

CPYU PARENT PAGE

LS 2 B E E

HELPING PARENTS
UNDERSTAND TEENAGERS
AND THEIR WORLD

THE SCHEMING LIAR

From 1970 to 1974, comedian Flip Wilson hosted a weekly variety show that featured one of his most famous recurring characters, Geraldine Jones. Wilson's portrayal of this liberated, bold, proud, honest, and sassy southern woman was known for several catchphrases that made their way into everyday conversation among young and old alike. One of those phrases that Geraldine used all the time as an excuse for her language, dress, and behavior was this: "The Devil made me do it!"

Our youth pastor asked us one night to consider Geraldine's blame-throwing to get us thinking about Satan and his role in undermining God's Kingdom by doing all he can to seduce human beings into sin. It was a lively, eye-opening, and life transforming youth group meeting for all of us.

That conversation launched me on a journey of recognizing not only the existence of Satan, but of seeking to understand the variety of ways he works to undermine God's work in our lives and our world. I've realized that the

first words he spoke to our first parents, leading them to rebel against God and enter into sin, are the very same doubt-inducing and iniquity-inducing words that he whispers in the ears of Christ's followers multiple times a day: "Did God really say. . .?" (Genesis 3:1). In my life and yours, Satan works to push us away from God and draw us into what the Apostle Paul calls "the course of this world" (Ephesians 2:2). It's a course which Paul goes on to describe as "following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in 'the sons of disobedience.'" It is the clear path to sin and destruction.

As parents, it's our responsibility to help our kids understand the role that Satan - the enemy of God who is hell-bent on undermining God's will and God's way - will play in working to undo them as well.

One of the clearest places to see the enemy's way of working against God's order and design is the account of his temptation of our first parents, recorded in Genesis 3:1-6.

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Molly Mulshine, a freelance writer, podcast host, and stand-up comic reflecting on how difficult it is to raise kids with screen limits when we ourselves are addicted to our own devices, slate.com, November 16, 2024.

"I never give my 1-year-old my phone. I'm determined to raise a kid who doesn't spend all their downtime on a device. So imagine my surprise when she recently got ahold of mine and started scrolling and swiping with the muscle memory of a bored teen on TikTok... That's when I realized: She learned by watching me... I began to worry: Will my excessive phone use make my daughter long for the sweet, lobotomizing glow of a high-tech rectangle, despite any screen limits I place on her?"



“IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, OUR FIRST PARENTS EXPERIENCED GOD’S SHALOM, A WORLD FULL OF PEACE AND HUMAN FLOURISHING AS THINGS WERE THE WAY GOD INTENDED THEM TO BE.”

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

I encourage you to share these words from Genesis 3 as a way to teach your own children and teens about the existence of Satan and his strategies. Theologian John Stott reminds us that there are three important aspects of Satan’s work that we must all recognize in his encounter with Adam and Eve.

First, Satan works to get us to deny the truthfulness of God. God told our first parents that if they ate of the fruit of the tree they would “surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Embracing Satan’s contradictory lie, Eve doubted the truthfulness of God and chose to disobey along with Adam. Stott writes, “The devil still denies God’s warnings of His judgment and of the

awful reality of hell for those who refuse to repent.” He is a liar!

Second, Satan works to get us to deny the goodness of God. In the Garden of Eden, our first parents experienced God’s shalom, a world full of peace and human flourishing as things were the way God intended them to be. But Satan twisted it all, lying to make that which God permitted seem unsatisfying, while making what God had forbidden seem desirable. Our kids need to know that God’s way is perfect! (Psalm 18:30).

Third, Satan works to get us to deny God’s otherness. God is God and we are not. But Satan lied to convince Eve that eating of the fruit would open her eyes, making her like God. Satan still works to convince us that we should bid for our independence. Stott says that “this is the fundamental nature of sin. Sin is an unwillingness to let God be God, a refusal to recognize His otherness and our continuing dependence on Him. Self-deification is the passport into sin and misery.”

Of course, we cannot forget nor fail to teach that in His mercy and grace, God sent Jesus Christ into the world to take the penalty for our sin and rebellion, a plan that was announced immediately in Genesis 3:15. As writer Kevin DeYoung says, Jesus Christ is the snake-and-Satan-crushing King of all, who will one day bring us back to the garden! Thanks be to God for the gift of His Son!

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

Sextortion

Parents, are you aware that the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation is warning parents, educators, caregivers, teens, and children about the growing tide of online dangers that they say may lead to the solicitation and enticement of minors to engage in sexual acts?

Known as “sextortion”, this danger involves a perpetrator coercing a minor to create and send sexually explicit material. If the perpetrator gets the sexually explicit material, they will then threaten to release those pictures online unless the victim produces more of the same, or unless the victim sends a payment often in gift cards, wire transfers, mobile payment services, or cryptocurrency. Sextortion victims are most often males between the ages of 14 and 17, but anyone of any age or gender can become a victim. Parents, teach your kids to never engage in online communication with someone they don’t know, and teach them God’s good design for the sacred gift of their sexuality.



