

2017



harvestusa

CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME



Youth Culture Issue



CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME

WHAT'S INSIDE

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 From The President The Time Has Never Been More Urgent Tim Geiger | 13 Real Life Conversations Youth Ministry Isn't for the Faint-Hearted These Days John Freeman |
| 3 A Look Up Discipling Students in an Age of Pour-Over Coffee and Smart-Tech Cooper Pinson | 15 Of Boys and Cultural Stereotypes Dan Wilson |
| 7 Should Parents Gouge Out Their Child's Eyes? Cameron Cole | 16 On the Road Bright Ideas from a Youth Minister Interview with Jon Shepherd |
| 10 An Exercise in Cultural Discernment From Bar to Bed...and Other Lies Walt Mueller | 19 Children at Risk Transgender Ideology R. Nicholas Black |

CONTRIBUTORS



R. Nicholas Black



Tim Geiger



John Freeman



Cooper Pinson



Cameron Cole



Dan Wilson



Walt Mueller



HARVEST USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

EDITOR

R. Nicholas Black

National Office Philadelphia
715 Twining Road, Suite 200
Dresher, PA 19025
215-482-0111
harvestusa.org

Greater Pittsburgh Region
11743 Frankstown Road, Suite E
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
412-723-2966

FIND US ON



READ OUR BLOG
harvestusa.org

From the President

The Time Has Never Been More Urgent



Fall 2014 was a time of celebration for us at HARVEST USA. After several years of prayer and planning, we launched a new focus in our ministry to benefit young Christians, from early childhood to age 25.

As a strategic initiative, we began developing content to help parents, youth leaders, youth pastors, camp counselors, and campus ministry leaders disciple their young men and women in God's design for sex, sexuality, and gender. Our goal? To equip the adults who love and care for young Christians to help them see the glory and wisdom of God in these areas of physical, emotional, and spiritual life. We want to see more and more young Christians struggle well—and struggle victoriously—against the ordinary temptations they face to misuse God's good gifts. We want to see fewer and fewer of them develop the life-dominating sexual sin patterns that cripple the lives, the faith, and the witness of so many young people in the church today.

Christian discipleship always starts with learning who God is, and the wisdom of his created order, and the ordinances he established for us in Scripture, in order that we would steward it well. We are, in fact, stewards of everything in creation, after the pattern of our first parents. God instructed them to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over [it]" (Genesis 1:28).

But stewardship involves more than wisely managing the earth; it also means that we are stewards of our own bodies, hearts, and desires. The ways in which we use them reflect where our true allegiance lies: to God or to our own happiness.

As we learn to steward our bodies—these physical bodies which reflect God's image into his creation—our lives reflect his wisdom and give him the glory and praise he deserves.

In this issue of *harvestusa magazine*, you'll find articles written to help you understand how to disciple students of any age in your church or family, and to better discern the particular barriers that young people face to believe and live out a biblical view of sex, sexuality, and gender. We hope what you learn here will also enable you to pray for the young people in your family, your church, and for the parents and Christian leaders who minister to them.

Please let them know you're praying for those who are called to help shepherd our children. The time has never been more urgent. Christian parents or youth leaders have never experienced such a challenging time in modern history to disciple their young ones in holiness. You will not only encourage them through prayer—you will help them in their labor.

And please pray for us at HARVEST USA, as we create more resources for parents and church leaders as they come to us with hard stories of children who have already tasted the saccharine sweetness of sin. Pray that we would be able to share with these parents and youth leaders that our God is a God who delights to redeem. Thank you so much!

In the Lord,

Tim Geiger
President

A Look Up

Disciplining Students in an Age of Pour-Over Coffee and Smart-Tech

By Cooper Pinson



Every adult generation has a similar refrain: a proverbial uphill-both-ways-commute, a more centralized family, a simpler life, and perhaps even a better America. And some of the generational shift is true. The neighborhood newspaper kid has been replaced with the online news feed. The drive-ins and Blockbusters of the world have been put to rest by Netflix and Amazon Prime. Those RC colas have stepped aside for pour-over coffee and craft beer. Now we have transgender bathrooms in elementary schools. Kids are exposed to hardcore porn on smart devices at their friends' houses. Fueled by the catalysts of hyper-individualism and secular humanism, a new sexual mantra has emerged:

Sexually, you are the only one who can define yourself, your truth, and your happiness.

But consider what has not changed: students are still searching for Meaning. Ever since we decided to forsake Meaning and rebelliously set out east of Eden to subdue the great unknown, we have forgotten who we really are. Yet we still search for that which we lost. At its core, our secularized sexuality is a meaning-quest, a desperate grasp at self-definition, finding ourselves. Rather than simply lament the state of today's youth and the sexual chaos that has enveloped them, let's take a fresh look at this quest.

Self-Defining as an Expression of Suffering

Think about transgenderism. What thoughts rise up inside of you?

"What is the world coming to today? The LGBTQ agenda... those liberals...the world is going to hell in a handbasket..."

But when the culture is preaching a message of radical self-expression, and when we ourselves feel the insecurity within us, is it any wonder that students seek to self-define? Who else can they trust? Newsfeeds are awash with upheaval in other countries, corrupt leaders, neo-Nazi hate groups, and TV preachers hyped up on riches. In other words, do we see gender-dysphoric students as political subversives or as human beings caught in a post-Eden world of chaos?

Think about the hookup culture.

"Kids can't control themselves...I would have never thought about...If parents would just..."

But given the rampant divorce rate and relational hurt many experience in broken families, doesn't it seem logical to protect yourself from that by-gone institution? Shouldn't we take the "best" of that bubble, the sex itself, and celebrate it without chaining ourselves to the social construct? The hookup culture is not simply a symptom of our sex-drive; it's also an attempt to discover a better way.

Students aren't mindless drones. They are responding to the world around them in panic, like sheep without a

shepherd. What if we saw meaning-making and self-defining as desperation in the face of deep suffering?

Perhaps it's time to give voice to what we often fail to recognize: following Christ in this world is hard and seems absurd at times. When the mantra, "God is in control," is spoken, it can be horrendously applied. Our students are wrestling with the ever-increasing darkness of our culture. We are not seeing them accurately, nor are we helping them, when we criticize their behavior without taking into account the larger context of their world.

But our kids are not alone in dealing with the chaos. We, too, have struggled with the notion of a good God in the midst of a twisted world. We were once the hippies, the punks, and the dropouts.

The Gospel of Jesus doesn't promise daisy fields on this side of eternity; it promises crosses. And crosses are still heavy, despite the fact that they will give way to crowns. It's only as we are honest about our own sufferings that we will be able to effectively walk arm and arm as fellow sojourners with kids.

