do so gets us off the hook from engaging, loving, and treating others with the dignity and respect God demands and they deserve. Friends, hating

others is not an option for followers of Jesus. Sadly, it has too often been a mark on the church as we engage with the watching world. Take your children into the first two chapters of Genesis to clearly see that the image of God is stamped on and present in all humanity.

Second, go to Genesis chapter 3 to read and think about the fall of humanity into sin. Everything in God’s good creation has been polluted by sin. The sin of our first parents is the same sin in which we engage today. It is the sin of pride. We believe that we know better than God. We want to be like God. In fact, we want to be God. We want to rule our own lives, to define ourselves however we wish, and to determine based on feelings/intuition who we are and who we will be. The tempter is continually fueling our doubts regarding God’s order, design, will, and way as he asks us – as he did our first parents – “Did God really say...?” It is for this reason that we are all... ALL... broken in some way regarding our sexuality and gender. Our desires are disordered. For us to label the sin of others – regardless of what those sins are – as worse than any of our own sins is horribly wrong. In fact, to do so is to sin.

Finally, we need to embrace God’s good order and design for our sexuality and gender. The Creation account tells us that God made us male and female (Genesis 1 and 2). God’s design is a gender binary, and He has made us to live into the biological sex He gifted to each one of us. God’s creational intent for us is what we are called to live into. Jesus affirmed this in Matthew 19:4. Following Jesus always requires a denial of self... which is a denial of our pride and disordered selves in any and every area of our lives, including matters of gender and sexuality. To love fully, we must be willing to tell the truth, even if that goes against cultural standards. To be loved fully, we must be willing to be told the truth.

I told my grandkids these three truths in what I hope was an age-appropriate manner. My conversation with my grandkids about *Danger Force* reminds us that these are such complex, tender, and sensitive issues. But they are not to be avoided. They are to be carefully navigated with grace, truth, gentleness, and concern. ★

Video Games to Buy Next

Console and PC
Week ended July 24, 2021
Source:
Nielsen



1. **FIFA 22**

2. **Far Cry 6**

3. **Playerunknown's**

Battlegrounds

4. **FIFA 21**

5. **Halo: Infinite**

6. **Battlefield 2042**

7. **Fortnite**

8. **Resident Evil: Village**

9. **Minecraft**

10. **Grand Theft Auto V**



QUICK STATS

57% of American parents are confident their kid has some knowledge about how to best manage their collegiate budget.

On average, parents expect the full cost of college to be above \$26,000 annually.

(College Ave Student Loans/OnePoll)

In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.

(Gallup)

FROM THE NEWS:

SCHOOL SPORTS AND TRANSGENDER

With the school year set to begin once again, there's a good chance that your local school district will soon have to navigate the same difficult issue some districts local to us have had to navigate over the course of the last few months. What will you do when a male athlete decides to identify and transition to female, and then join a girls' sports team? While there are many variables at work here, two of the issues relate to fairness and to privacy. What happens when a male athlete transitions and then dominates the field? And how will our girls navigate issues related to locker room and bathroom safety and privacy? Now is the time to determine policies related to this trend. Current Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona is on record as telling ESPN that transgender girls have a right to compete, and he suggested that the current administration will step in to protect these student's civil rights if states choose not to. Let's pray and seek God's wisdom on how to best respond to his glory.

TRENDS:

INCLUSIVITY EDUCATION AND
GOD'S DESIGN

It's important to pay attention to youth culture stories that leave us scratching our heads while wondering if what we're reading is actually true. Knowing the emerging trends allows us to address them from a Christian perspective before they move into the mainstream. One such story involves reports that a private school in Manhattan is making a deliberate effort to teach their students to use inclusive language as part of their mission of inclusivity. The Grace Church K-12 School is encouraging students to stop using the terms *Dad*, *Mom*, and *Parents* because the words make assumptions about kids' home lives. Among the guidelines in the school's inclusive language guide is this:

"If someone says a boy can't marry a boy or a girl can't marry a girl, you should respond with 'People can love and commit to whomever they please. It's their choice who they marry.'" Parents, ideas and words matter. Be sure to teach your kids God's good design for all things.



LATEST RESEARCH:

READING THE BIBLE

Researchers at the Barna Group recently worked with the team at the American Bible Society to release their *State of the Bible 2021* report. Their research tracked how the population perceives and

engages the Bible. One encouraging finding is that one in six adults in the United States is still reading the Bible most days during the week. While it might seem strange to call the fact that 16% of U.S. adults reads the Bible on most days encouraging, you have to realize that this was an increase from the 12% who did the same in 2020. We should hope and pray that this trend will continue to move upward. One way to

ensure that this will happen is to take seriously our responsibility to nurture our kids into daily bible reading through our parenting and our youth ministries. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God has made us for himself. We can only know and follow him as we know and obey his Word.