TRENDS:



Brain Rot

One of the best tools at your disposal for tracking changes in youth culture is the dictionary. That's right, the dictionary. The rate of cultural change is now so fast that those who publish dictionaries are constantly removing words deemed irrelevant and no longer usable, while adding words that reflect cultural change. Late last year, the folks at the *Oxford Dictionary* actually named one of these new words, brain rot, as the word of the year for 2024. Oxford defines brain rot as "the supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material, usually online content, considered to be trivial or unchallenging." The word was chosen to reflect what our consumption of excessive amounts of low-quality online content is doing to our brains, our relationships, and our lives. Parents, stop your constant scrolling and teach your kids to do the same. Let's promote heart for God flourishing.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Longing to See Platonic Relationships in Media

UCLA's Center for Scholars & Storytellers recently released some thought-provoking data regarding teens and media in a new research study. The report is titled "Reality Bites: Teens and Screens 2024." There's some good news coming from the survey regarding what our kids think about friendship and sexuality. In 2023, over 50% of adolescents desired content that focused on platonic relationships and friendships. In 2024, that number had increased to over 63%! In 2023, just over 47% of adolescents said that sex and sexual content are not needed to advance the plot of TV shows and/or movies. In 2024 that number increased to over 62%. We can assume that our kids are longing for relationships, and the content they seek reflects that desire. Parents, let's go out of our way to teach our kids about developing healthy relationships with friends, about living out God's good design for sex and sexuality, and for glorifying God in all things.

QUICKSTATS

58% of kids on TikTok, 52% of kids on Instagram, and 56% of kids on SnapChat had a false date of birth on their profile to make them appear older.

(The Telegraph)

As a result of TikTok videos of Gen Z influencers buying embroidered "Grandma sweatshirts" at Cracker Barrel going viral last year, the restaurant/store chain saw a 700% increase in sales of the sweatshirts since debuting in September of 2024.

(Country Living)

TOP

10

TOPICS KIDS WANT TO SEE IN MEDIA

Among 10-24 Year Olds
Source:
*Reality Bites: Teens and
Screens 2024*
Center for Scholars &
Storytellers @ UCLA

1. Hopeful, uplifting content with people "beating the odds"
2. Action and/or fight scenes (may include guns and violence)
3. People with lives like my own
3. Superheroes
5. Friendships and social groups (popular, unpopular, etc.)
6. Crime/true crime
7. People with lives unlike my own
8. Content that doesn't include sex or romance
9. Family life and relationships with parents
10. Racial minorities



IDOL OF YOUTHFULNESS

by WALT MUELLER

From time to time I tell you about the power that marketing has over our kids. Marketing not only peddles products, but it also sells and promotes a worldview. Yes, marketing shapes the way that our kids look at and live life. But our kids aren't the only targets that marketing so effectively hits. Marketing also shapes us adults.

It's for that reason that I want to sound a warning that relates to one message marketing so effectively is sending to us as parents.

That message is this: *Don't grow old.*

It seems that we're listening as we older folks have become obsessed over our appearance, our clothing, our complexions, our body shapes, and more. We spend billions and billions of dollars trying to stop something that just can't be stopped. Ultimately, this is idolatry. And in the process, we're teaching our kids to grow up to worship the idol of youthfulness as well. Parents, consider what it is that you worship, and the message you're sending to your kids about what's most important in life.

FROM THE WORD

If you've ever gotten sucked into the rabbit-hole of watching YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram Reels, you've probably seen countless numbers of the millions of videos of people lying in wait to scare family members and friends in all kinds of creative ways. These videos relish in producing *fear*, a word defined as "an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat." Could that be what the *Bible* is instructing us to do when it calls us to "fear God"? The quick answer is "No!"

In Proverbs 1:7 we read words that some have called "the motto" of The Book of Proverbs and all other Old Testament wisdom literature, including Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. That motto sets up *fear* of the Lord not as a type of cowering, cringing, and paralyzing fear, but a reverent attitude toward God that is fueled by awe-filled gratitude to God for his grace and mercy in our lives.

We must rightly recognize that we are fully-dependent on our Creator for all things, including our salvation through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The "fear of the Lord" recognizes God's power and authority over all things, including our very lives. When we understand this we are driven to surrender ourselves to God's authority, to seek to know Him through His Word, and to live in humble obedience to His will. As the Book of Proverbs tells us, this is the beginning of knowledge, wisdom, and instruction that will guide us in every area of our lives.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 1:7



PODCAST



The Word in Youth Ministry

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

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 81:

"BETTER PREACHING IN YOUTH MINISTRY" WITH JEREMY MEEKS

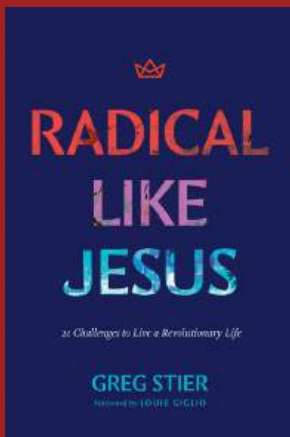


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RADICAL LIKE JESUS

HELPFUL
RESOURCES



BOOK

You are meant for more. God has called you to live a radical life for Him—one that makes a lasting impact on this world. Like Jesus did.

But how is this possible?

There's never been anyone in history as radical as Jesus. From the way that He prayed, to how He interacted with sinners, to His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus was a revolutionary. It's just who He was. As His followers, we are called to be like Him. It's not just something we should aspire to—it's a reality every Christian should strive for every day. We can live as Jesus did—be radical like He was—because Jesus lives in us and wants to live through us. When Jesus lives His life through us, we begin to do the things that He did.

That's what *Radical Like Jesus: 21 Challenges to Live a Revolutionary Life* by Greg Stier is all about—putting into practice the rhythms, activities, and actions that Jesus modeled throughout His life.

Radical Like Jesus is meant to challenge you with:

- 21 chapters that reflect on the life and actions of Jesus.
- 21 challenges that help you build Christ-honoring routines.
- 21 insights on how your everyday life can become revolutionary.

Every chapter ends with a *Radical Like Jesus* challenge. Some will truly stretch your faith, and all of them will help you live like Jesus lived. Take these challenges individually or do them as a group, and you'll never be the same.

Live your life on mission. Become radical like Jesus.



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