



WHO'S RAISING THE KIDS?

Up until a little over a month ago, the only thing I knew about popular make-up and skin-care retailer Sephora, was what it was like to stand *outside* of the store to wait for my wife. Some of you dads know what I'm talking about! But a troubling story that hit the news late in January caught my attention, telling me not only what's recently been going on *inside* Sephora stores, but what's been happening in the lives of our kids as a result of growing up in today's world.

The snow-balling number of stories that caught my eye all feature headlines including words like "Sephora Kids", "Sephora Tweens," and "Sephora Babies." Why is this big news? It seems that thanks to social media influencers and how social media trends spread virally, Sephora stores everywhere are being stormed by groups of tween girls, typically ages nine to thirteen, showing up after school and wreaking havoc.

Sephora employees report that these girls show up and mix and apply product from testers, open and destroy sealed product, apply dangerous chemically-infused products meant only for adult-skin on their delicate skin, and generally leave the store a mess. While doing this, they take and post pictures and videos of themselves hoping to build their own social media following, which only serves to feed the

viral "Sephora Tween" frenzy among their same-aged peers. In addition, they are rude to other customers, demanding of store employees, and are reported at times to use disrespectful and profane language to both. Store employees who have to deal with these "Sephora Tweens" report that these kids are leaving a trail of destruction and disarray. One 23-year-old Sephora employee describes what's happening as a "free-for-all."

To be honest, these reports are saddening, but not surprising. Those who have been tracking the changes in our cultural setting for the last fifty-years-or-so know that a perfect storm of cultural forces would some day lead to expressions of anarchy among the young. There's the deterioration of marriage as an institution. More and more marriages have been marked by growing weakness and a failure to function properly as a guiding and nurturing force in kids' lives. There's the "you do you" philosophy of life that has trained our kids to follow their feelings, leading them to make choices that aren't based on a shared system of morality, but on expressing and acting on "whatever I feel like doing" in the moment. More and more kids are committed to building their own social media presence and following, hoping to become the next "celebrity influencer", just like those high-profile pied

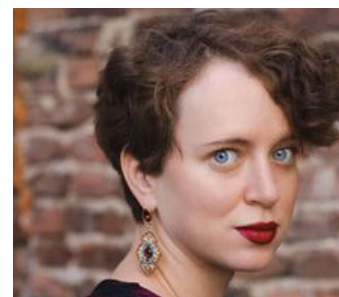
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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Tara Isabella Burton, in *Self-Made: Creating our Identities from Da Vinci to the Kardashians*.

"Our economic, cultural, and personal lives are suffused with the notion that we can and should transform ourselves into modern-day deities, simultaneously living works of art to be admired by others and ingeniously productive economic machines."



WILL I CATECHIZE MY KIDS?

OR WILL I LEAVE THAT TASK TO SOMEONE ELSE?



pipers who have influenced them to join this craze. In addition, parents who cater to their child's every desire have created a growing sense of entitlement. That might explain not only the absence of parental supervision or intervention in the Sephora stores, but also the presence of kids entrusted to carry a parent's credit card in order to ring up Sephora product purchases that reach into the hundreds of dollars. And last but not least, there's the body image and appearance pressure that's running wild in our culture, leading even the youngest of our girls to look for identity in their outward appearance and what they look like to others. All-in-all, the "Sephora Tween" craze is a symptom of deeper cultural issues.

The good news is that while our kids *can* and *will* be influenced negatively by what they see and hear on social media, they are *more greatly* influenced by us as parents when we choose to exercise our God-given responsibility to guide them through life according to His will and His way. With the culture now offering and effectively working to catechize our kids 24/7, we need to take seriously the directives given to us in Deuteronomy 6:4-9: *"Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on*

your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Parents, nurturing your children and teens in the faith is a 24/7 calling and endeavor.

In essence, "catechesis happens." The question we must ask ourselves is this: Will I catechize my kids? Or will I leave that task to someone else? Both the Lord *and* the wrecker of this world want to rule in the hearts and minds of our kids. The greatest instruments in the enemy's hands are the fallen messages blasted out through culture. He wants to lead our kids to death. God wants to lead our kids to life. The greatest instruments in God's hands, those that He uses to accomplish His purposes, are fathers and mothers focused on no greater parenting pursuit than to point their kids to life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Parents, establish your nurturing presence and influence by building your marriage and family according to God's good design. Teach your kids that "you do you" is a path to sure destruction. Lead them into an understanding of what it means to live according to God's will and way. Teach them to focus their lives on glorifying God rather than themselves. Don't make life easy for them. And help them find their true identity in who they are as God's unique image-bearers and as adopted sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

KIDS AND WEIGHT LOSS PRODUCTS

For our kids, especially our girls, there is an ever-present pressure causing them stress and anxiety that is undermining their mental and physical health.