CPYU'S
DIGITAL
KIDS
INITIATIVEKids, Screens,
and Declining
Eyesight

by Walt Mueller



As we continue to come out of the difficult months of the pandemic, researchers are learning more and more about the fallout of Covid-19. An international team of researchers from the United States and China have found that the rates of myopia, or near-sightedness, among young children were three times higher during the pandemic than they were during the previous five years. This uptick among children ages six to eight is believed to be caused by children spending less time outdoors and more time in front of digital screens. This finding is consistent with pre-pandemic research that connected the use of digital screens with a doubling rate of teens needing glasses between 2012 and 2018.

Parents, God has blessed us with the gift of our eyes and our eyesight. All of us know that as we age, our eyesight tends to decline. Our role is to help our kids steward the gift of their eyesight by encouraging healthy habits. One good step in that direction is to limit their screen time.

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 134 titled
"Integration of Faith and
Sport" with Tim Sceggel

FROM THE WORD

"All you have to do is name it and claim it!" That's what a Christian friend tried to convince me about prayer back during my college days. To him, prayer was the way to summon God as a kind of cosmic genie who exists only to serve us by granting our every wish. Not only did my friend have a horribly skewed understanding of God, but he had no idea about the nature of prayer. In fact, I remember my friend redacting the words of I John 5:14 to this: "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything he hears us."

**"AND THIS IS THE
CONFIDENCE THAT
WE HAVE TOWARD
HIM, THAT IF WE
ASK ANYTHING
ACCORDING TO HIS
WILL HE HEARS US."**

I JOHN 5:14

The reality is that our prayers need to be asked "according to his will", which is the very thing my friend was forgetting. He was ignoring the fact that as we pray, we don't somehow magically change God's mind. Rather, it is through prayer that God changes us! The theologian J.I. Packer writes, "The aim of prayer is not to force God's hand or make him do our will against his own, but to deepen our knowledge of him and our fellowship with him through contemplating his glory, confessing our dependence and need, and consciously embracing his goals. Our asking must therefore be according to God's will."

As parents, this is a reality that should not only guide the way in which we pray, but we should teach our children to do the same. To pray according to God's will means that our lives will be centered on knowing his will. To do so, we must be regularly engaged in learning more about God's heart, will, and way through our reading and meditating upon Scripture. If we are praying according to what Scripture says pleases God, then we are praying according to his will. Know Scripture. Pray Scripture. Then watch as God listens! You will begin to see that God gives you what you need, rather than what you think you want.

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Did you know that CPYU offers devotionals for families? We've been given a great opportunity to nurture our children and teens in the faith! Our *Family TableTalk* devotionals are designed to provide your family with tools to help you dig deeper into and apply God's word. We've recruited a team of gifted thinkers and writers to create several months worth of *Family TableTalk* daily devotional guides. The guides give you a Scripture passage to read together at the dinner table, some commentary on the passage to spark your thinking, some questions to help you apply and discuss what you've read, and a short prayer to pray together. These *Family TableTalk* devotional guides are all free.

Visit www.cpyu.org/ftt to access all of the guides in a downloadable format.

Scan the QR Code here to access a *Family TableTalk* titled "God On Gender." It would be a great tool to use with your family as a follow-up to all of the gender related news reported in this month's issue.



Family TableTalk

Conversation 98

God On Gender

read

Genesis 1:27-31; Matthew 23:6

think

While the world around us can get the gender message right from time to time, the culture is taking quickly into accepting and teaching a gender message that isn't biblical. More and more people are choosing to believe that it is ok and normal to adopt a gender identity based on how they feel inside. You could feel like you are male, female, some combination of both, or actually neither. For some, gender falls on a spectrum that can even change from time to time. People now believe that your gender identity has nothing to do with the sexual organs with which you were born. Your gender is not biologically determined. But is this really true?

As followers of Jesus, we must go to and trust God's Word as the scripture that shows truth on our understanding of gender. God, the Creator of all things, pronounced everything He created as "good." But when He finished creating humans He said "very good." And what He pronounced as "very good" was male and female. The binary genders He designed and designed... male and female only, that are both fully human and equal in dignity and value. This is the very thing we are supposed to be. Jesus affirms this in Matthew 23:6 when He says, "I have not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female?"

God desires that we never allow our feelings to dictate and misshape our understanding of truth. Rather, we need to submit our feelings and desires to God's Word. So, the wonder of this world, is on a mission to divert us from hearing God's Word and being God's way. Just like he did with our first parents (see Genesis 3:7), he who is continually in our ears the double ending question, "Did God really say..."? Don't even forget, God in His goodness has created and given us both our gender, which is indicated by our anatomy, either male or female.

apply

- What beliefs do you hold regarding gender? Are your beliefs more reflective of the culture's message on gender, or God's message on gender? How have you come to your conclusions?
- What movies, music, advertising, books, and TV have you encountered that shape people's views on gender these days?
- How would you communicate God's message on gender to a friend who believes differently, or who is questioning their own gender identity?

pray

Almighty God, loving Creator of all things, thank you for caring enough for me to make me who you've made me to be. Help me to hear and live into your will and way for gender. Give me the ability to discern truth from error and to trust your plan for my gender. Enable me to live boldly to your glory. Amen.

by Walt Mueller

Walt Mueller is the President of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding. He serves with CPYU, podcasts, and other resources, with a passion.

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