

Helping parents understand teenagers and their world

LESSONS FROM A TIKTOK CELEB

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“When they turn 18, there will be little I can do to stop them. But they would be going into the business with their eyes opened by me, knowing that it is a high-risk environment, knowing that sexual predators to the fashion industry are like bees to a honeypot. While I have it in my power to protect them, it will be a ‘no’, ‘no’ and another emphatic ‘no’ to the ugly business of modelling.”

Clare Boyd, former professional model, speaking about her experience in modeling and whether or not she would allow her daughters to get into modeling, *The Daily Mail*, February 14, 2021.



Chances are, few of our kids knew the name Addison Rae Easterling just 19 months ago. But now, less than two years later, anyone with any youth culture awareness at all knows that this 20-year-old TikTok celebrity with 70 million followers and counting, along with 5 billion views, is now an influencer and popular role model for children and teens.

A competitive dancer who started uploading her dance videos to the short-form TikTok video app back in the summer of 2019, she soon dropped out of college as her following grew and she decided to focus full-time on growing her cross-platform social media presence. Now, she’s making millions of dollars through endorsement deals and merchandising. Just last month, she graced the cover of *Glamour* magazine, and now her acting career is taking off.

Today’s social media-saturated world has made it possible for any kid – or adult – with a smartphone to devote time and energy to the pursuit of online celebrity status. More and more chase the dream of becoming the next Addison Rae. But they don’t realize that once one “successfully” grabs the brass-ring of a following, fame, and fortune, the empty God-shaped hole they thought such status would fill never fills up at all.

A recent Addison Rae interview with yahoo!life features this headline, “Addison Rae reveals mental toll of having 70 million TikTok followers: ‘A lot of it has to do with body image.’” While celebrity-inspiring kids might ignore or write off the disturbing realities that occasioned the headline, we should *all* – young and old alike – be paying attention. Read further in the interview and you’ll find that Addison Rae has sought the help of a therapist to help her navigate her own *continued* issues with body image, identity, comparison, and self-worth. It seems like her gnawing emptiness isn’t going away.

Among other issues raised by Addison Rae’s “success”, we need to be thinking and talking

about how technology and social media are controlling and shaping (mis-shaping) us. . . and what we can do to appropriately use the good gifts of technology. In effect, how we can take control of social media rather than giving it permission to take control of us?

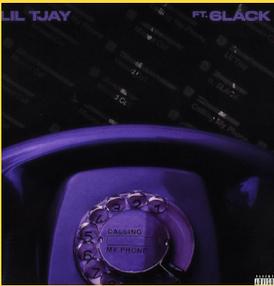
Perhaps one of the greatest battles we and our kids face each and every day of our lives is the battle over where to place and find our identity. And while we dabble endlessly in trying on identity after identity in an effort to emerge from the “fitting room” and be embraced by affirming/accepting eyes, there is, ultimately, only one place to find that for which we were created. It’s through a relationship with Jesus Christ, the only One who can fill the God-shaped vacuum.

In Paul Tripp’s devotional book, *New Morning Mercies*, I found this little poem that’s simply titled, “Identity.” I encourage you to read it, ponder it, and have your kids do the same.

*No need to search for myself.
No need to grasp for meaning
for my life
or purpose
for what I do.
No need to hope for inner peace,
that sense of well-being
for which every heart longs.
No need to hope that someone or something
will make me happy
or give me joy.
I no longer need any
of these things because
grace
has connected me to you
and you have named me
your child. ✨*

Billboard Hot 100

Source:
Billboard.com
Week of February 27, 2021



1. *Drivers License* by Olivia

Rodrigo

2. *34+35* by Ariana Grande

3. *Calling My Phone* by Lil Tjay

Featuring 6LACK

4. *Blinding Lights* by The Weeknd

5. *Up* by Cardi B

6. *Save Your Tears* by The Weeknd

7. *Mood* by 24kGoldn Featuring

iann dior

8. *Go Crazy* by Chris Brown &

Young Thug

9. *Levitating* by Dua Lipa Featuring

DaBaby

10. *Positions* by Ariana Grande



QUICK STATS

Teen spending in 2020 dropped 9% from the previous year. The average teen spent a little over \$2000 in 2020. The decrease is believed to be because of the pandemic.

(Piper Sandler)

88% of teens growing up in evangelical homes say they enjoy religious activities with their families. 55% read the Bible together, 80% say grace at family meal-times, and 88% spend time talking about faith.

(Pew Research Center)

FROM THE NEWS:

JOJO SIWA, SEXUALITY, & INFLUENCE

Jojo Siwa is a seventeen-year-old who is having a deep and lasting impact on our kids. She first came to prominence back in 2013 when she appeared as a very young contestant on the reality show, *Abby's Ultimate Dance Competition*. In 2015 her fame started to build when she was a regular on the reality TV series *Dance Moms*. She's released several non-album singles that have charted, and won a host of Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Awards, including Favorite Viral Music Star, Favorite Musical YouTube Creator, and Favorite Social Music Star. JoJo Siwa is an influencer, as evidenced by her over 12 million young YouTube followers. It's not surprising that she was named as one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in 2020. So what's the big deal? Back in January, she came out to her young fans, revealing she has a girlfriend. Parents, whoever speaks first to your kids about sexuality, defines their understanding of normal and right. Teach them God's good design.