For parents, youth workers, and anyone who works with kids, what does it look like to come alongside of our students as they make sense of this world? It means sitting your kid down this week to take a look at the news, asking questions about how he or she is processing the suffering in the world while not giving canned answers in response. It means taking a student out for a meal and asking, "What has been particularly difficult for you this week? How has that impacted you?" It means talking about our own hardships as well. Notice that Jesus weeps with Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus *before* he reframes suffering in a flood of resurrection-light (John 11:35-44).

Self-Defining as an Expression of Sin

However, our students' attempts at self-defining are more than expressions of suffering. They are ultimately expressions of sin.

As one theologian said, secularization is "essentially forgetting Christ, because secularization is the isolation of the world within its own immanence."¹ But since we can never truly isolate ourselves from our Creator, our secularized sexuality is at best *attempted* isolation, an endeavor to cut ourselves off from God. It is, essentially, an effort to burn Jacob's ladder to the ground. But true purpose and meaning come from *beyond* the self.

When we have no Cosmic Norm, we brew confusion. If there is no Authority, we are all authorities, and when we are all authorities, there are no legitimate rights and wrongs. So while we need to approach our kids with a compassion that seeks to validate their suffering, we also need to approach them with a challenge about their rebellious hearts.



How can we do this practically? If we want kids to trust God, and what his Word says about sex, sexuality, and gender, then as parents and leaders, we must be willing to wisely talk about our own sins with kids. We must be honest about our mess and the truth that Jesus — yes — has changed us, and that He, by His Spirit, is *currently* changing us as well.

We need to help students see that repentance and faith are things we practice *every day*, not just things we did long ago when we were immature and foolish students ourselves. Maybe we let our older teens in on some of the sins we struggled with, and still struggle with, as youth ministers. When we are honest, we open up space for students to be honest with us. If we want to make disciples, we've got to be willing to walk alongside of our children and our students for the long haul, not simply lecture them momentarily on morality.

Self-Defining as a Farce

Under the angst, both we and our kids know that our experiment in self-defining is a farce. We all “know” the true Meaning of the universe, and our knowledge of Him betrays us even as we seek to suppress it (Romans 1:18-20). We know that our attempts at self-defining are exercises in hewing broken cisterns that hold no water and give no life (Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:13-14).

Take a look at the celebrity culture. These people can have all the sex, all the money, and all the fame they want. But what sense can we make of those tip-top celebrities being jailed for drugs or racing their Lamborghinis to spite the police? What do we make of all the rampant divorce plaguing the celebrity world?

If we are attentive to the culture, we will see this truth: human beings can never be “authentic” when we attempt to separate ourselves from God. Even in attempting “authenticity,” we find ourselves just repeating our culture’s sexual mantra. In other words, we are still “going with the flow” even if we buck traditional, Cosmic authority.

We can only be authentic when we are being worshipfully derivative, “receptively reconstructive” of our God-created sexuality, not “critically constructive” to the exclusion of our God.ⁱⁱ In other words, when we construct meaning ourselves, we sinfully burden tweens with the idea that they can choose their own gender. When we don’t receive the meaning of sexuality from God, we praise porn stars for their “artistic” ability as we chain them to an industry bent on their exploitation.

With so much time spent looking down these days, it might be best to do the reverse.



A Way Out

I, like all high school students, experienced the pull to meaning-make, to self-define. But there were two, physical spaces that threw cold water in my face during those years.

The first was an observatory on an extremely large, and rural, college campus. This building was in the middle of nowhere (in a wheat field to be exact). I would drive my angst-ridden self out there many days after school and sit in the silence. I could see the pond across the gravel road, feel the wind in the wheat, touch the dirt, and experience the immensity of the land. I could see that the world wasn't waiting on, or revolving around, me.

The second was the deck attached to my parents' house, which is situated on top of a mountain in Northwest Georgia. In the late hours, when the house was asleep, I would often sneak out to the deck, and on clear nights, the billions of stars and the expanse of the valley infused Meaning back into my quest. But that Meaning came from seeing that I, in fact, did not live in an isolated snow globe of my own existence. I lived in a universe that sang a different song, and I was not its Theme.

I think, at times, given the chaos of our world and the genuine love we have for our kids and students, we run around

looking for quick solutions, for a list of do's and don'ts. But in our hectic spirit, we have neglected to look up.

Repositioning our secularized sexuality starts with turning our gaze elsewhere, escaping the prison of our own self-centeredness to rejoin the universe in its grand song to its loving Creator, Sustainer, and Savior.

A Look Up

There are tons of things we, as parents and youth ministers, can say and do to reach our kids. But we mustn't begin there. Addressing the secularized sexuality of our kids starts with humbly addressing our own, with lifting our eyes to meet our Savior's. We need to apply both the balm and challenge of Jesus to our own suffering wounds and sinful flesh in real, practical ways today.

As to our sexual sufferings, we need to bring them to the One who cares for us. Consider Psalm 56:8: "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?"

Can you imagine your God compassionately tallying your many, excruciating battles with pornography, loneliness, insecurity, or same-sex attraction? Can you imagine Him holding a bottle up to your eye to catch your tears shed for



the son or daughter who has embraced a rebellious life? Can you think of Him with His cosmic book, recording your sorrows in prose?

But doesn't that make the world about me? Certainly not. It is the ironic nature of grace. Grace is water to a dry mouth, enabling speech and song to our God.

How can we bring our sorrows and sufferings to Him? Let me suggest one thing: let's honestly pray to Him today. Let's lay our frustrations, our despairs, our inabilities, our sufferings at His feet. And, in doing so, let's remember the One who hears us. He is the One who did not stay aloof but suffered with us, for us.

As for our sins, the call for repentance must be laid upon us before it can be laid upon our kids or students. In the warmth of his kindness (Romans 2:4), let's turn back to Him in practical ways even today. When we get angry with our children, let's apologize to them and ask for their forgiveness, teaching them how we come to our Father. Instead of trying

to manage the pull to look at porn on our smartphones, let's consider a dumb phone.

Do we need to apply the balm and challenge of Christ to our kids' sufferings and sins? Absolutely. But we cannot offer to them something we haven't received ourselves. We cannot ask our students to lift their gaze if our own is downwardly fixed.

Only when we, ourselves, fix our gaze on Jesus in everyday ways will our families and ministries find their true place in the universe, not as creators, but as creatures; not as masters, but as servants; not as movers, but as moved. Only then will we, and those kids under our watch, be set in motion, not by our farcical, self-defining meaning-quest but by love for our Great God.

*High phantasy lost power and here broke off;
Yet, as a wheel moves smoothly, free from jars,
My will and my desire were turned by love,
The love that moves the sun and the other stars.*ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 18.

ⁱⁱ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th Ed., Ed. K. Scott Oliphint, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), 72.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dante Alighieri, *Paradise*, Trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969), 347.

Should Parents Gouge Out Their Child's Eyes?

