

"Don't you see that children are God's best gift? The fruit of the womb his generous legacy? Like a warrior's fistful of arrows are the children of a vigorous youth. Oh, how blessed are you parents, with your quivers full of children."

- Psalm 127:3-5 (The Message)

**YOUTH CULTURE
HOT LIST**

**TOP 10 VISITED U.S.
GAME WEBSITES**
MONTH OF JULY, 2008
(SOURCE: Hitwise)

1. **Pogo**
2. **RuneScape**
3. **Yahoo! Games**
4. **Webkinz**
5. **Yahoo! Sports Fantasy Baseball**
6. **MSN Games**
7. **GameFAQs**
8. **Club Penguin**
9. **Addicting Games**
10. **Neopets**

**YOUTH CULTURE
HOT QUOTE**

"[Being in the public eye] has taught me all the things I need to be grateful for. It makes you appreciate your real friends and family so much more. They were there when you were a dork in sixth grade, they're there when people you don't know are screaming your name on the red carpet, and they'll be there when no one cares again."

- Actress Lauren Conrad, *CosmoGirl*, September 2008, pg. 148

MTV'S INFLUENCE

This month - Sunday, September 7 to be exact - the cultural force known as MTV will be airing their annual Video Music Awards. It might sound a bit strange for me to recommend watching a network you might already be steering your kids away from, but that's just what I'm going to do. Carve out some time to watch this year's VMAs. Let me state my case and offer some healthy responses.

Over the years I've met many Christian parents who throw up their hands when it comes to MTV. But it's a part of our teenagers' world and its potent influence is shaping them directly through the tube and indirectly through their peer group whether we choose to recognize these facts or not. That said, what can we do as parents of teens to be sure that our kids are more influenced by God's will and way, than by MTV? While not exhaustive, here's a list of suggestions.

First, spend some time monitoring MTV. After you find out what your teen and/or your teen's peers are watching on MTV, sit down and give it a look. Remember, you're not watching to be entertained. You're watching to learn. If you're raising older teens, invite them to watch with you. Then, process what you've seen. Point out those values and messages that God's Word affirms. Challenge those values and messages that contradict the way and the will of our Heavenly Father. Help them see the lies for what they are. As you challenge, always show your teen what the Scriptures say about the issue, value, or behavior.

CPYU TREND ALERT: BINGE DRINKING

The dangerous and oftentimes deadly act of binge drinking is now seen as a normal rite of passage for today's teens. Our culture has glorified alcohol consumption so effectively, that more and more kids are bingeing, which is defined as having five or more drinks in a row. Among the reasons adolescents give for engaging in this dangerous behavior are to get drunk, the status associated with drinking, the overwhelming presence of alcohol in the peer community, peer pressure, and to deal with academic stress.

BY WALT MUELLER, PRESIDENT, CPYU

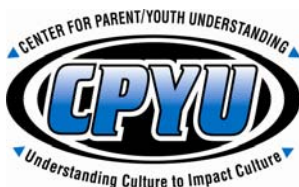
Second, be sure to pray. Pray for yourself, asking God to give you insight into how to evaluate MTV, and courage and wisdom as you discuss the network and its messages with your teen. Pray for your teen. Ask God to help them avoid confusion, develop wisdom to distinguish good from bad, and courage to live out Godly convictions.

Third, develop media guidelines and learn to say "no." Establish guidelines on how long the TV will be on in your house each day, and what is and isn't allowed on the screen when the power is on. Develop standards regarding the specific shows, themes, and program content that will and will not be a part of the media menu in your house. Respect your teen's cognitive abilities by explaining the reasons for your decisions.

Finally, have patience. Your teens are in *the process* of moving from childhood to adulthood. It is a rare thing for your efforts to be welcomed without resistance. Nor have I ever met a parent whose media intervention was met with a response of complete and instantaneous acceptance. Show grace as grace has been shown to you. Allow God to work in His time as He works out His plan for your teenager.

In an MTV-saturated world, our kids are learning and living what they see. Our consistent example and words of Godly wisdom are also powerful teachers. Let's give them another option to learn and live.

Sadly, binge drinkers are twenty-one times more likely to miss class, fall behind in their schoolwork, damage or injure themselves, engage in sexual activity, get arrested, and drink and drive. In addition to these outwardly visible consequences, kids are also doing irreparable damage to their developing brains, which of course, will have long term consequences. On top of that they run the risk of alcoholism and drug addiction. Parents, talk to your kids about the dangers of binge drinking.



LATEST RESEARCH: PEER PRESSURE AND BODY IMAGE

A new study published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* sheds new light on the current body image and disordered eating epidemic among our girls. The study finds that in addition to media portrayals of rail-thin females, peer pressure is playing a strong role in how our girls view and treat their bodies.

Researchers had teenage girls complete questionnaires about the peer groupings they related to, and how they felt members of those peer groups judged their appearance. Girls who identified with

alternative and burnout peer groups were most worried about their weight. This worry led to taking steps that were potentially unhealthy. In addition, African American girls were less concerned about their weight than others.

These findings remind us of our need to instill a Godly sense of healthy body image into our kids from the moment they are born. You need to know your child's friends, then you must counter any unhealthy or dangerous messages being sent by the peer group.



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FROM THE WORD

Did you know that your teen is a gift from God? For that reason we can't buy into the widespread cultural cynicism regarding teenagers as difficulties or burdens. That's unjustified. The psalmist writes, "Don't you see that children are God's best gift? The fruit of the womb his generous legacy? Like a warrior's fistful of arrows are the children of a vigorous youth. Oh, how blessed are you parents, with your quivers full of children." (Psalm 127:3-5, *The Message*).

Teenagers are not liabilities; they're rewards from God, given to us as a sign of God's fa-

vor. God values them highly and so must we. Because it's so easy for us as adults to fall prey to the selfish pressures and expectations of life in today's world, we can just as easily see teenagers as inconveniences and nuisances that suck the life out of us, keeping us from doing the things we want to do and from realizing what we think is our full potential.

When you face difficult times with your kids – and you will – always remember that the children God gave you as gifts *remain* gifts. . . even during the teenage years.

IN THE NEWS: WORK PLACE ABUSE

Teenagers have always held down jobs. That hasn't changed as more and more kids look to make money for college, to put gas in the car, and to finance their many purchases. Chances are your kids are working. For that reason, you should extend your parental diligence to include knowledge on the negative things that might be happening while they're at work.

Researchers at the Injury Prevention Research Center report that as many as one in three teenagers may have been on the receiving end of violence or abuse at work. For example, those

teens who work in retail stores are at risk because of their constant contact with customers and large amounts of cash. Ten percent of teens say they've been physically attacked while at work. Ten percent believe they were sexually harassed. And twenty-five percent said they had been verbally abused.

Parents, talk with your working teens about the dangers they may face at work. And, be sure they learn how to treat others with Christlike dignity and respect.

