

STICKS, STONES, AND WORDS

What's your favorite movie scene of all time? Mine is one that doesn't conjure up warm and fuzzy feelings, but rather is one that has continued to smack me in the face with the truths it tells about the power of a parent's words. It's that scene in the 1985 film, *The Breakfast Club*, that pulls back the curtain on the horrifying home life of John Bender, aka "the criminal" protagonist. Locked into a Saturday detention room with four other students, the angry Bender enviously mocks Brian, aka "the brain", for what Bender imaginatively stereotypes as Brian's idyllic homelife. All this is prelude to the climax of the scene, where Andrew "the Jock" asks Bender, "Alright, what about your family?"

John Bender's explosive response is heartbreaking. He yells off a list of hateful adjectives no son should ever hear from his father, but which he has endured. . . multiple times: "Stupid! Worthless! No Good! Retard! Big-mouth! Jerk! Ugly! Lazy! Disrespectful!" and more. When asked by Brian if that's all real, Bender pulls up his sleeve to reveal the cigar burn he received for spilling paint on the garage floor. It's a heart-breaking scene of movie fiction that's the reality for too many kids, both then and now.

Perhaps you've heard it said that "words can either build up, or they can tear down." If you haven't, you still know the reality that phrase captures. Each and every one of us grew up in a home where our parents' words were heard, taken to heart, and ultimately shaped who we are today. For those of us who were built up, we have fond memories. For those who were torn down, navigating our memories has required lots of prayer and perhaps a healthy dose of counseling. Each of us knows that the words we heard and the words that we say to our own kids matter.

The Swiss medical doctor and pastoral counselor, Dr. Paul Tournier, has said, "If one thoughtlessly calls a child a liar, one makes him a liar, in spite of all his aspirations towards honesty. He is still at the age when the frontier between myth and reality is imprecise. Call a child stupid, and you make him stupid, incapable of showing what he has in him to do. The power of suggestion exercised by the labels we are given is considerable. This is particularly the case in childhood, but the same is true throughout our lives." Just like us, our kids believe about themselves what they hear about themselves.

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Julia Roberts on how her and her husband managed to parent in the age of technology. Today, December 4, 2023

"So, for us, we just had sort of simple rules where we had a charging station, where everybody's phone goes when you get home. There's no phones at the table, certainly."



"YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS ARE ALWAYS AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE TRUE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART. THE THINGS YOU DO AND SAY ALWAYS TELL YOU MORE ABOUT YOURSELF THAN WHOEVER YOU'RE SPEAKING OR RESPONDING TO."



Paul Tripp

My own words spoken quickly in the heat of an angry moment and without forethought are enough to remind me that I need to exercise Godly self-restraint. Proverbs 29:20 asks the question, "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?" Yes, in my mirror. "There is more hope for a fool than for him." What can we do to develop the habit of speaking words that build up our kids, rather than words that tear them down now, and echoes of which will tear them down for life?

First, understand that while words that hurt come out of our mouth, they are bubbling over from our heart. Jesus said that "what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart" (Matthew 15:18). Paul Tripp reminds parents that "your words and actions are always an accurate reflection of the true condition of your heart. The things you do and say always tell you more about yourself than whoever you're speaking or responding to." Prayerfully ask God to expose and change your heart, and pray for God's grace to liberate you from verbal habits that hurt rather than heal your kids.

Second, take a moment to pause, to breathe, and to ask the Lord to help you see which words are needed and how they are to be spoken. Once your words exit your mouth, they are not only out there and unable to be pulled back in, but

they will echo forever in the ears, minds, hearts, and very lives of your kids.

Finally, never stop listening to yourself. Old habits die hard. Most of us have developed patterns of communication to which we might be totally oblivious regarding the impact of what we say and how we say it. The Apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians that they were to "let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29). Ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear yourself, and to change those unhealthy communication patterns which are sure to undermine the health and flourishing of your kids. Of course, don't forsake your need to teach your kids the truths of God's Word, including those hard truths which need to be communicated in the midst of difficult times. Remember, Paul also reminds us to "bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4).

Parents, develop the habit of glorifying God and building your kids up by choosing words that are gracious and seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:5-6). Words like these will echo through their lives, bearing fruit for generations to come.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

THE SCHOOL BATHROOM DEBATE

If it hasn't yet happened somewhere near where you live, it most likely will at some point in the future.

What will happen? The debate over who gets to use what bathroom in your local public school. Thanks to activists and the spread of the transgender ideology, more and more school boards are facing the pressure to allow students to use the bathroom they believe corresponds to their felt gender identity, rather than the bathroom that reflects their anatomical makeup and biological sex. Here in Pennsylvania, one high profile case is that in the Perkiomen Valley school district in suburban Philadelphia. In September, the Perkiomen Valley school board shot down a policy that would require students to use the bathroom that corresponds to their biological sex. One month later, the school board reversed their decision. The reversal came after 400 high school students staged a walkout in support of protecting women and girls. Sometimes it takes kids to show us what's right.



TRENDS:



Predators on Gaming Apps

There's something about just hearing the word pedophile that makes the hair stand up on the back of our necks. We wonder how there can be people out there who actually take the time to carefully approach and groom kids into situations where they sexually assault and exploit innocent and unsuspecting children. The folks at Defend Young Minds are now warning parents to be aware of the many places and ways that predators engage our kids in the world of gaming apps. Specifically, these predators are using the chat features in a variety of games, including Roblox, Minecraft, and Fortnite, which are all games played by a younger crowd. After the initial grooming takes place, the predators then move the conversations to different messaging apps, thereby keeping parents out of the loop. Parents, you need to know that where kids play, predators are playing as well. Talk to your kids about the dangers, monitor their online time, and be sure to use parental controls.