Cameron Cole

I, like every other father in the world, have a perfect daughter. My four-year-old princess is the only girl among four children. In theory, I know that my “perfect” daughter is a sinner. In reality, I actually believe that somehow she miraculously dodged the infection of original sin. At least, that’s the best rationalization I have in the fantasy-based, biased view I have of “daddy’s special girl.” Given her long, Shirley Temple curls, radiant smile, and warm personality, can you blame me?

This sentimental conception of my precious daughter works fine now as she currently emerges into “big girl” phase from toddlerhood. However, this naiveté will present major problems for her if I cling to it as she starts to enter school.

In my years of youth ministry, I have watched parents struggle to accept the realities about their maturing children. It’s hard. It’s sad. It’s a source of grief. We mourn our babies growing up and progressing toward adulthood. But here’s the truth: children do not remain babies forever.

I often have observed parents resisting this struggle in conversations about pornography and Internet protections. I tell all parents in all talks about technology in our church that they need an Internet reporting device on any screen to which their child has access. Just checking the Internet history is insufficient as 70% of kids admit to erasing history or concealing online activity from parents.ⁱ

More times than I can count, I have suggested to parents of middle school boys that they install a filter and reporting device on their children’s phone and tablet. Too often, I have watched in amazement as parents suggest that their 14 or 15-year-old boy isn’t interested in things like that yet. He’s still so young.

I understand the struggle. I do not want to admit that my precious angel ever could have an interest in pornography. I can hardly imagine the thought of her receiving a sext solicitation from some teenage punk—and caving to the pressure. However, two sources tell me that I should not be so foolish.

First, statistics tell us that the rate of teens accessing inappropriate material online is rampant. In the United States, 93% of boys and 62% of girls have looked at pornographic videos online before the age of 18.ⁱⁱ And 54% of young people ages 18-22 admitted that they engaged in sexting while they were minors.ⁱⁱⁱ

The second (and more reliable) source, which warns of the risks and temptations of teenagers, is Scripture. The Bible does not paint a pretty picture of the human condition. Jesus said that “people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (John 3:19). Not “people have a mild attraction to” or “people stumble from time to time,” but people *love darkness*.



James writes that temptation is not simply evil wooing us from the outside. He said, “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desire* (James 1:14, emphasis mine). Our sinful nature wants to be tempted because it is inherently attracted to darkness. He does not say that the flesh tempts some people but that it tempts “each” and, thereby, every person.

Here’s what I am saying about your child’s inherent sinfulness as it relates to sexual sin and technology. If you have a boy, I promise you, that boy really wants to look at pornography. Porn is an incredibly powerful temptation for your son. Statistics suggest that your daughter has enough of a temptation to look at pornography that the risk warrants protecting her, also.

As challenging as accepting this reality may be, your children — like my children — have not escaped the effects of the Fall. They have a natural affinity to sin sexually. Of course, your child needs you to be their champion and cheerleader who believes the best in them. Simultaneously, your child also needs you to be the responsible adult who realizes that their sinful flesh can lead them into very damaging places if they are not protected. If parents cannot accept their child’s inherent sinfulness and take action, then they will endanger their child.

Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:30). He exercises hyperbole here in telling people to exercise whatever means possible to distance themselves from temptation and sin.

While Christ's words here pertain to our own sanctification, this principle can be extrapolated to parenting, as well.

Technology opens doors to sexual sin for your child—so close them. Install a filter/monitoring system on every device and apply parental controls.

**Parents, I plead with you, do not be naïve.
Protect your child.**

Cameron Cole is the Chairman of Rooted: Advancing Grace-Driven Ministry, and he serves as Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry at Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, AL.

¹<http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/25/tech/web/mcafee-teen-online-survey/index.html>

²<https://www.brushfiresfoundation.org/youth-are-exposed-to-pornography-worldwide/>

³Van Ouytsel J; Ponnet K; Walrave M. "The associations between adolescents' consumption of pornography and music videos and their sexting behavior," *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw*. 2014 Dec; 17(12): 722-8.

The poster features a background image of tall pine trees with a warm, golden-orange light filter applied. The text is centered and reads: "GOSPEL-CENTERED YOUTH MINISTRY CONFERENCE" in a white, all-caps serif font. Below this is the phrase "Gospel of Hope" in a white, italicized script font, flanked by two horizontal white lines. The word "rooted" is in a large, white, lowercase sans-serif font, followed by "2017" in a large, white, all-caps serif font. A white infinity symbol is positioned below the year. The dates "OCTOBER 26-28" and the location "DALLAS, TEXAS" are written in a white, all-caps sans-serif font. At the bottom, "NEW PARENTING WORKSHOPS" is in a white, all-caps sans-serif font, and the website "rootedministry.com/conference" is in a white, lowercase sans-serif font.

GOSPEL-CENTERED
YOUTH MINISTRY CONFERENCE

Gospel of Hope

rooted 2017

∞

OCTOBER 26-28
DALLAS, TEXAS

NEW PARENTING WORKSHOPS

rootedministry.com/conference



Gospel Sexuality

Raising Sexually
Healthy Kids

Our seminar for parents gives them gospel-centered principles to disciple their kids' hearts and nurture their faith as they face the sexual chaos of their world.

Bring this seminar to your church!

Contact brooke@harvestusa.org

Saturday, November 11, 2017
Immanuel Bible Church
Springfield, VA

Saturday, January 27, 2018
Trinity United Reformed Church
Visalia, CA



An Exercise In Cultural Discernment

From Bar To Bed... And Other Lies

Walt Mueller

I've been watching youth culture for almost thirty years. I'm convinced that there's no visible cultural shift that's been faster, more significant, more widespread, and more life-altering than our beliefs and behaviors regarding sex and sexuality. And if *culture* refers to the way that we define and live in the world, then the road map we're following in today's world is pointing our kids to a sexual ethic void of borders and boundaries, with the exception (at least for the time being) of labeling anything *non-consensual* as "wrong."

The life-shaping cultural soup that our kids swim in 24/7 tells them that when it comes to sex, you can do *whatever* you want, *however* you want, *whenever* you want, *wherever* you want, with *whomever* you want. To be "sex positive" is to be authentic and true to your desires and feelings in the moment.

Over the course of my years watching culture, I've looked for ways to effectively engage in conversations that might challenge kids to rethink the cultural narrative in light of the biblical narrative on God's good gift of sex and sexuality. One valuable tool we have at our fingertips is the cultural artifact of popular music, which happens to be one of the more voluminous ingredients in the cultural soup. So, why not use it to our advantage?

Perhaps we can take a lesson from the missionary approach of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 17 we read of his encounter with the Athenians and their pagan culture. Before challenging their cultural narrative with the biblical narrative, Paul took the time to look carefully at what they held near and dear (v. 22-23). He kept his eyes and ears open, listening to their beliefs and behaviors *before* confronting their beliefs and behaviors with the Gospel. Then, when he opened his mouth to speak the truth, he did so in ways that reflected his knowledge of their culture.

