



HOPE-Y NEW YEAR

How many times have you seen a microphone in the face of a New Year's Eve reveler, standing in the crush of a Times Square crowd, gladly saying "good riddance" to the last year as they recount the bumps, bruises, and disappointments of the preceding 365 days? And how many times do they excitedly explain to the watching world how they are looking forward to the clock striking midnight while anticipating all the good things to come over the next 365 days? Yes, next year *will* be different!

We've all seen it over and over, and we might even be the ones gladly casting off the disappointments of the past year like a pair of handcuffs, while looking forward to the freedom the coming year will bring. But has it ever dawned on us that this annual celebration has always included dissatisfaction with the last year? And, should we not be surprised that at the end of the new year we're so looking forward to, we'll be doing the exact same thing? Somehow, that "Happy New Year" never works out the way we think it should.

I've been around long enough to know that what Jesus promised His followers in John 16:33 holds true: "In the world you will have tribulation." Wait. What? This means that each and every New Year should be entered knowing that it will bring a combination of ups and downs. This is the only way to think about the flipping of the calendar for the person who truly understands what it means to be human, living in a world that is broken and groaning to be fixed (Romans 8:18-25). I'm sure your experience over the last year, like mine, proves this to be true. Death, disease, discord, and difficulty were all around us this last year. Some of it you saw in the news. Some of it you experienced in the world of your family and friends. In so many ways, the 2024 we anticipated didn't quite work out as expected.

What can we realistically expect in 2025? Alistair Begg tells us that "Jesus never promised the absence of trouble. Nowhere does He say to us that as a result of His coming, dying, rising, and ascending the world is going to be a more

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Liel Leibovitz, editor at large for *Tablet Magazine* and cohost of the *Unorthodox* podcast, in an article for *First Things Magazine*, speaking about the younger generations and their interest in attending church, April 2024.

[This is] "a generation whose minds, hearts, and souls are ravaged by a technological torrent that thrusts upon them more audiovisual stimuli per minute than the human brain can possibly process."



“PERHAPS YOU CAN FIND TIME TO SIT WITH YOUR FAMILY DURING THIS FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR TO TALK ABOUT THE DAYS IN WHICH WE LIVE, THE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS WE MUST HAVE, AND THE ONLY SOURCE OF HOPE.”



¹ Alistair Begg, *Truth For Life: Vol. 2*, p. 352.

² Timothy Keller, *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, p. 3.

peaceful place or that our place in it is going to be more comfortable.” Begg also reminds us that the very things we hope for in this life – including wealth, healing, or absence of tribulation – have been promised to us by God *only* in the world to come. You see, we are destined until the day when Christ returns and makes all things new to “groan and suffer under the weight of sin – both our own and that of others.”¹ Tim Keller tells us the same thing, that “no matter what precautions we take, no matter how well we have put together a good life, no matter how hard we have worked to be healthy, wealthy, comfortable with friends and family, and successful with our career, something will inevitably ruin it.”² As one of my friends recently told me, “God loves you and has a difficult plan for your life.”

But the Good News is that the story does not end there! You see, the Apostle Paul, in the same place he wrote about our ever-present groanings in this world, said this: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). We are to live life in the here and now not expecting life in this world to be completely happy. . . although happiness will come from time to time. Rather, we are to live every day in the knowledge and hope that one day in the new heaven and the new earth, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall

there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

For me, I’ve gotten into the habit of starting each New Year looking forward to a year that is “hope-y” rather than “happy.” Perhaps you can find time to sit with your family during this first month of the year to talk about the days in which we live, the reasonable expectations we must have, and the only source of hope. Pause and thank the Lord for another year. Ask His blessing on your family. Ask Him to protect your children from harm and to provide for their well-being.

Because our world is filled with brokenness, there will be unexpected bumps in the road during 2025. There will be sadness, pain, loss, fear, and disappointment. Ask the Lord to prepare your family to handle whatever may come. And remind yourselves each and every day, that Jesus is with you every moment no matter what comes, and He will bring you through it! You see, while Jesus tells us that “In the world you will have tribulation,” the story doesn’t end there. He goes on to say, “But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

May your New Year be filled with hope. . . the only hope. . . the hope that comes through faith in Jesus Christ!

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

CTE and TRAUMATIC BAIN INJURIES

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a degenerative brain disease found in those who have had repetitive brain trauma, which cannot be diagnosed accurately until one’s brain is examined after death.

Looking back over the histories of deceased athletes, researchers have discovered that there are cases of CTE in athletes who never experienced a concussion. A connection has now been made between higher odds of developing CTE as a result of the number and strength of non-concussive head impacts experienced over one’s lifetime, also known as subclinical traumatic brain injuries (TBI), which typically show no immediate signs or symptoms. It’s not a single injury that causes the disease, but instead accumulation of microtrauma from thousands of hits over years. Many of these unseen TBI’s take place in youth sports where the brain is developing and most vulnerable. Parents, you are called to steward the God-given safety of your kids’ bodies and brains!



