

Your Kids & Cohabitation

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

“I had never posted a photo of my son, and I decided to post a shot of the back of his head, and almost as soon as I’d done it, I wished that I hadn’t. I felt like I had broken some kind of a seal in inviting people into my life.”

Anne Hathaway, discussing how she felt after posting a photo of her son on Instagram, in an interview for Jezebel’s The Muse, April 3, 2017.



My parents uttered many repetitive prayers on my behalf during my younger years. One of them sticks out as a prayer I’ve adopted as I’ve prayed for my own children: “May they grow up to love Jesus and marry someone who loves Jesus too.” Embedded in that prayer are three desires that my parents had for me. First, that I would grow up! I chuckle about that now. Second, that I would enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. And third, that I would be “equally yoked” by marrying someone who shares my love for Jesus. I love this prayer.

In today’s world, there are (just like in year’s past) many cultural beliefs that pose challenges which necessitate this prayer for our children. But there’s one particular cultural belief and behavior that undermines the God-ordained institution of marriage in today’s world. Cohabitation, or choosing to live together while unmarried, is increasingly seen as a normal and perhaps even expected part of life. First legalized in the United States in 1970, cohabitation was happening, but not all that often. In fact, in 1970 around one million people were cohabitating here in this country. Now, the most recent statistics tell us that around 18 million individuals are living together in an unmarried relationship. The majority of young twenty-somethings will live with a romantic partner at least once, and more than half of all marriages are preceded by cohabitation.

When we look around, it’s easy to believe that what’s been embraced by the majority is normal and right. Our vulnerable and impressionable children grow up believing that living together is simply one of the next steps after high school graduation and before marriage. . . if marriage is even still an option. Numerous justifications for living together are given, including pooling finances, fear of marriage, testing out a relationship (Are we compatible?), and a good way to prevent a divorce once married.

As Christian parents, we are called to nurture our children in the faith. Our desire should be to see them pursue and please God through their beliefs and behaviors. Consequently, we should be training them from a young age to embrace the glorious gift of a biblical marriage, while seeing the downside of living outside of God’s plan. What is it that we must be teaching our kids to push back on the decline of marriage and the rise of cohabitation?

First, we must promote God’s plan and purpose for marriage. God created marriage to be the richest, most intimate, and unique relationship that can be shared by a man and a woman. Marriage blesses them, their children, and all of society. As Paul states in Ephesians 5:21-33, marriage is a deep and wonderful mystery that points to Christ and his commitment to the church. Love, trust, and security deepen as a *committed* marriage unfolds and grows over time.

Second, we must share the shortcomings of cohabitation. Recent research tells us that just over 50% of cohabitating couples ever get married. Cohabitation is nowhere near as stable as marriage. Cohabitating couples who marry tend to divorce more and divorce earlier. Cohabitating couples who have children don’t offer the security of stability to their children, as they are two-times more likely to break up by the time a child reaches the age of 12. And, children who grow up in cohabitating situations are more likely to engage in a host of risky behaviors, including growing up with a diminished view of marriage.

God desires that his children will flourish. Cohabitation undermines the realization of our full freedom and humanity.★

That Happen in a Minute on the Internet

Based on 2016 statistics
Source:
Visual Capitalist



1. 2.4 Million Search Queries on Google
2. 2.78 Million Video Views on YouTube
3. 700,000+ Facebook Logins
4. 150 Million Emails Sent
5. 20.8 Million Messages Sent via WhatsApp
6. 527,000+ Photos Shared on Snapchat
7. 972,000+ Swipes on Tinder
8. 347,000+ Tweets on Twitter
9. \$200,000+ Sales on Amazon
10. 38,000+ Posts to Instagram



QUICK STATS

e-Cigarette use among high school students has increased 900% from 2011 to 2015.

(U.S. Surgeon General Report)

Only about 7% of high school students said they used indoor tanning in 2015, down from almost 16% of students in 2009.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

FROM THE NEWS:

MARIJUANA AND ANXIETY

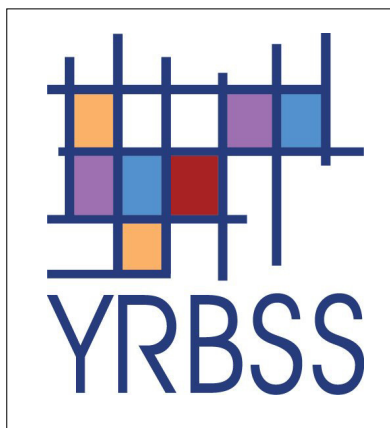
Anxiety has reached epidemic proportions among our children, teens, and young adults.

Late last year, *Time* magazine ran a cover story addressing the issue. It was titled, "Anxiety, Depression, and the Modern Adolescent." It's now reported that anxiety is the number one health concern being treated by healthcare centers on our college campuses. Our kids are stressing out to the breaking point. Of course, we need to address the causes of anxiety, do what we can to relieve it, and seek Scriptural guidance on the issue. We must also address the faulty coping mechanisms kids are choosing to engage in an effort to relieve stress. New research from Canada shows that teens are now turning to marijuana to relieve stress. Many of these youthful users think that marijuana is not dangerous or addictive. Jesus invites all of us to lay our burdens on him. He tells us to not be anxious about anything. Let's point our kids to the one true and lasting source of relief, Jesus Christ.

TRENDS: MULTIPLE DATING PARTNERS

As adults, we become aware of the radical nature of youth culture change when we talk to our kids about what we used to call dating. In the old days, if you were dating, you were dating someone. And if you started to date more than one person at a time, that was a sneaky trick known as cheating.