LATEST RESEARCH:

How Can Our Churches Disciple Kids?

Recently, our friends at Lifeway research offered some very helpful directives for those of us who desire to see our kids grow up to love, follow, and serve Jesus Christ. There are three factors in particular that parents must be aware of that research tells us are present in the churches of those who grow up to embrace a life of Christian discipleship.

First, churches who foster an environment of trust and guidance are churches where teenagers feel the freedom to go for help and direction. Teens who grow up in a church like this are less likely to drop out of church and walk away from the faith. Second, churches that provide youth leaders who truly care about their students leave kids less likely to drop out of church and walk away from the faith.

Make sure your church is training and equipping strong leaders. And finally, churches where adults reach out to kids, take an interest in them, invest in them, and foster relationships with them are more likely to see kids stick around. Is this what's happening in your church?

QUICKSTATS

In the early 1990s, no more than 16% of eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students said that religion was not important to them at all. Now, that number has climbed to 30% of our seniors and sophomores, and 25% of our eighth graders.

(Monitoring the Future Survey)

76% of the members of the Baby-Boomer Generation say that having regular family meals was a part of their childhood experience. Now, only 38% of the members of Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, report having regular family meals.

(American Enterprise Institute)

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FASTEST GROWING BRANDS 2023

1. ChatGPT
2. Starry
3. Zelle
4. Shein
5. Twisted Tea
6. Southwest
7. OpenAI
8. Facebook
9. Instagram Reels
10. Coke Zero Sugar
11. Jeep
12. Amazon Pharmacy
13. Topgolf
14. Fox Nation
15. e.l.f.
16. Keystone Light
17. YouTube Shorts
18. Instagram
19. HP Instant Ink
20. Clinique

Source: Morning Consult



PARENTING STRATEGIES FOR A TOXIC CULTURE

by WALT MUELLER

Here at CPYU we are always telling parents that there are three essential elements to a healthy, biblically-based response to an alarming youth culture trend.

First, when we realize that something is trending, we are to exercise a prophetic influence by speaking Scripture related to the trend into our teen's life.

Second, we are to exert a preventive influence by establishing borders and boundaries designed to protect our kids from harming themselves while providing for their well-being.

And finally, when our kids fall prey to the trends and enter into making poor decisions that lead to bad habits and sinful behavior, we must do all that we can to help them experience recovery from the consequences of their choices while moving them to a place of repentance and restoration as they own their mistakes and experience grace. This is the redemptive influence we are called to have.

Parents, fulfill your responsibility to parent well with a balance of the prophetic, preventive, and the redemptive.

FROM THE WORD

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ulture is morphing and changing at breakneck speed. And for those of us committed to living out our faith in every nook and cranny of life, the changes in culture bring a realization that the world is in many ways regressing rather than progressing. As a result, it's easy for us to throw up our hands in lament thinking that everything is spinning out of control.

This is particularly true for us as parents. We hope and pray that our kids won't make bad decisions. Sadly, many opt to follow the voice of the culture as opposed to following the voice of God. When this happens, our faith is oftentimes shaken to the core. And if we're honest with ourselves, we may even wind up questioning God.

When this happens, it's good to remember the words of David in Psalm 11: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The answer you might expect would be an action plan. You know, a "do this" or "do that" type of response. But that's not the answer that David... or we... get. Instead, God states the fact that should serve as a sure foundation in the midst of turmoil: "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord is on His heavenly throne." In other words, God is. He is still God. He is sovereign. And no matter how bleak or dark things look, He is still in control.

Remind yourself of this often. Our trust is in God and God alone. The world and everyone in it is broken. But our heavenly Father is still seated firmly on His throne and in control. What a comfort this is!

"When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne."

Psalm 11:3-4



PODCAST



Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU hosted by Walt Mueller.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 177:

"YOUTH CULTURE YEAR-IN-REVIEW"

LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST

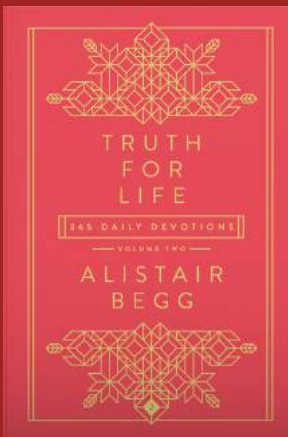


“If you take God at His word and trust Him in faith, then there is never any reason for hopelessness.”
ALISTAIR BEGG

FROM
YOU CAN FACE TOMORROW
A DAILY DEVOTION



HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

In this follow-up to *Truth For Life: 365 Daily Devotions, Volume One*, Alistair Begg explores passages from over 50 books in the Bible. Like volume one, volume two presents an entry for every day of the year that includes a brief Scripture reading followed by an insightful commentary that expounds on the text and explains how the passage relates to our everyday lives. Alistair helpfully encourages us to consider:

- how God is calling us to think differently
- how God is reordering what we love
- how God is calling us as we go about our day

Each devotion in volume two offers additional reading recommendations for diving deeper into the day's topic and provides a Bible reading plan to navigate us through the entirety of Scripture in one year.

Embrace a pattern of learning from God's Word each day using *Truth For Life: 365 Daily Devotions, Volume Two*.