TRENDS:



Chroming

Inhalants are a class of drugs which are easy to obtain, inexpensive, and popular, especially among younger teenagers who have difficulty obtaining alcohol and other drugs. They're one of the most widely used classes of drugs among our middle school kids, and even those who are younger will experiment with them. Known for years as "huffing" and now known as "chroming", sniffing common household products like solvents and cleaners is extremely dangerous. Not surprisingly, there's been an uptick in the practice thanks to the presence of social media. Researchers looked at over 100 chroming videos, many of them on TikTok, which have garnered over 25 million views. We need to warn our kids about the dangers of inhalant use, letting them know that dizziness, brain damage, addiction, and even death can occur. Parents, we've been given the high calling and privilege of teaching our kids to steward their bodies to God's glory. Warn them about the dangers of substance abuse.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Digital Switching

One of the many new time-taking activities afforded to us by our ever-present smartphones is scrolling through online videos and reels. If you only take into account the YouTube video platform, about 3.7 million new videos are uploaded every day. Talk about a rabbit-hole! Add to that Instagram and TikTok videos, and we could spend a lifetime looking at people scaring other people, people trying to back boats down boatramps, and cats doing whatever silly stuff cats do. A new study published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* has found that swiping through online videos to relieve boredom may actually make people more bored and less satisfied or engaged with the content. This is caused primarily by our habit of digital switching, or watching only short snippets rather than complete videos. What would happen if rather than engaging in this digital switching, we invested our time engaging with real-life family and friends? Would that relieve our boredom?

QUICKSTATS

Nearly half of kids ages 12 to 15 globally cannot read with comprehension. They are unable to connect main ideas, understand the author's intentions, or draw reasoned conclusions.

(UNESCO)

Emergency room visits due to eating or drinking too much caffeine have doubled among middle school kids, and nearly doubled for high schoolers between 2017 and 2023.

(Epic Research)

III TOP III

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GREATEST POP STARS OF 2024

1. Kendrick Lamar
2. Sabrina Carpenter
3. Taylor Swift
4. Chappell Roan
5. Charli XCX
6. Ariana Grande
7. Beyonce
8. Post Malone
9. Billie Eilish
10. Jelly Roll

As chosen by
Billboard staff
Source:
Billboard.com



PRAYING THAT OUR KIDS COME TO THEMSELVES

by WALT MUELLER

Here's an interesting strategy to consider as you think about how to lead the teenagers you know away from a culturally-influenced self-centered lifestyle, to a God-centered lifestyle: pray for crisis to enter their lives.

Self-centeredness with no room for God plays and advances well in a youth culture that feeds the beast of self-absorption from a deep well of luxury and wealth. Sometimes it's not until the well runs dry through poverty, want, or crisis that our kids understand their thirst for what it really is – a longing not after self, but after God.

While our kids might not see it as such, it's a blessing when the clay feet on which a self-centered lifestyle is built crumble to dust. Sadly, that's oftentimes what it takes for them to reach out to their heavenly Father. As John Stott reminds us about the prodigal son, "he had to 'come to himself' by acknowledging his self-centeredness, before he could 'come to his father.'" While we hate to see our kids hurt, sometimes that hurt helps!

FROM THE WORD

WHO

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?

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

Psalm 127:1

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." (Scotty Smith, *Everyday Prayers*, p. 25).



PODCAST



Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

Youth Culture Matters

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

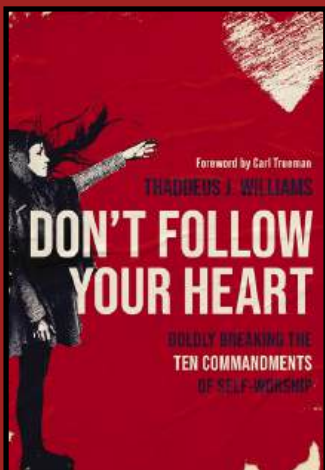
BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 195:

"HIPPOS OR HONEYBEES?" WITH DAVE CORYELL AND JOSH GOOD

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HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

Why chasing after expressive individualism, experiences, and desires always fails to deliver on its promise of happiness.

Today we are told to be true to ourselves, look within for answers, and follow our hearts. But when we put our own happiness first, we experience record-breaking levels of aimlessness, loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Self-centeredness always fails to deliver the fulfillment we're seeking.

In *Don't Follow Your Heart: Boldly Breaking the Ten Commandments of Self-Worship*, Thaddeus Williams debunks the "ten commandments of self-worship," which include popular propaganda, like:

- **#liveyourbestlife:** Thou shalt always act in accord with your chief end—to glorify and enjoy yourself forever.
- **#followyourheart:** Thou shalt obey your emotions at all costs.
- **#yolo:** Thou shalt pursue the rush of boundary-free experience.

Williams builds a case that this type of self-worship is not authentic, satisfying, or edgy. Instead, its rehashing what is literally humanity's oldest lie. He calls on a new generation of mavericks and renegades, heretics who refuse to march in unison with the self-obsessed herd. With a fascinating blend of theology, philosophy, science, psychology, and pop culture, Williams points us to a life beyond self-defeating dogmas to a more meaningful life centered on Someone infinitely more interesting, satisfying, and awesome than ourselves.