

# PARENT UPDATE

coming alongside your family

Wesley Student Ministry

## Miracle or Material?

*Chris Countryman*

Advent is upon us, it is a season of anticipation and hope. The word Advent is of Latin origin meaning, "coming toward." For the early church the birth of Christ was such a monumental event they felt it necessary to have a period of time leading up to prepare themselves. This advent I invite us and encourage us all to come towards Christ, as He left his throne and came to us. Let us this advent celebrate the miracle of "God with Us" and not the material.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Lock-in

*On 12/19/14 at 6:00PM to 12/20/14 at 9:00AM*

On 12/19 @6:00pm Wesley Student Ministry will have a lock-in. All students must have a completed registration form to attend. There will be a lot of food, fun and a whole lot of worshipping Jesus.

### Progressive Dinner/Ugly Xmas Sweater

*On 12/21/14 from 4:00PM to 8:00PM*

Instead of our Sunday night youth meeting we are inviting you all to join us as we make 3 dinner stops (apps, entre, dessert). Meet us in the SMC at 4:00pm and wear your ugly xmas sweater!

# Shaping Spiritual Change in Your Teenager

*By Jim Burns*

One of the main reasons I remain focused on young people as my life work is because it is such an important time for developing a relationship with God. It's exciting to see teens explore their spirituality, but it's also a bit scary for us parents. As they move from a concrete faith to a more abstract way of thinking, they just may say and do some things that go against their parents' views. While in college, our daughter Christy felt she had to disown our faith to eventually claim her own faith. Interestingly enough, her faith still looks quite similar to ours.

This is the stage in their faith development where teens may not want to go to church, or they might say things about God just to get you upset. It is a time of passionate belief and passionate doubt. One morning they may sincerely feel called to be a missionary, and later in the day they will tell you they don't believe in God anymore and they want nothing to do with church. Both feelings are real, for the time being, both feelings are a normal part of their faith development. The worst things parents can do is freak out, panic or put down their child during this time of searching. Young people are on a spiritual quest, and we can't mistake skepticism or doubt as a sign that they are not interested.

Parents must also avoid smothering their kids with their own faith. Sure you can set expectations (like church attendance,) but don't spend much time preaching at them. Allow and even affirm the difficult questions. A healthy faith has room for questions. And whenever possible, empower them to put their faith in action. During a tenuous time in the faith development of one of my own daughters, we went on a foreign mission trip together. The experience of putting her faith in action caused her to do some very important thinking, and after college graduation, she moved to Ecuador to invest a year of her life working with kids.

Teens today are very experiential. They need opportunities to put their faith in action. Obviously, we can't all go with our kids to a foreign country to do mission work, but we can help them find the time to give them the opportunity to do hands-on ministry and learn that the call to Christ is the call to serve.

# An Introduction to Generation Z (aka: your teen)

*By HomeWord.com*

When you think of today's teens you might assume that they all belong to the Millennial generation. But while Millennials will continue to influence culture for decades to come, if you are now raising teens, it's likely that they belong to Generation Z, a new and emerging generation of teenagers.

Even though research into Gen Z is in its infancy, two things are consistently agreed upon by students of culture: Gen Z teens are now on the scene, and 2) they, like all previous generations, will carve out their own unique characteristics and have their own distinctive values, attitudes and behaviors.

Researchers have started turning the lens of examination on Gen Z. One recent study by Northeastern University compiled information obtained from surveys of over 1,000 teens 16-19, and this study may be one of the first to attempt to build our understanding of this new generation.

Here are some characteristics of today's teens that were obtained through the study:

- Today's teens are concerned about the costs of going to college and the debt that is often part of the college experience.
- Two in three fear they might not be able to find a job after college.
- Four in ten expect to be self-employed during their adult career.
- More than half believe that anyone should have a right to become a U.S. citizen no matter how they enter the country.
- Half receive their news online. Only two in ten get news from watching television.
- While technology is simply a part of everyday life for teens, two in three (69%) prefer to interact with friends in-person over interacting online, with only 15% preferring online.
- 70% would not use electronic methods (online, phones, texting, etc.) to ask someone out on a date.

## Questions for Parents

1. If your teen is planning on attending college, how can you help prepare her/him to deal with the financial aspects?
2. If your teen expresses concern about accumulating significant debt to attend college, how can you help her/him think through alternatives to amassing debt?
3. How does your teen view today's significant social issues like immigration?
4. What points of tension might you experience with your teen based on their views of these social issues?
5. Does your teen prefer to connect with friends online or in-person? Why?
6. How can you encourage your teen toward more in-person interaction with their friends?
7. How can you influence your teen toward better integration between life issues and their faith?

# Discipline Demonstrates Love

*By HomeWord.com*

At some level, most parents fear the possibility that using discipline with their kids might drive them away. Yet the reality is that discipline is needed, and (for most kids) it works.

Many kids aren't mature enough to realize that if their parents don't ground them; if they don't attach consequences to actions that are outside the established boundaries, their parents are not acting in love toward them.