This pressure is the pressure they feel to conform their body shape and weight to appearance standards that value thinness as the passport to acceptance. Because this pressure is so strong during adolescence, our teens are vulnerable to not only feeling the pressure, but trying to answer the pressure by enlisting the dangerous practice of using weight-loss products. Over six percent of American teens report using a weight-loss product in the last thirty days, with instances that are higher among girls. Researchers say there's a correlation between the use of these products in girls with low self-esteem, parental influence to lose weight, self-body dissatisfaction, and peer groups that value thinness. Parents, buffer the pressure by helping your kids value the development of their insides, rather than their outsides.



TRENDS:



Stanley Quencher Craze

Depending on how old you are, you remember the specific have-to-have-it faddish items that you needed if you desired to fit in with your peers. For those who are baby-boomers, it was yo's-yo's, clackers, mini-skirts and bell-bottomed jeans.

There's a new fad for today's kids that's rather pricey and a bit surprising. It comes from the 110 year-old Stanley company that has long been known to make steel lunch boxes and vacuum bottles favored by construction workers. Today's fad among children and teens is the Stanley Quencher water bottle, that goes for \$45. I've seen elementary aged kids carrying them around, a boon for Stanley whose sales rose from \$73 million in 2019, to \$750 million in 2023. While fads like these are not ethically or morally wrong, they can reveal the idols of our children's hearts if they believe that having a certain thing is the passport to happiness and acceptance. Teach your kids to love the Lord above all else.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Sports Drop-Outs and Body Image

Roughly 70% of our kids who play organized sports drop out by the age of thirteen. One of the main reasons cited is the pressure they feel from parents and coaches, a pressure that becomes unbearable and

which drains the fun out of playing the sport. Now that we live in a social media saturated world, there seems to be a new reason for our kids to drop out of sports. A recent survey found that kids are dropping out due to the fact that they don't think their bodies measure up to the idealized athletic body types they are seeing on social media. Researchers

found that kids who had concluded they didn't have the right body were defining the right body by what they saw on TikTok and Instagram. Not surprisingly this reason for dropping out was cited more often by our girls than by our boys. Parents, we need to promote the value of Godly character over body type, and we need to encourage our kids to play and have fun.



QUICKSTATS



When teens were asked why they thought they were abusing substances, easing stress was the leading factor cited. 73% said their substance use was "to feel mellow, calm, or relaxed", 44% reported "to stop worrying about a problem or to forget bad memories" and 40% said "to help with depression or anxiety."

(Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report)

37% of 16-19-year-olds in the U.S. were employed or searching for jobs in 2023, the highest rate since 2009.

(Labor Department Data)

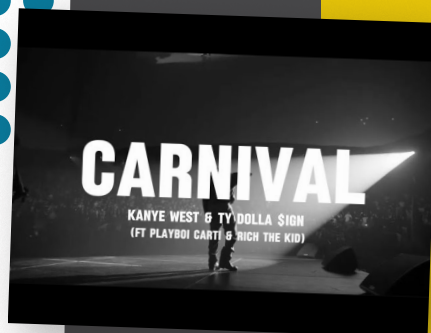
III TOP III

10

SONGS ON APPLE MUSIC

Source:
Apple Music
Top 100: USA

1. CARNIVAL by ¥\$, Kanye West, Ty Dolla \$ign, Rich The Kid
2. Saturn by SZA
3. redrum by 21 Savage
4. Whatever She Wants by Bryson Tiller
5. TEXAS HOLD 'EM by Beyoncé
6. Snooze by SZA
7. Beautiful Things by Benson Boone
8. Get In With Me by Bossman Dlow
9. Praise Jah In The Moonlight by YG Marley
10. Freestyle by Lil Baby



PARENTING ADVICE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA?

by WALT MUELLER

I remember what a qualified parenting expert I used to be. In fact, I was at my best in knowing how to parent correctly before I even had kids... And then our kids came.

