

KILLING THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

The destructive power of teenage envy was captured on the cover of the May 19, 1990 issue of *Sports Illustrated* with these words: “Your sneakers or your life!” Inside, the story written by Rick Telander, referenced a horrifying encounter two 15-year-old boys (one who I knew) had on the streets of Philadelphia as they emerged from a store after purchasing sneakers. Christopher Demby and Allen Gore were shot at and robbed of their purchase by three other teens. Demby died and Gore survived. In his investigative article on this growing national trend of teenage muggings and killings over sneakers and athletic apparel, Telander concluded that the violence had little to do with the sneakers and jackets themselves. Rather, the precipitating motivator was quite simple: envy. The perpetrators, dissatisfied with their own status in the teenage pecking order, were attempting to elevate their status by owning the right sneakers and jackets. Has any of this changed over the last three decades?

Because our kids are growing up in a screen-saturated world where they spend hour after hour putting their eyes on the carefully constructed and curated status displays of friends, celebrities, and even complete strangers, they can so easily fall into

the comparison snare. And when they do, they become increasingly bitter over the fact that others have it so much better. Left unaddressed, they can easily become what Shakespeare referred to as a “green-eyed monster”, or beings marked and controlled by an all-consuming envy.

Listed among the seven deadly sins, envy is something different than jealousy. The latter is a fear of losing what we have, for example, seeing someone who has been a “best friend” peel away to give best friend status to another. Envy is desiring something someone else has that I don’t already have, along with the component of taking that something away from the person who is the object of my envy. It’s a kind of resentful and malicious hostility that will motivate the envious to make what is yours mine, while leaving you empty-handed. Because envy is a sinful “work of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21), it not only keeps those who practice envy from inheriting the Kingdom of God, but it undermines our human flourishing and well-being. Proverbs 14:30 tells us, “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.” Envy is never a winning proposition. The 4th century early church father, John Chrysostom, knew the dangers of envy. He wrote, “As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consume a man.”

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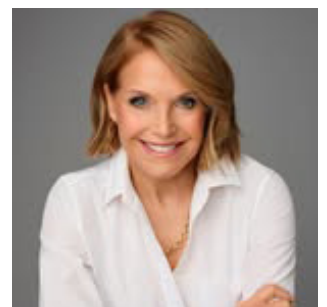
HELPING PARENTS
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS
AND THEIR WORLD

YOUTH
CULTURE

HOT
QUOTE

Katie Couric, former co-host of the NBC morning show *Today* talking about fame on the *Is This Working?* podcast, July 29, 2026.

“It’s hard not to believe your own press if you’re, you know, being praised and you’re like the it girl or the big thing, and you’re being — you’re on the cover of magazines, and people are cheering for you and rooting for you. People are interested in a version of you that’s not necessarily who you really are...sometimes because they may want to use you or exploit that relationship at some point.”



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“As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consume a man.”

- John Chrysostom



WALT MUELLER
CPYU President

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In today's world, our teens still find themselves envious of the footwear and clothing of others. But envy is also fueled by wanting the fame, celebrity-status, social media followers, looks, friends, talents, wealth, and other kinds of stuff that mark the lives of those they compare themselves to, leaving them feeling inferior and worthless.

We need to realize that envy is nothing new. The Tenth Commandment tells us “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or *anything* that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17).

How can we raise and nurture our kids in a vital Christian faith that helps them understand, see, and avoid turning into green-eyed envious monsters?

First, be sure that you give them a clear biblical understanding of what envy is, what the Scriptures say about the sin and consequences of envy, and the fact that envy is the opposite of love. True love seeks the good of others and it rejoices when others have it good. Envy seeks to destroy others’ good. Christ, however, calls his followers to love God and love neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39).

Second, show them what it means to love God and love neighbor through your own lifestyle, words, and actions. You can do

this when you endeavor to have the Holy Spirit live in you and through you. Where envy is present, confess and repent of the sin of envy. Then work with God’s help, as John Owen has said, to “be killing sin or sin will be killing you.”

