

OUR SIN-CORRUPTED KIDS

What I didn't know then was that I was being a complete fool. In fact, my unformed frontal lobe had me believing I was invincible. What I do know now is that getting found out was the best thing that could have happened to me. Retelling this little story always leaves me shaking my head and a bit embarrassed at just how stupid my younger self really was, but I'll share it with you anyway.

I'm 12-years-old and it's a Friday night in winter. I finish dinner and tell my parents as I did every Friday night, "Goodbye. I'll see you after youth group." As the front door closes behind me and I'm out-of-sight, I make a right to head to my friend Steve's house, rather than a left to head to the church. A few of us had planned earlier in the day to spread our wings to run around through the neighborhood in the dark. We weren't sure what we were going to do. We just knew that it would be fun to stretch and break the boundaries that had been a part of our young lives since. . . well, forever. And so we embarked on a mission to ring doorbells and run, to soap some windows, and to generally just disrupt that quiet Friday night. I remember

feeling a strange combination of freedom coated in well-deserved guilt.

After about two hours or so, we called it quits and I headed home. As I approached our house I could see from a distance that the front door was wide open. The light coming out of the house framed the unmoving silhouette of my father, standing stone-cold still as hands-on-hips he watched me come down the street. When I got close enough to see his face, I knew that he knew what I was about to know. . . and I was scared-stiff.

His angry "Where were you and what were you doing?" preceded the kind of excuses that a cornered pre-teen boy would use, none of them believable. It wasn't until later as I was laying on my bed lamenting the severity of the well-deserved grounding that was issued, that I finally put two-and-two together to figure out how my parents knew I had not been at youth group. This is the part of the story where my earlier confession of complete foolishness will be validated in your mind: You see, my dad was the pastor of the church. We lived directly

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Thomas B. Fowler, Sc.D., president of the Xavier Zubiri Foundation, technology consultant to the U.S. government, and Adjunct Professor of Engineering at George Mason University, in his article "Supreme Thinking: Christianity & the Limitations of Artificial Intelligence" in Touchstone, May/June 2025.

"There is a basic creative ability based on perception of reality that cannot be replicated with the AI paradigm. The human paradigm of knowing, therefore, differs in two critically important ways from the AI paradigm: (1) it perceives things as real, transcending any type of algorithmic construction; and (2) it has a creative component that allows it to deal with new situations and propose radically new theories about the world. AI, on the other hand, is always stuck in the past."



"In many Christian homes, kids will often hide their sinful natures through behavioral conformity that doesn't reflect the true condition of their hearts."



WALT MUELLER
CPYU President

next to the church. Our volunteer youth leader always stopped at our house after youth group. And, there were only four kids in our youth group, so when the 25% of the group that's missing is the pastor's son. . . enough said.

I remember getting older and revisiting that incident with my Dad. He shared with me a parenting commitment he had made which I embraced when I became a parent. He knew that like our first parents, all of us are sinners who fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). He knew that all sin flows out of the sin-stained hearts of human beings (Mark 7:21-23). He knew that the human heart is "deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). In short, he knew that I was a sinner. He also knew that he and my mom had been given the responsibility to train me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Consequently, he was committed to praying that my sin-nature would rear its ugly head while I was under their roof, when they could address it, rather than later in life when I was out from under their influence.

We need to remind ourselves that part of our teenagers' makeup is that just like us, they were born with a default setting to sin. In other words, they don't have to be taught how to do wrong. The Apostle Paul

recognizes this when he instructs parents to teach their children how to do right by bringing them up "*with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). But in many Christian homes, kids will often hide their sinful natures through behavioral conformity that doesn't reflect the true condition of their hearts. But if the symptoms of their corrupt nature come out when they are young, we have the opportunity to address those heart matters now. If those matters are left to rear their ugly heads later in life and our adult children don't know how to deal with them, think about the great troubles and difficulties that will create.

Parents, pray that God would reveal your children's sin issues and tendencies *now* so that you are able to teach them how to recognize, confess, repent, and receive God's grace and forgiveness *now* – and for the rest of their lives. When God grants this request, it will make for some interesting parenting situations. But it's important for us to call out and address their sin now so you can nurture their hearts into a God-honoring adulthood. Stand in the doorway. Love them enough to tell them the truth, discipline them, and help them see their sin. Point them to the freedom that comes with the Gospel!



FROM THE NEWS

Smartphones, Schools, and Test Scores

At the start of this year's school year, we were hearing reports about more and more schools nationwide that were taking steps to get the smartphones out of their student's hands during the school day.

This a great move that every school district should take. But there's still concerns about how much time our kids are spending with their smartphones and social media during their out-of-school hours. Some new research, that's not at all surprising, should push you as a parent to set limits on smartphone use in your home. It seems that social media is effecting test scores. For kids ages 9 to 13, just one hour on social media per day can lower test scores by at least one or two points. Kids who spent as high as four hours a day on social media saw up to a five point drop on their test scores. Our students should be pursuing a love of the Lord with all of the capacities of their minds. Let's help them do this well by setting clear borders and boundaries on smartphone use.



TRENDS:



Popularity of YouTube

The Pew Research Center recently released new data shedding light on how parents of children ages 12 and under are managing the realities of life in a smartphone saturated world. One finding deserving our attention is this: that even for the youngest of our kids, the YouTube video platform is widely used. 85% of parents say their child ever watches YouTube, with half of those watching on a daily basis. 60% of parents report that their child under two watches YouTube, and it's at 84% for kids ages two to four! Parents, are you aware that your kids are being marketed to through YouTube?