Healthy discipline is a sign that parents love their children. Let's think about God for a moment. The Scriptures tell us that He disciplines us because He loves us: "My child, don't reject the Lord's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights." —Proverbs 3:11-12 (NLT) This passage in Proverbs ties God's discipline to the human discipline a parent provides to his or her child, and this is how we know that discipline (provided in a healthy way) is a demonstration of love.

I believe the healthiest and most effective way to discipline teenagers is to set up consequences for violating boundaries ahead of time. When consequences are set ahead of time, you set up the dynamic where it's not you versus your child, but rather you and your child versus the consequences. For example, if my daughter comes home late, missing her curfew, and I meet her at the door, I can tell her, "I'm so bummed that you missed your curfew and now you have to spend the next three weeks with Mom and me."

I don't have to get angry. I don't have to yell. I don't even have to raise my voice. I can actually be empathetic toward my daughter, because the reality is that we agreed to the consequence ahead of time. It's my daughter and me against the consequence.

No teenager is ever going to go up to a parent and say, "Thank you. Thank you. I love it when you ground me!" But, loving guidelines and strong parental boundaries are a sign of love. Beyond applying consequences, your kids need you to help them process bad decisions and help guide them toward learning from the mistakes they've made. They need your coaching and encouragement to build confidence that they are capable of making good decisions.

Your kids are not going to ask you to ground them or bring more discipline into their lives, but they need it! Discipline is a sign of love! Just make sure you discipline in a reasonable and loving ways!

# Keeping Instagram Safe

By *TheSource4Parents.com*

Should I let my daughter have Instagram?

I'm asked that question at almost every one of my parenting workshops, and it's no wonder. Almost every teen has the photo-sharing app. If your kid doesn't... their best friend does.

Instagram was the fastest growing smartphone app of 2013's top 10 Smartphone apps (Nielsen data), growing 66% last year and ranking 7th overall for the number of users. Yes, Facebook is still number one for Average Unique Users... but ask any teenagers which app they prefer.

Jump on a young person's Instagram and you'll quickly get an idea of who they hang out with, where they spend time, what they enjoy, and sometimes even what they eat. Instagram provides a unique little porthole into their world. A picture tells 1,000 words... right?

This brings up some interesting ramifications for parents. Do you know what your kids are posting on Instagram? How do they look to friends... and to predators? Instagram can be a fun and innocent app, but like all social media, it requires responsibility by the user. As Instagram's own faq page states:

"All photos are public by default which means they are visible to anyone using Instagram or on the instagram.com website. If you choose to make your account private, then only people who follow you on Instagram will be able to see your photos."

Parents need to have conversations with their kids about social media responsibility. I've witnessed the horror stories when parents don't. If your kids are one of the 31 million Instagram users, make time to talk about basic common sense social media decisions like these:

- Only chat with people you know face to face.
- Don't post anything you wouldn't want Grandma to see.
- Never post a mean comment about someone.
- Consider setting up privacy settings so only followers can see your photos. Then they have to send you a follow request which you can either approve or deny.
- Be careful posting your location. If you allow anyone to follow you, then they may be able to see the location information when you post a picture of your home or your school. You can remove those locations from your photos by editing your photo map.
- Always report any abusive behavior, the app makes it easy to do. Also, feel free to block a user if they creep you out! (Just don't block Mom or Dad—they pay your phone bill!)

Many of these are common sense to today's social media users, but parents should never assume their kids know this. If your kids ever download an app, spend some time on the app's website and read their Privacy and Safety suggestions.

Instagram is a great photo-sharing app that can be used innocently... or dangerously. So parents should be sure to engage in conversations with their kids before they start snapping pics.

# Family Ideas for Serving Others at Christmas

*By Jim Burns*

It's recorded in Matthew's Gospel, (Matt. 10:8) that Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely give." Though our lives may not always be everything we hope for them to be, God has richly blessed each one of us. One of the ways we can demonstrate that we are grateful to God for his many blessings is to help others.

Christmastime provides an opportunity for your family to roll up your sleeves and get involved in helping to meet the needs of others in your community – showing them the light and love of Christ. Here are some family ideas for reaching out and helping others during the Christmas season:

1. Donate your family's time to help out at a food kitchen or a food bank.
2. Take your family to visit someone you know who lives at a nursing home, who lives alone, or is confined at home because of poor health.
3. Invite neighbors who don't have plans to join your family for Christmas dinner.
4. Provide some (or all) of the Christmas dinner groceries for a needy family in your community. Take the family along to make the delivery.
5. Have your family gather winter clothes and coats that don't fit any longer, or are no longer wanted or needed – and distribute them to homeless people in your area – or deliver them to a local shelter.
6. Make some bag lunches and take your family into the community to distribute them to homeless people in your area. (Make sure ahead of time that your local authorities allow this type of distribution.)
7. Make more Christmas treats than you need for your holiday meals. As a family, deliver extras to the neighbors or to a needy family in your area.
8. Find an elderly person in your area that could use some help at the grocery store. Better yet, invite them to your home for a special holiday meal.
9. Find a family in your area that could use some help to take care of fall yard cleanup, basic repair or weatherization around their home. Buy the needed materials and get to work as a family!
10. Invite a neighbor's family over to your home for a simple, fun family game night.