I had a lot of repenting to do, and I also needed to know where to look for the best advice. My bookshelf is filled with Christian parenting books that helped us along the way as we were raising our own kids. We also went to our parents for advice on many of the everyday tasks of parenting that sometimes left us confused and looking for help.

Researchers at the University of Michigan are reporting that parents are now bypassing advice from their parents along with parenting books. Instead, and not surprising, they are going to social media for guidance on potty training, sleep issues, and child discipline. Here's the rub: you can find anything on social media, and how do we know it's trustworthy?

We recommend that you navigate social media with caution, and filter any advice you receive through the lens of God's Word.

FROM THE WORD

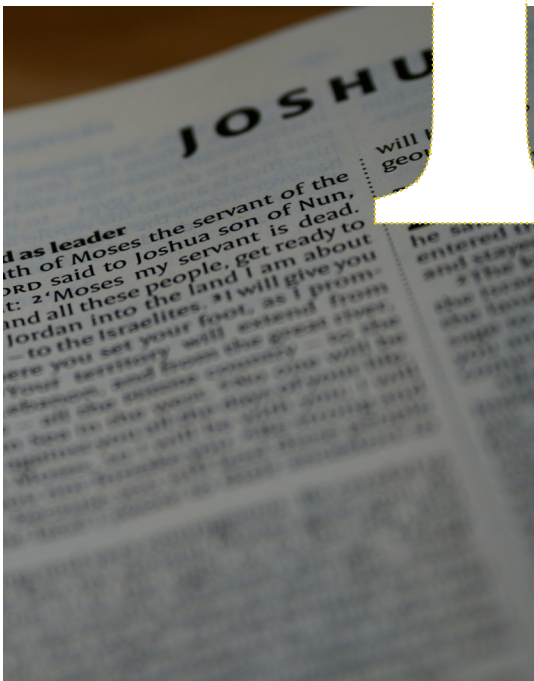
If you ever take a drive north from Toronto into the Muskoka Lakes Region, you reach a point where the highways are lined with hilly and rocky terrain. As you're driving, all you have to do is look out to either side and you will see evidence that people have stopped and left organized towers of stacked stones that serve as a remembrance of their trip north. The "cairns" serve as memory markers. These rock cairns are not a modern invention, but rather can be traced back much further in history, and they are mentioned in the Bible on a few occasions.

Shortly after leading the Israelites out of Egypt and into the safety of Canaan across the miraculously-parted Jordan River, Joshua instructs one man from each of the twelve tribes to take a stone to stack as a memorial to God's faithfulness to His chosen people. These stones were to remain as a sign of remembrance. In effect, they were to be a visual provocation to further generations, giving those who were older an opportunity to answer their children's curiosity about the stones and their meaning.

Like the Israelites of the Old Testament, we are called to "remember" all the good that our faithful God has done throughout history and in our own lives. What "cairns" can you set up in your life, family, and home which will serve as reminders of God's faithfulness? Use every opportunity you have to remember, and to teach your kids about God's goodness and faithfulness.

"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

Joshua 4:6-7



PODCAST



*Youth Culture Today with Walt Mueller
is a one-minute daily radio show
and podcast from CPYU.*

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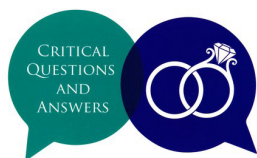
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CRITICAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



HELPFUL RESOURCES

MARRIAGE DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE



JIM NEWHEISER
FOREWORD BY EDWARD T. WELCH

BOOK

What constitutes a valid marriage? How should you go about finding a spouse? Is there a purpose to engagement? Why, and under what circumstances, does God permit divorce? Is abuse a ground for divorce? When is remarriage advisable? When it comes to counseling related to marriage, remarriage, and divorce, the questions and issues can be especially complex. But we can turn confidently to the Word of God for answers, knowing that it will speak to every situation with profound wisdom.

Drawing on decades of counseling experience, Jim Newheiser explores forty crucial questions relating to the complexities of marriage, divorce, and remarriage—unpacking the answers given in God's Word.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers acts as a useful reference work for pastors and counselors or could be assigned in small sections to counselees. It can also be used for personal study and can be read straight through for a scriptural overview on the topic of marriage.