Third, set borders and boundaries on screen-time and social media use. A growing body of research and observation is pointing to the fact that online time pours gasoline on the fire of comparison and envy for both young and old alike.

Finally, pray for your kids. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any envious tendencies in your kids. Seeing these tendencies now gives us the opportunity to address and correct them, allowing our kids to hear the Gospel and respond with a resounding “Yes!” to the invitation of Jesus to “Come and follow me.” It is then, and only then, that they can begin to find freedom and rest in knowing that their true identity is in Jesus Christ, not in having what others have which they do not.

In her book, *Glittering Vices*, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung writes, “A self secure in its unconditional worth, a worth based on God’s love, is a self free to affirm others’ gifts without feeling threatened or thereby made inferior. . . . It is a self able to take joy in its own good and in the good of others.” May our kids be secure in who they are in Christ!



FROM THE NEWS

E-Bikes

Last spring, the local news reported a story about a group of ten teenagers who were riding e-bikes while being chased by the police.

It all happened in broad daylight, as the kids vandalized school athletic fields, stopped traffic on a busy street, and injured a man by riding past and kicking him, all while shouting profanities. Because electronic bikes can be customized to travel at speeds higher than 45 miles an hour, all of the riders got away from the police and were never caught. Parents, e-bikes are everywhere and chances are your kids already have one or will be pestering you for one. Be aware of the local regulations, many of which are actively being formed and debated across local municipalities. These bikes can be dangerous, and it’s your God-given responsibility to ensure the safety of your kids, teaching them to ride not only with care, but with respect for others. Yes, all of our activities, even riding a bike, should be seen as an act of worship!



TRENDS:



The Cozy Comeback

CPYU recently came across a list of projected youth culture trends for 2026 published by the fashion media platform, Qui Talks. One trend that caught our attention is actually quite hopeful, and it's one that we should not only take note of, but work to facilitate. The Qui Talks site calls the trend "The Cozy Comeback", explaining that it's all about a generation that increasingly finds itself burnt out and desiring a slower pace of life. The site tells us that young people are romanticizing rest – not as laziness, but as survival. In a youth culture world marked by anxiety, constant pressure, and ongoing stimulation, this is not at all surprising, after all, God made us for a rhythm of work and rest. What a great opportunity we have to introduce our kids to the restorative and God-ordained practice of sabbath. The translation of the Hebrew word for Sabbath is translated as "cease" or "desist", which clearly reminds us of our need to rest. Start with one day, Sunday, to practice Sabbath.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Social Media and Body Image

If you've got any suspicions that social media is increasing the body image pressures our kids feel, your suspicions are correct. An internal study conducted by Meta, the parent company of Instagram, found that the algorithms were pointing users who already have body image concerns to a disproportionate amount of "eating disorder adjacent" content, which is feeding the pressure these kids already feel over their bodies. In fact, as a result of these algorithmic content feeds, kids with existing body image concerns were being exposed to 10.5% of their total content being related to body image. Those users who were content with their bodies were seeing only 3.3% of their total content being related to body image. The point here is this: social media algorithms are throwing fuel on the body dysmorphia problem. We need to push back by helping them understand that their identity is not in what they look like.



QUICKSTATS



3 in 5 girls say they have not felt confident at school because of how they feel about their appearance. 25% of girls as young as 5 say their body and how it looks is a top concern. By ages 8-10, it is 43%.

(State of the Girl 2026, Girl Scouts report)

There is an average of 1.94 children per family in the U.S., which represents a generational low. There are 6 million multigenerational (3 or more generations under one roof) households nationwide, making up 7.2% of family households.

(State of the Girl 2026, Girl Scouts report)

TOP 10

MOST-PLAYED SONGS IN THE U.S. ON APPLE MUSIC

Source:
Top 100: USA
Apple Music
July 30, 2026

1. Been By Now - Morgan Wallen
2. Choosin' Texas - Ella Langley
3. Dead Fresh - Lil Baby
4. Janice STFU - Drake
5. I Can't Love You Anymore - Ella Langley, Morgan Wallen
6. Be Her - Ella Langley
7. Shabang - Drake
8. stupid song - Olivia Rodrigo
9. Don't We - Morgan Wallen
10. Spend Dat - Yung Miami



SIGNS OF ENVY

by WALT MUELLER

How can we recognize envy in our kids? We must first realize that any of the signs we see flow out of the hearts of our kids. In Mark 7:21-23, Jesus tells us that it is "out of the heart of man" that come all sorts of evil things, including envy. These are the things that defile us.