When it comes to talking to kids about sex and sexuality in today's world, it's not enough to know the ins and outs of biblical sexuality. We must also know the ins and outs of what culture is teaching our kids on these matters so that we might be able to celebrate and affirm where the culture might be getting it right (and that happens from time to time), and where the culture might be getting it wrong. That can only happen when we are committed to taking the time to *listen carefully*.

At the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, we endeavor to allow popular music to serve as a tool that pulls back the curtain on the "spirit of the age." By listening carefully to the music, we begin to unfold and see the maps that guide our kids. Then, we work to bring the light of the Gospel to bear on the realities that exist. A simple way to hear the music speak and to frame a response is to utilize what we call a "3(D) approach." We begin by **D***iscovering* the worldview woven in and through the musical piece. Then, we work to **D***iscern* how that worldview affirms or conflicts with the biblical worldview. Finally, we **D***ecide* how to best respond to what we've **D***iscovered* and **D***iscerned*.

Singer Ed Sheeran's song, "Shape of You," offers a great example of how to use music to spark conversations on sex and sexuality. Pre-released as a single digital download on January 6, 2017, this Caribbean-flavored dance song from Sheeran's album "÷" (*Divide*), has already topped the charts in 30 countries (including the U.S.), and just might wind up being the most-listened-to song of the year. Find the song's lyrics online and give them a read. Then, go to YouTube and watch the official video for the song. Then take a look at how we've broken the song down using our 3(D) methodology (see below). Finally, take what you've learned and use it to spark discussions with the kids you know, love, and have been called to lead!

Discover: What is the message/worldview?

- The song's title is a straightforward reflection of the song's message. The song and video depict and promote a quickly-formed mutual male/female relational connection prompted solely on the basis of visual/ physical attraction.
- In the video, Sheeran and his female interest cross paths while training in a dimly lit boxing gym. In the song, Sheeran sings of his deliberate quest to hook-up in a bar: *"The club isn't the best place to find a lover/So the bar is where I go/Me and my friends at the table doing shots/ Drinking fast and then we talk slow/Come over and start up a conversation with just me/And trust me I'll give it a chance now."* With inhibitions lowered due to alcohol, the couple agrees to dance.
- The dance leads immediately to each of them declaring a desire for a sexual connection. He sings to her, *"Girl, you know I want your love/Your love was handmade for somebody like me/Come on now, follow my lead."* She follows his lead while discouraging any getting-to-know-each-other through conversation: *"Say, boy, let's not talk too much/Grab on my waist and put that body on me/Come on now, follow my lead."*
- The encounter quickly leads to a hook-up: *"I'm in love with the shape of you/We push and pull like a magnet do."* Sheeran tells us that continuing sexual encounters based on visual attraction precede love: *"Although my heart is falling too/I'm in love with your body/And now my bedsheets smell like you/Everyday discovering something brand new."*
- Reflecting and promoting current cultural trends regarding sex, dating, and love, Sheeran wants a dating relationship following a week's worth of sexual encounters: *"One week in we let the story begin/We're going out on our first date."* The song ends with Sheeran singing his mantra of physical attraction: *"I'm in love with your body/Oh-I-Oh-I- Oh-I-Oh-I."*

Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- Culture is bombarding our kids with hyper-sexual messages that lead them to equate "love" with sexual activity of all kinds. "Shape of You" both reflects and promotes the message they hear, specifically that there are no boundaries when it comes to sexuality, except for mutual consent. When it comes to sex, you are to "follow your heart" and your emotions, pursuing physical intimacy by doing whatever you want, wherever you want, however you want, whenever you want, with whomever you want. Increasingly, dating may now follow sexual hook-ups (which are increasingly random and anonymous). Contrary to these beliefs, the reality is that sex has been created by God as a good gift that He's given to humanity. The Scriptures are clear from Genesis to Revelation: Sex is a wonderful and good thing that has its place: shared between one man and one woman within the context of a covenantal marriage (Genesis 2:24). Sex also has its divinely-ordained purpose: consummation of marriage, procreation, intimacy, and pleasure. We are to flee from any sexual activity which is outside of this place and purpose (Colossians 3:5; Galatians 5:19-21; I Corinthians 6:18).
- The Bible defines "lust" as a strong attraction and desire that can move in either a good or evil direction. In this case, Sheeran is promoting indulgence and servitude to the lusts of the flesh, which the Bible states are not of God and which war against the soul (Ephesians 2:3; I John 2:16; I Peter 2:11). Indulging lustful feelings is not only immoral, but it selfishly sabotages personhood (both of self and other), our flourishing, and the potential for full relational intimacy (both now and future).



- Culture puts a premium on physical appearances. Our boys are growing up in a culture that encourages them to view females as nothing more or less than sexual objects. Our girls are learning that they must center their lives and identities on creating a sexually attractive visual persona that is attractive and pleasing. Identity is now found in curating one's self to satisfy "sexual consumerism" where we display ourselves, window-shop, purchase, consume, and then quickly dispose of that which is no longer novel. The Scriptures tell us that we have been made *by* God and *for* God. Finding our identity in anything other than Christ is idolatry (1 John 5:21; Exodus 20:3-6). While humans mistakenly idolize outward appearances, we must rewrite the cultural narrative by cultivating inward character and hearts bent on faithful obedience to God (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 31:30).

Decide: What do I do with it?