A new study from Australia shows just how much the nature of dating has changed, which is a reality you may have already discovered through a conversation with a young person you know. The new study from eHarmony says that it's now normal to date six people at once. The results show that people are hesitant to commit to one person. Instead, people want to keep their dating options open. Experts are saying that dating apps might be what's behind this trend, as potential love interests are only a swipe or two away. Parents, we need to teach our kids that biblically, love is commitment, and that commitment is necessary for a God-honoring relationship.



LATEST RESEARCH:

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEILLANCE

The pressures, problems, challenges, and choices facing our kids are so vast, that our kids need us to help them navigate the potential

difficulties of life. In our diligence, it's important to realize that kids who make poor choices in one area of their lives, are statistically more prone to make poor choices in other areas of their lives. If they are having trouble in one area of life, we need to become more alert by looking to see if there might be trouble in another area. For example, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System tells us that high school students who attempt to control their weight by engaging in unhealthy behaviors like fasting, purging, or using diet aids, are also more likely to have substance abuse problems. In other words,

the discovery of one problem, might indicate a variety of additional problems. God has stewarded us with our children. Good stewardship includes diligence.

CPYU'S DIGITAL KIDS INITIATIVE

www.DigitalKidsInitiative.com

Hacking Into Your Kid's Brain

by Walt Mueller



Last month, *60 Minutes* ran a story on what's become known as "brain hacking." In an interview with former Google product manager Tristan Harris, the show pulled back the curtain on how Silicon Valley programmers are engineering smartphones, apps, and social media to get users addicted. In other words, that need we feel to constantly be checking our devices didn't just happen by chance. Rather, our devices have been engineered to trigger neurological and bio-chemical responses that make us feel this need. Harris says, "They (developers and programmers) want you to use it in particular ways and for long periods of time. Because that's how they make their money."

Just as the constant use of our devices can rewire our brains and cause electronic addiction, changing one's habits can undo these addictions, leading to decreased anxiety and a more stewardly use of our time.

Because our children and teens are particularly vulnerable to these strategies, we must run interference by setting borders and boundaries on *what, when, and how often* they engage with their devices. Offer alternative activities that get them to see the great benefits of face-to-face human interaction.

New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters

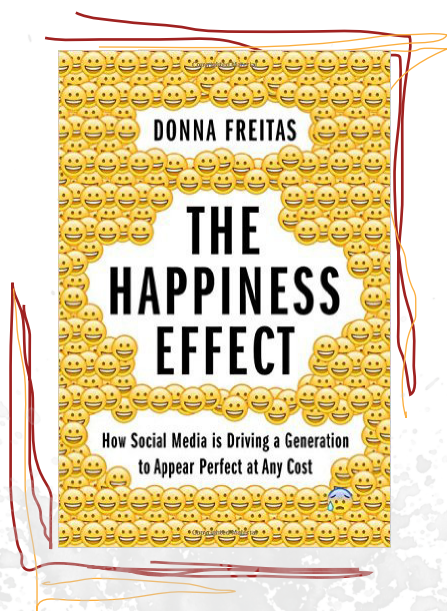
is a long-format podcast from CPYU.

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.

Be sure to check out
Episode 36 for a discussion
on the Trending Netflix
series "13 Reasons Why."



FROM THE WORD

Who is building your house? It's a good question to ask in our performance-based and status-oriented world. It's important that we take stock of how often we take control of the building process, causing us to parent in ways that manipulate our kids to measure up to societal standards rather than the standards God has set out so clearly in His Word. How often do we fall into the trap of endeavoring to make ourselves, our kids, and our parenting look good to others, rather than being pleasing to God?

The first full sentence of Psalm 127 never says that raising kids *isn't* hard work. Rather, it's the practice of parenting outside of God's will, way and blessing that winds up being fruitless. This even applies to Christian parents who so earnestly want to see their kids live in faithfulness to Christ, but who do so by working to bring about behavioral conformity that appears good on the outside, rather than waiting on God's Spirit to bring about deep-seated life-giving heart-change.

In his *Everyday Prayers*, Scotty Smith writes these words that we should all pray for ourselves: "You've rescued me from parental 'laboring in vain' – assuming a burden you never intended parents to bear. Father, only you can reveal the glory and grace of Jesus to our children. Only you can give *anyone* a new heart. Oh, the arrogant pride of thinking that by my 'good parenting' I can take credit for what you alone have graciously done in the lives of my children."

**"UNLESS THE LORD
BUILDS THE HOUSE,
THOSE WHO BUILD IT
LABOR IN VAIN."
PSALM 127:1**

HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

Sexting. Cyberbullying. Narcissism. Social media has become the dominant force in young people's lives, and each day seems to bring another shocking tale of private pictures getting into the wrong hands, or a lament that young people feel compelled to share their each and every thought with the entire world. Have smartphones and social media created a generation of self-obsessed egomaniacs?

Absolutely not, Donna Freitas argues in *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost*. And, she says, these alarmist fears are drawing attention away from the real issues that young adults are facing.

Drawing on a large-scale survey and interviews with students on thirteen college campuses, Freitas finds that what young people are overwhelmingly concerned with—what they really want to talk about—is happiness. They face enormous pressure to look perfect online—not just happy, but blissful, ecstatic, and fabulously successful. Unable to achieve this impossible standard, they are anxious about letting the less-than-perfect parts of themselves become public. Far from wanting to share everything, they are brutally selective when it comes to curating their personal profiles, and worry obsessively that they might unwittingly post something that could come back to haunt them later in life.

The Happiness Effect is an eye-opening window into their first-hand experiences of social media and its impact on them.

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PHONE: (717) 361-8429 FAX: (717) 361-8964 EMAIL: CPYU@CPYU.ORG
PO BOX 414, ELIZABETHTOWN, PA 17022 | WWW.CPYU.ORG