Are you aware that there are a variety of messages and worldviews being dispensed and promoted, many of which are contrary to the Gospel and a Christian world and life view? Two necessary responses come to mind. First, limit their time with smartphones. And if they are watching YouTube, watch wisely with them.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Soccer and CTE

Recent research from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* serves to remind us of our need to be diligent in protecting our kids from experiencing trauma to their brains while playing sports. Using new imaging techniques, researchers at Columbia University have discovered that the area of the

brain behind the forehead – known as the cerebral cortex – suffers the most damage from repeatedly heading a soccer ball. The practical result of this damage is a decline in cognitive function. In the past, you've heard us talk about the growing body of research regarding CTE, or chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a condition leading to cognitive decline. If

you want to learn more about CTE we suggest you check out the website of the Concussion Legacy Foundation. Parents, we are called to steward the physical, mental, and spiritual health of our kids. Are you taking steps to insure that they won't engage in activities that put the gift of their God-given brains at risk? If not, take steps now.



QUICKSTATS



41% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 say they support banning middle and high school students from using cellphones during class. Roughly half of teens oppose such a ban and 9% are not sure.

(Pew Research Center)

66% of 18-24 year-old men play video games on a PC or console multiple times a week. This same demographic participates in online sports betting multiple times per week at a rate of 41%. 22% admit to viewing AI-generated pornography and 16% admit to paying for creator pornography (such as OnlyFans) multiple times a week.

(Ipsos)

III TOP III

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WHAT TEENS VALUE MOST

1. To be safe
2. To be kind to others
3. Self acceptance
4. To have a lot of fun
5. To change the world and achieve big things
6. To be in great shape
7. To be part of a community
8. To look really good
9. To be connected spiritually to others
10. To be rich

Source:
What Teens Value
2025 Teen Snapshot
Survey from Center
for Scholars & Story-
tellers @ UCLA



GETTING TO KNOW THEIR CULTURE

by WALT MUELLER

Even though we were once adolescents ourselves, the cloudy nature of those memories combines with a teenage world that's very different from the one we grew up in to leave us... well... pretty clueless. We need to go out of our way to learn about the uniqueness of living and growing as a teenager in today's world by asking good questions... over and over and over again.

Here are some questions to get you started:

What changes is my child facing as he grows from a child into an adult?

How can I support, love, and lead my teenager through these changes in a way that brings honor and glory to God?

What must I do to build bridges into my teen's life that keep the lines of communication open?

What makes my kid tick?

What is their world like?

What does my child find confusing at this point in her life?

Why does she think and act the way she does?

When it comes to our kids and their culture, what we don't know, don't want to know, or refuse to know, can hurt them.

FROM THE WORD

Thank God for the honesty and vulnerability of the Apostle Paul! When one of the most Godly human beings admits that he was constantly at war with sin, we know that what we personally experience but yet are hesitant sometimes to admit is common

to all humanity. We are in a battle against the disease of sin. Kevin DeYoung says that all of us “are slaves to wickedness, unable to do what is truly good, unable to please God, and unable to save ourselves.”ⁱ

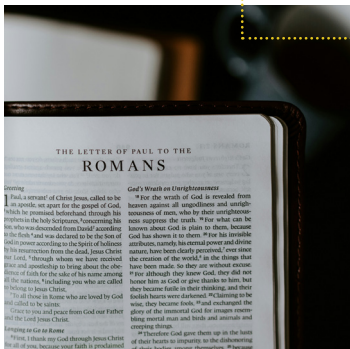
The Good News of the Gospel is that by faith in Jesus Christ alone, we are now rescued from being slaves to sin, and we are now slaves to righteousness. So why did Paul – and the rest of us – continue to struggle with sin? The Bible tells us that those who have been rescued and redeemed by Christ and who desire to serve and follow Christ are still engaged in a spiritual struggle created by sin. We are free from the condemnation of sin thanks to the Cross, where Christ took on himself the punishment for our sin. As our Savior, Jesus *has* delivered us once and for all, and *will* continue to deliver us from the sin struggles which we have every day.

These are realities we and our kids must realize as we struggle with gratitude to God for the free gift of salvation by working out our salvation each and every day as we choose to mortify our sin while striving to live holy lives thanks to His energy which works so powerfully in us!

ⁱ Kevin DeYoung, *Daily Doctrine*, page 122.

“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Romans 7:21-25



PODCAST



The **WORD**
in Youth Ministry

A CPYU PODCAST

The Word in Youth Ministry

is a podcast from CPYU for youth workers by youth workers.

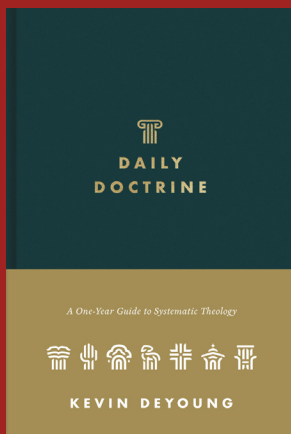
BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 101:
“TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT
IDENTITY” WITH CHRISTINA
FOX



LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM



HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

Learn Important Systematic Theology Topics Each Day with This Accessible One-Year Devotional

All thoughtful Christians want to better understand the Bible, its author, and its influence on their beliefs. In short—whether they recognize it or not—they want to understand theology. But many find the subject matter too academic, dense, or difficult to understand, and they lack proper study resources to help expand their knowledge of God and his written word.

Designed to make systematic theology clear and accessible for the everyday Christian, *Daily Doctrine: A One-Year Guide to Systematic Theology* walks through the most important theological topics over the course of a year. Each month is categorized into broad themes, starting with the study of God and concluding with the end times. Written by bestselling author and associate professor of systematic theology Kevin DeYoung, each concise daily reading contains verses for meditation and application, building upon each other and easing readers into the study of systematic theology.