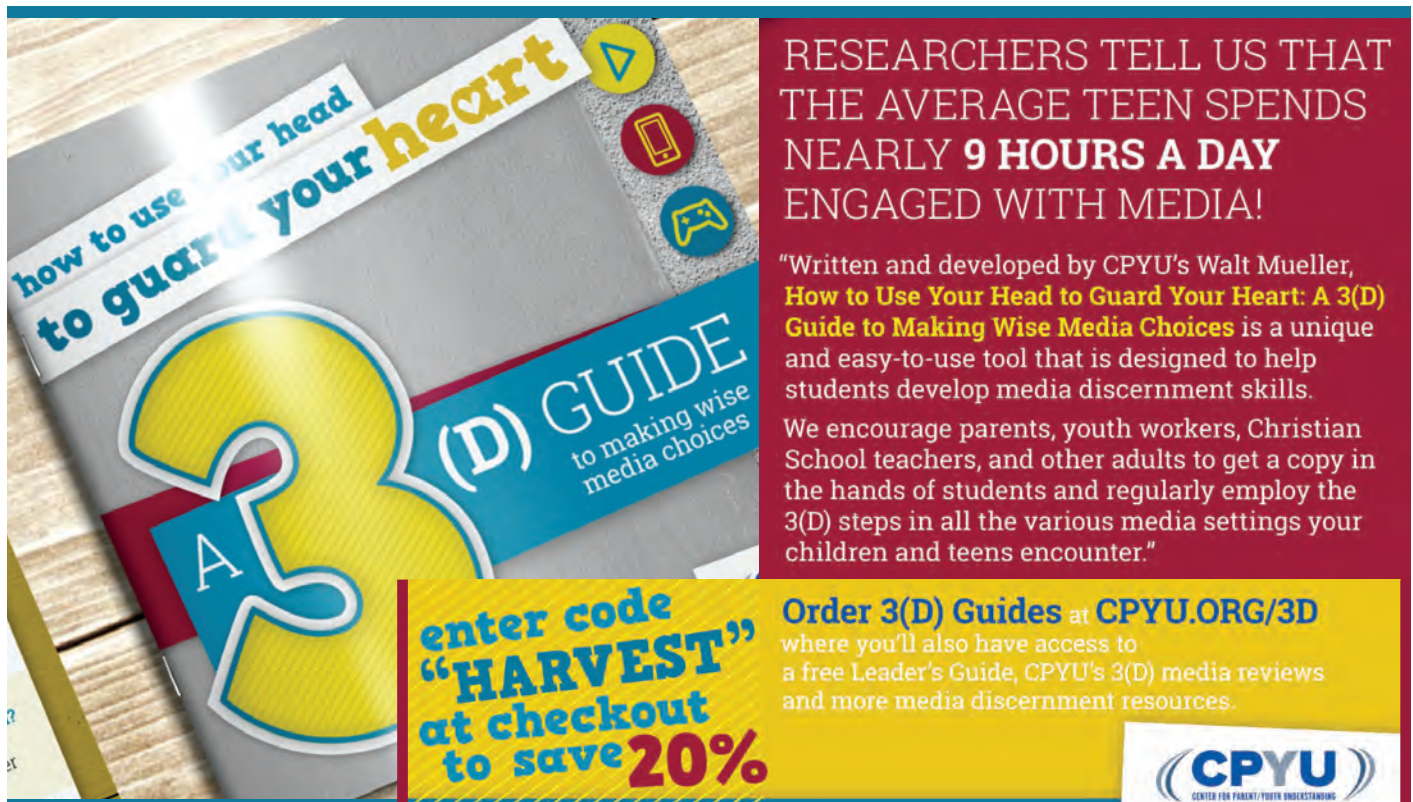
- You can be assured that the overwhelming majority of kids have seen and/or heard "Shape of You." The song's video treatment is relatively tame, using the boxing gym as a metaphorical representation of the song's lyrical content. We recommend showing the video to students and then talking about the song's lyrical messages, contrasting those messages with the message of the Scriptures on sex, sexuality, love, identity, personhood, objectification, and dating.
- Ask students to evaluate how Sheeran's song reflects the movement towards "expressive individualism" (being faithful, true, and authentic to one's self) in our culture,

as opposed to following the way and will of Jesus Christ (being a faithful, true, and obedient follower of Jesus).

- Show the video to parents and youth workers, demonstrating how a cultural artifact serves to mirror current beliefs and behaviors. Specifically, describe the current cultural order of relationship building (hook-up, conversation, dating relationship). Then, teach them how to use "Shape of You" as a springboard for engaging in narrative-shifting conversations in a manner Jesus himself used: "You have heard it said that" (the erroneous cultural narrative) "... but I tell you ..." (the corrective of the biblical narrative).
- Ask students to consider this quote from Lord Acton in relation to "Shape of You," from a talk that Os Guinness gave to Cambridge University students: "Freedom is not the permission to do what you like. It's the power to do what you ought."ⁱ

Dr. Walt Mueller is the founder and President of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding (CPYU), a non-profit organization serving schools, churches, and community organizations across the U.S, Canada, and worldwide in their efforts to strengthen families. Walt is the author of several books as well as the media discernment resource *How To Use Your Head to Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide to Making Wise Media Choices*. CPYU has several initiatives including our Sexual Integrity Initiative, found at www.sexualintegrityinitiative.com, which provides information and resources for parents, youth workers and educators to help kids navigate their sexuality. More resources can be found on the CPYU website at www.cpyu.org.

ⁱ<https://bethinking.org/is-there-meaning-to-life/os-guinness-on-big-questions/3-truth>



RESEARCHERS TELL US THAT THE AVERAGE TEEN SPENDS NEARLY 9 HOURS A DAY ENGAGED WITH MEDIA!

"Written and developed by CPYU's Walt Mueller, **How to Use Your Head to Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide to Making Wise Media Choices** is a unique and easy-to-use tool that is designed to help students develop media discernment skills. We encourage parents, youth workers, Christian School teachers, and other adults to get a copy in the hands of students and regularly employ the 3(D) steps in all the various media settings your children and teens encounter."

Order 3(D) Guides at CPYU.ORG/3D where you'll also have access to a free Leader's Guide, CPYU's 3(D) media reviews and more media discernment resources.

enter code "HARVEST" at checkout to save 20%

CPYU
CENTER FOR PARENT/YOUTH UNDERSTANDING

Real Life Conversations

Youth Ministry Isn't for the Faint-Hearted These Days



Youth pastors have challenging ministries, and that's an understatement today. I took a phone call from Tom (all names have been changed), a youth pastor at a large, PCA church, and his situation is something churches will be encountering everywhere.

Tom said he had worked hard to build a thriving, discipleship-oriented youth ministry. He solicited many 30-something adult helpers and small group leaders. His ministry emphasis was on biblical education and personal ministry, but he also worked to develop an outreach mindset for the unsaved and outsiders among his kids.

And it was working. The youth group grew. Many unchurched kids regularly attended as a result of being invited by his kids. But one day his outreach approach came close to tearing the entire ministry apart.

What happened? One of the invited kids, Eric, who got very involved in the youth group, announced one day that he was gay. This is where the problem for Tom began.

The kids from church had different responses to Eric's disclosure, and they fell into three camps. The first camp was, "That's wrong! He shouldn't be in the youth group." The second was, "He should be here. The church is the best place for him to learn about Christ." And some said, "There's nothing wrong with being gay."

All three responses created confusion and turmoil.

And then the parents got wind of it all. Not only were they shocked by the emerging disorder in the youth group, but many of the parents began to learn, for the first time, what their children believed about this issue. And they responded with anger and fear at everything that was happening.

Tom's phone rang, and his email overflowed. "How did this kid get into the church's youth group?" asked one dad. One mom gave an ultimatum: "If that boy continues to attend, we're pulling our sons out." Another said, "I don't want that kind of bad influence around my child."

Some church kids threatened to leave if Eric was asked to leave; others said they would never invite anyone else to come. To top it off, Tom's staff had different responses. Tom was in no-man's land, feeling pressure to make the right decision. Clearly, there would be consequences no matter how he handled the situation. Hence his phone call to me!

As issues of sex, sexuality, and gender become the defining identity marker in the culture, it has never been more critical for the church to be educated and equipped. With the church and parents often committed to not speaking about these matters to our kids, most kids make up their minds about sexuality and gay marriage by the age of 12 these days (and it's getting younger every day). The culture has "discipled" them well. They are listening to the voices on the Internet and media, which they spend hours each day consuming.