So what are the evidences of envy which flow out of the heart? Look for these signs of envy listed long ago by St. Augustine, paying special attention to how your kids reveal and conduct themselves on social media:

- Feeling offended at the talents, successes, or good fortune of others.
- Selfish or unnecessary rivalry and competition.
- Showing pleasure at another's difficulties or distress.
- Showing ill will toward others.
- Reading false motives into the behavior of others.
- Belittling others.
- False accusations.
- Backbiting: saying something bad, even if true, behind another's back.
- Slander: saying something bad, even if true, in the open about someone.
- Initiating, collecting, or retelling gossip.
- Working to arouse, foster, organize, or stir up antagonism against others.
- Showing scorn over another's abilities or failures.
- Teasing or bullying.
- Ridiculing persons, institutions or ideals.
- Showing prejudice against those considered to be inferior, who consider us inferior, or who we see as threatening our security or provision.

FROM THE WORD

How are we to live in the world as followers of Jesus Christ? Practical guidance for “holy living” is given throughout the Bible. One place where we can turn for guidance as we live in a world that is increasingly negative and hostile towards Christianity and Christians, is First Peter. In this letter, Peter is writing specifically to Christians who are confused, struggling, and discouraged by the opposition they were facing because of their faith. At the beginning of his letter he reminds them that they’ve been born again to a living hope thanks to the grace of Christ. This is the very same hope that is ours!

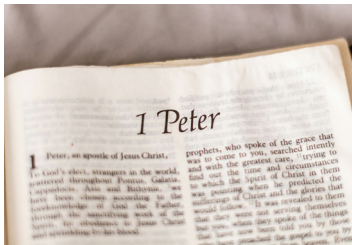
“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”

1 Peter 2:1

He goes on to remind them that as grateful and faithful followers of Christ, they are called to be holy as Christ is holy, that is, set

apart in conduct from the ways they formerly lived before coming to faith in Christ. He then goes on to describe what it is to live a life of love for both God and one another, calling them to “put away” and reject the sins of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. He is calling them, and us, to give up and get rid of the sinful attitudes and habits that are harmful to others. What Peter is saying is that wickedness, falsehood, insincerity, resentment of others, and harmful speech need to be addressed in our lives so that we might instead love others by seeking their good.

Parents, your kids are watching you. As they watch, they are learning from you as you model the beliefs and behaviors they will come to adopt in their own lives. Ask the Lord to reveal the dark spots in your life where sin still resides. Confess your sin. Repent of your sin. And ask the Holy Spirit to conform you into the image of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



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 107:

**“THE IMPORTANCE OF
TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLY
SPIRIT” WITH ALEX TUFANO**



LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/TWIYM

Biblical Answers to Crucial Questions

discover



CPYU

HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

It's ok for your teen to have questions about their faith. They aren't the only ones that have those questions, and you and your teen shouldn't be embarrassed by them. In *Discover: Questioning Your Way to Faith*, Mike McGarry explores the twenty most common questions teenagers ask.

In nearly twenty years as a youth pastor, Mike has heard just about every question students ask. Questions are important—and they may prove to be the very thing that actually leads your teen into deeper faith. *Discover* covers a wide range of questions that teens ask about faith including: Why does God allow suffering? Why should we trust the Bible? Is church relevant? Does God care about my sexual identity? and more.

Mike wants your teen to see their questions as an opportunity to dig deeper and grow in their faith. Each chapter is short and tackles important topics such as doubt, the resurrection, tolerance, sexual issues, prayer, and more. Your teen will be encouraged to see what God has to say.

- Equips teens to help answer the questions their friends have.
- Helps teens understand what the Bible teaches about the issues they face today in everyday life.
- Shows how doubt and questioning can be a pathway to greater faith.