TRENDS: DOOMSCROLLING

Way back in the 1970s media critic George Gerbner coined the term mean-world syndrome. In his research, Gerbner was finding that viewers who were exposed to a growing amount of violent television content were more apt to experience an increased level of anxiety, stress, fear, and pessimism in response to perceived threats. In other words, what they were watching on TV, both fictional content and news reports, created a sense that the world was far more dangerous than it actually was, thus leading those viewers to live in fear. Since then, developmental experts have voiced concerns about how mean-world syndrome is effecting kids. In today's world, 24/7 access to online content has created a phenomenon known as doomscrolling or doomsurfing. Smartphone addicted kids and adults scroll through an almost endless stream of negative perspective shaping online content. The antidote? Lets get our kids to shut down and spend more time in the good news of God's word.



LATEST RESEARCH: MUSIC OF OUR TEEN YEARS

Relatively speaking, it wasn't too long ago that there were only two ways to hear your favorite songs. One was to buy the record and play it over and over again. The other was to wait until the DJ played the record on your favorite radio station. In today's world, those from previous generations can listen to their favorite songs from their own adolescence on demand, and it usually brings a smile to their faces as they think back. The findings of a new study explain why we love to find and stream the music from our teenage years. It appears that there is what is called a musical reminiscence bump that leads people to disproportionately recall memories from when they were 10 to 30 years-old. And, because we experience more unique self-definition experiences during this period of life, the music we listen to becomes closely entangled with those memories. What this means is that the music we listen to during our younger years sticks with us for life. Parents, introduce your kids to good music as a way of making lifetime memories.



**SEXUAL INTEGRITY
INITIATIVE**
A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria

by Walt Mueller



I recently read Abigail Shrier's book, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*. It's a book I highly recommend. In the book, Shrier describes the current social contagion sweeping through the population of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls that's been labeled Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria. Simply stated, girls without any prior history of questioning their biological gender, are being influenced to change their gender through changing dress and outward appearance, through puberty blocking drugs, through hormone therapy, and through radical gender reassignment surgery. What's even worse is this: Shrier tells how physicians, counselors, schools, and parents are trusting the feelings of their kids and jumping on board to affirm this nonsense. Parents, you are the parent for a reason. Don't go along with the current cultural stupidity that encourages everyone to embrace a "you be you" mindset. Teach and even enforce God's glorious design for gender.

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 124:
“Read Well, Think Well,
Become Better Christians”
with Karen Swallow Prior

FROM THE WORD

The Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of final sermons preached by Moses to the people of Israel shortly before his death. Moses instructs the Israelites to be faithful and obedient to God after he dies and as they enter the Promised Land. Moses recounts the history of God’s faithfulness to the people. He gives them instructions to follow in the future. And, he reiterates the content of God’s statutes and rules for His covenant people, including a restatement of the Ten Commandments.

Just before Moses restates the Ten Commandments, he reminds the people of the fear they had when God gave the Law, speaking with them out of the fire. Consequently, God used Moses as a mediator between Himself and the people, a function Moses filled on many occasions.

Take a minute and think about these words of Moses in Deuteronomy 5:5: “. . . I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord.” The same way that Moses saw his function as one communicating the word of the Lord from the Lord to the people, so also are parents called to serve as communicators of

God’s Word to our children. This is what it means to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We must listen to God and know His word in increased measure as time goes on. And, we must consistently mediate and proclaim that word to our kids as they grow up in the midst of a world that would rather have them listen to and follow anything other than God’s voice and His word.

**“THE LORD SPOKE WITH
YOU FACE TO FACE AT THE
MOUNTAIN, OUT OF THE MIDST
OF THE FIRE, WHILE I STOOD
BETWEEN THE LORD AND YOU
AT THAT TIME, TO DECLARE TO
YOU THE WORD OF THE LORD.”
DEUTERONOMY 5:4&5**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and youth pastors. What do they all have in common? An opportune placement to be at the front lines of youth formation. In the midst of rapid growth and change, youth are in a pivotal season. While they can most often be influenced by competing cultural narratives around them, youth pastors are similarly placed as a voice above all the clicks, shares, and noise that fills teenagers’ days and weeks.

Authors of *Fertile Ground: Faith and Work (Field Guide) For Youth Pastors*, edited by Luke Bobo, break down the five “hats” youth pastors wear as they disciple students to better integrate their faith with all of life, including work. Youth pastors serve as theologian, guidance counselor, psychologist, liturgist, and cultural facilitator, and each of these roles gives them a unique lens to navigate the trenches of youth culture, including how to help students connect faith and work both within the classroom and once they enter the workforce.

We believe work needs a new story, even for teenagers. *Fertile Ground* will help you lead and care for the teenagers in your congregation as they figure out who they’re becoming.

**Fertile
Ground:
Faith and
Work**

(FIELD GUIDE)

**For Youth
Pastors**

Edited by Luke Bobo



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