Churches need to educate their leaders and volunteers in how to lovingly and compassionately minister to youth, some who struggle silently with sexual issues from a relatively early age. Parents need to be taught how to talk to their kids, well before an issue explodes and they respond in anger and fear.

Those who are involved in ministry to junior and senior high youth **must** speak boldly, frequently, compassionately, and truthfully about sex, sexuality, and gender, especially because most kids struggle in their silent formative years when sexual identity is being formed and embraced. We must take

seriously this awful fact: the culture (not parents, not the church) has become the predominant and authoritative teacher of sexuality for our youth. If youth leaders don't want to take the initiative to address these issues, they should not be in youth work today.

Yes, you want 13-year-old Jason to trust you (or his small group leader) to tell you he's looking at porn on his smartphone. Yes, you want 15-year-old Erica to confide that she's attracted to other girls, and wants to know, is she gay. You want Sam to tell you he feels he's another gender. You want these kinds of talks because God has placed you in their lives at this crucial time, while they still live at home and before college. Believe me, once they get to a secular college, there will be plenty of voices saying, "Yes, come talk to us. We'll help you figure this out."

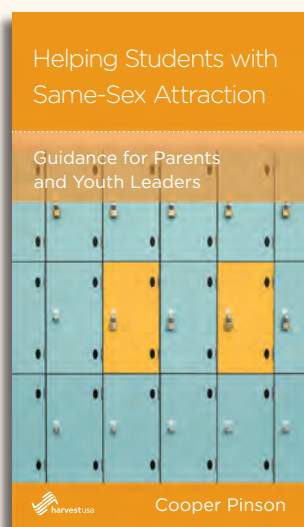
I'm so serious about this I'm going to repeat it: if youth leaders are not willing to engage these issues with the youth under their care, they shouldn't be involved in youth work today!

HARVEST USA is ready to help your church become educated and proactive in dealing with these matters. We can meet with your church staff and leadership teams to help you strategize how to do 21st-century youth ministry work. Email me at john@harvestusa.org.

John Freeman

John Freeman, Founder & Ministry Liaison

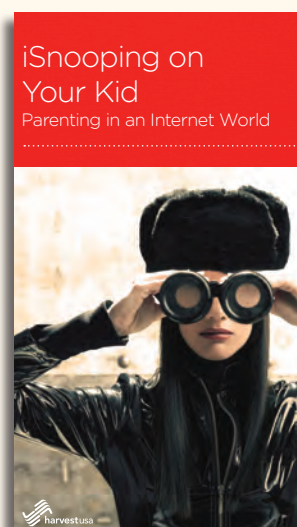
Two mini books for parents and youth leaders



Helping Students with Same-Sex Attraction

A student sits in your office and shares about his or her struggles with same-sex attraction. Or perhaps it's your child asking you for help. What can you say or do that will bring the gospel into this struggle?

Cooper Pinson begins by helping parents and youth leaders understand that this struggle is not so very different than their own struggles with sin and suffering that they encounter every day. Then he goes on to give specific, detailed, and practical direction on how to encourage students to go to God and others for hope and help. You will learn how much we all have in common and how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms every area of life.



iSnooping on Your Kid

In our increasingly wired world, your children have access to people, images, and media that you don't want them to experience. What's a concerned parent to do? What does wisdom look like when technology floods into your home bringing access to pornography and other Internet dangers?

Providing extensive practical suggestions, Nicholas Black directs you in making a plan with your family for safety and clear boundaries on technology use. By reminding you of how Christ leads you to repentance and faithful living, he offers helpful advice on how you can help your children grow in purity, integrity, and dependence on Christ, as they navigate the world of technology.

Of *Boys* and Cultural Stereotypes

Dan Wilson

"Is it OK for my son to play dress-up like a princess and dance?" asked Bob, after one of our parenting seminars. Bob, who looked like the former college athlete he was, and his wife were concerned about their five-year-old son and some of his behaviors. At the same time, Bob didn't want to squash his personality or crush his son's spirit. He also worried that his son might be bullied because he did not fit into traditional cultural stereotypes.

Here's some advice I gave these parents:

Affirm and Validate

True gender differences and gender roles come from God our Creator. But every culture has certain gender-specific, stereotypical standards. The problem is that, since Genesis 3, every culture's ideas on gender contain fallen elements. So, before we guide our sons away from behaviors we don't like (or the sub-culture in which we live, like the church, deems unacceptable), we have to ask if a biblical line is being crossed.

All our little guys, whether or not they present any atypical gender behaviors, need us to envelop them in love and affirmation. We need to affirm them first of all for who they *are*. They need to hear, "I'm so glad God sent you to us," and "I love you!" before we affirm what they do.

Often parents are worried when their sons have different temperaments, talents, and interests that are not stereotypical for boys. Dads need to deal with the idol of having a son just like them—a chip off the old block. Therefore, affirm and validate to your son that his personality and gifts are from God. Tell your son that God's purpose for him is to bless the world and build up his Kingdom through his unique giftings.

Dad, if you're the guy who loves sports, then you've got to let "it" go as a *must* for your son. Instead, explore what your child's personality, gifts, and passions are, and then support them, develop them, and cultivate an appreciation of them. So, a father who loves football and has a son who loves art, dance, and drama needs to show up for recitals or performances, appreciate the inner complexities of his son's fine art with him, and support and celebrate his efforts and successes.

Protect and Guide

Bob and his wife have a good idea of their young son's personality but not a clear sense of his giftings and passions

yet. Dads like Bob fear that other boys may bully their sons when they see their atypical gender behavior. And this is a very valid concern. We have to protect our little boys from bullying and shaming. So we have to be engaged, stepping in to stop verbal or physical abuse by other boys while avoiding a tendency to overprotect.

But protecting your son is not isolating him from other boys and boyish activities. This is where gentle guidance comes

in. We want to help our little guys find safe ways to integrate into the world of boys, which eventually becomes a world of men.

With my son, we've tried most of the major sports, dabbled in martial arts, put him in a choir, started trumpet lessons, and tried art classes. At nine, we are still discerning his top gifts and cultivating his passions. Sample lots of boy-related and general kids' activities, but be wary of requiring your son to remain in an activity he doesn't like.

Now, remember, Bob had a specific question about dress-up and dancing. And in helping your son grow up, there are times when you need to gently guide and redirect his behaviors and help reshape some of his attitudes. My son held my hand and clung to me like glue when I first started taking him to Cub Scouts. He was feeling overwhelmed and anxious in a loud, crowded place.

I started to gently break his habit of holding my hand and hanging back from the other boys. I said, "Guys don't usually hold their dad's hand all the time unless they are in a dangerous place." I would even leave the room to go to the water fountain so that he had to interact with the boys. He is more reserved than other boys, but over time he found his place, figured out some social cues, and began to enjoy the loud, large group meetings.

Note that I didn't shame my son with any "Man up!" commands to toughen him up. We need to gently guide and redirect them, and that is far different than isolating or shaming them. This way we can help our sons feel included, part of the tribe of men to which they belong.

As parents, and especially dads, we need to pray for wisdom in raising little guys up to be men who follow Christ, who is the ultimate model of manhood. And for Bob and his wife, that might mean their son grows up to be a dancer.



On The Road

Bright Ideas from a Youth Minister

Interview with Jon Shepherd



HARVEST USA did two day-long seminars for parents and youth leaders at Cheltenham Church in the suburbs of Philly. Afterwards, we sat down with Jon Shepherd, their Student Ministry Director, to talk about ways he addresses sexuality with his youth group and helps parents do the same with their children.

As a bit of an ice-breaker, what's one of the funniest moments you have experienced in youth ministry?

Having been a part of the Youth Ministry at Cheltenham since 2006, I have so many fun memories. One that everyone can enjoy involved one of our senior guys laying on the beach at Ocean City, NJ letting a flock of seagulls eat Cool Ranch Doritos off his bare chest.

We know you have a heart for youth, so tell us a bit about why you got into youth ministry.

One of my favorite quotes is from Frederick Douglass who said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." I got into youth ministry because I want to use the gifts that God has given me and my own experiences to help the next generation know Christ and follow him from a young age.

What do you think are some of the unique challenges facing youth ministers today in discipling students in the area of sexuality?

In my opinion, the biggest challenge is the culture's definition of normal sexuality. From billboards to TV shows, songs to smartphone apps—we are combatting a message that says that you get to define your sexuality and do what seems right for you.

Also, what is unique to our day and age is the role that the smartphone has played in the lives of our teenagers. Social media, for example, tells our young people that they don't look good enough. Other apps make hooking up or sexting as easy as a swipe of your finger. Unfiltered cell phones provide accessibility to endless amounts of pornography with just a few simple clicks.

Leaving the depressing state of our world, what have been some of the best moments in addressing sexuality amongst students?

The most impactful times with students have always come after another leader or I have made the first move toward individual students by sharing some of our own struggles.

I can remember a night where we had a “guy’s night” and allowed the students to anonymously write questions on index cards where a panel of their regular youth leaders would take turns answering. Several of our leaders were very vulnerable with our guys and shared both past and present struggles with sexual sin. This type of leading, from a point of need and weakness, creates a culture within the church where it becomes safe for students to approach leaders to share their struggles.

As we take the risk of sharing our need for Jesus in the area of sexuality, we open the door for students to invite us into their lives. Young men will come and share their addiction to pornography. Young ladies share that they have turned to self-harm or an eating disorder because they don’t feel pretty or sexy enough. It is then a privilege to walk beside them to Christ, knowing that we both need the same grace.

HARVEST USA came to your church to do *Gospel Sexuality: Student Ministry Training*. What did you take away from the seminar that you would like others who work with students to hear?

One reason youth leaders don’t talk about sexuality is that we feel the pressure to have an entire night or series devoted to the topic, which is overwhelming and quite honestly, terrifying! Your training gave us some great tips on how to make sexuality a regular topic of conversation. For example, when addressing different sins that students may be battling, include in your talk a sexual sin like looking at pornography along with lying to your parents and trashing someone else’s reputation.

Also, we learned that when we don’t talk about sexual issues, it communicates shame to the one who is struggling in those taboo areas. Jesus invites all sinners to come forward from a place of shame, as he did the woman with the bleeding problem in Mark 5. We must create a church culture in which sexual sin is not ignored but is instead safe to talk about, a place where we can confess and find healing in Christ.

What did you take away from *Gospel Sexuality: Raising Sexually Healthy Kids* that you would like parents to hear?

Gospel Sexuality: Raising Sexually Healthy Kids began with providing the bigger picture on sexuality and sexual sin by using the metaphor of the tree. This metaphor showed that we cannot simply address the fruit—the behaviors that we see—we must also address other factors as well.

Also, it is not enough to have “the talk;” we must, instead, engage in multiple discussions at different levels over the course of our child’s life. In other words, discussing sexuality with our kids is not a box to be checked, but is instead an ongoing topic of conversation and discipleship. We want to maintain ongoing communication to the point where we can be there to help pick up the pieces when they mess up and walk with them to Christ.

As a parting gift, what are three words of wisdom you want to give to youth ministers or parents on talking about sex and sexuality?

Push through the awkwardness. That first step to begin a conversation that’s uncomfortable to you and the student is hard, but it’s totally worth it. Sharing your own need is also a great way to begin that conversation. As you share your own story, where you talk about your past and present need for Jesus, you invite them to open up and share their struggles.

Second, shepherd in community. Sexual sin can be a dangerous area to enter into with a young person. It is essential that we shepherd our students in community. Developing a team of adults in your youth ministry is key to this. In our youth ministry, every student is divided into small groups based on age and gender with multiple volunteer youth leaders over every group. We regularly divide into small groups for processing God’s word, sharing, and prayer. When a student comes to a staff member or volunteer leader with a sexual sin, we ask the student to continue to widen the circle of knowledge by involving another staff member, volunteer leader, or parent into the conversation. While it is extremely important to protect the student’s trust and privacy, it is also important that we, as youth leaders, are accountable to one another for our own protection.

Third, pray for your students more than you talk to them about sexuality. The reality is, we cannot fix the brokenness in our own lives or the lives of students. Redemption and healing can only be found in Jesus Christ. Knowing this truth is a huge relief and comfort. God is far more invested in your youth ministry and the sexuality of your students than you are.

Jon Shepherd is the Student Ministry Director at Cheltenham Church in Dresher, PA. He loves spending time with his wife, Jolie, and his two children, as well as working around the house and garden and spending time with teenagers.



Children at Risk

Transgender Ideology

R. Nicholas Black

Ever since I was a kid I have been a reader of the *National Geographic* magazine. So I was both intrigued and concerned when the January 2017 issue, “Gender Revolution,” arrived. How would the story on gender and transgender be told, with an objective analysis or a subjective slant? On the cover was an elementary-aged transgender girl, with the caption reading, “The best thing about being a girl is, now I don’t have to pretend to be a boy.”

I got my answer. I found myself looking at that picture and feeling much sadness. I couldn’t help but think that this young child is still pretending, but now being encouraged by adults to exchange reality for fantasy.

I don’t want to criticize *National Geographic* for this issue. After all, these issues are in the forefront of our news and culture. Christians must look at this issue from both a cultural and individual level. We should not dismiss out of hand these stories of children and adults who feel out of sorts with their own gendered bodies.

But we must equally examine how the media presents this issue. There is a concerted effort to complexify issues of gender, designed to leave the reader agreeing that biology has no essential connection to gender, and that we can be whatever we want to be regardless of the anatomy with which we are born.

That’s a deeply mistaken notion. But what’s most tragic is seeing where this viewpoint has led—that we let even the youngest children make life-altering decisions that will lead them to steadily transform and even mutilate their bodies, with parents and other adults encouraging them onward. Our hearts should feel for how these children struggle with their sense of self, but we should grieve even more for the kind of help they are being offered.

The main article in the magazine, “Rethinking Gender” by Robin Marantz Henig, is the one to read carefully. It is well-written and presents itself in a measured tone, and that is what makes it all the more uncomfortable, if not disturbing. Unless you carefully read what it is saying and what is subtly not being said, you might walk away thinking, yes, science is indeed showing us that what we believed about the connection between gender and biology—the normative gender binary—has been all wrong.

But that is not what the article proves at all. And you’ve got to read it carefully to know that.

Here’s what I mean:

Henig begins by writing about the complexities of being born intersex. The brief summary is excellent in describing how complicated intersex conditions are for the child and their family. These are difficult situations for parents, doctors, and the children involved, to sort through, and we should give wide leeway to acknowledge the tough decisions that have to be made here.

Intersex conditions have long been seen by the medical establishment as disorders of sex development. In other words, something has gone wrong in the fetal development of the child. A Christian worldview sees intersex conditions in the same light, placing it within the biblical story of the Fall, where the introduction of sin brought about brokenness in all things, including our bodies.

But in a post-Christian culture, energized by an increasingly aggressive LGBTQ agenda, intersex conditions are now seen as evidence of multiple genders, as normative as the binary view of gender once was.

Henig, however, makes a connective leap from intersex to transgender, slipping in a paragraph that mentions Caitlyn Jenner becoming a trans woman. Here’s the paragraph:

As transgender issues become the fare of the daily news — Caitlyn Jenner’s announcement that she is a trans woman, legislators across the United States arguing about who gets to use which bathroom — scientists are making their own strides, applying a variety of perspectives to investigate what being transgender is all about.

Step back and notice what has happened here. Henig has linked here the complex issues about intersex conditions to someone being transgender. The reality is, these are two very different things. Jenner’s transformation has nothing to do with being born intersex. The phenomenon of transgenderism is quite distinct from intersex complications. This unwarranted (and virtually unnoticeable connection), if not challenged, will leave the casual reader thinking the two are related, and that science is finally coming to understand, through its research, a new understanding of gender.

Transgenderism is a radical redefinition of what it means to be human, and the implications are likely to bring tragic results.

Henig casually drops hints that, indeed, something more than science is driving this phenomenon. She writes about a 14-year-old girl: “She’s questioning her gender identity, rather than just accepting her hobbies and wardrobe choices as those of a tomboy, *because* we’re talking so much about transgender issues these days” (emphasis added). Did you catch that? So much of what these children are struggling with is how to fit into cultural roles of gender, many which change from one generation to another. How did we go from ongoing generational discussions about gender expression (or roles) to encouraging children to alter their bodies to fit into those roles?

What is driving the issue of transgenderism and its acceptance is not scientific research (let’s not as Christians oppose legitimate scientific inquiry into this issue), but a dominant cultural idea which has persistently deconstructed gender and gender roles for more than half a century. In a materialistic worldview that refuses to see a divine plan for how we should live, we now arrive at truth by means of our

own individual stories and experience. This personal-truth-for-me cultural mindset is seen in a photo of a six-year-old boy who describes himself as “gender creative” and who, the caption says about him, “is very sure of who he is.”

A six-year-old who knows with certainty who he is? Childhood has always been observed as the journey in which young boys and girls wrestle with who they are, and eventually emerge into adulthood with a clearer understanding (sometimes still not fully formed) of themselves and the world in which they will live. Now we think children are wise enough to short-circuit that process by more than a decade.

The real difficulties these children experience will not be fixed by encouraging them to pretend to be what they are not, and especially to put their bodies at the mercy of hormone-altering drugs and surgical knives. Walt Heyer, a former transsexual who speaks on transgender issues,

said this about the issue: “Like others who elect to live the transgender life, I painfully discovered it was only a temporary fix to deeper pain...if *National Geographic* truly wanted to explore the complexities of gender change, they would have included stories of people who discovered that living the transgender life was an empty promise.”¹

There are a lot of risks our children face as they grow up; some we can protect them from, and some we can’t, where we must let them stumble and learn. But when it comes to sexuality and gender, we must not let them learn on their own, passively absorbing the constant bombardment of cultural voices. We must intervene, not to shield them inside a protective bubble — as if we could — but to teach and persuade them to see and believe that life is found by living within God’s design and purpose. Here, we must talk and teach and walk with them, helping them see all of life as coming from a divine design and purpose.

¹Walt Heyer, “The National Geographic Transgender Cover Champions Child Abuse and Junk Science,” *the Federalist*, January 3, 2017, www.thefederalist.com/2017/01/03/national-geographic-transgender-cover-champions-child-abuse-junk-science/

GOSPEL SEXUALITY: STUDENT MINISTRY TRAINING



Our seminar for youth and college ministers and their volunteer teams helps them cast a vision for Christ-centered sexuality in ministry and gives them practical ways to implement that vision into large group settings, one-to-one discipleship times, in parental support, and more.

Bring this seminar to your church! Contact brooke@harvestusa.org



Partner with us. Impact a person, a family, a church.
harvestusa.org/donate

Earlier this year, we began promoting *Impact a Life* – a campaign that describes what our ministry accomplishes when you partner with us. You and other donors contribute \$1,905,000 annually to HARVEST USA. Your donations, combined with our direct and equipping ministries, impact lives, families, and churches.

What Your Partnership with Us Makes Possible

- Youth and campus ministers receive resources to disciple their students in biblical, Christ-centered sexuality
- Churches receive training to minister to those in their congregations and community who experience life-dominating sexual struggles
- Parents receive support when their child comes out as gay or transgender
- Men and women receive help in their struggles with same-sex attraction and pornography
- Women find hope after sexual betrayal

In every aspect of our ministry, your donations make it possible for us to share the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ—every believer's greatest need and sweetest comfort. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the path forward in these struggles, bringing both change and hope. Thank you.

I'd also like to thank you for your generosity to us at the end of our fiscal year (June 30). We received \$295,000 of our \$372,000 goal, which was an answer to our prayers and an encouragement to our staff. We rejoice that the

Lord continues to supply us with everything we need to accomplish the ministry work we love doing.

Since 95% of our annual budget comes from donations, we depend on your support throughout the year. With the upcoming holidays, would you help us in two ways?

- **Consider HARVEST USA in your year-end giving.** Of the 95% mentioned above, a large number of these donations are received in December which makes it a critical month for us. Since HARVEST USA is a 501(c)3, all gifts are tax-deductible.
- **Before starting your online Christmas shopping, select HARVEST USA as your AmazonSmile charity.** Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.



Finally, if you found this magazine helpful, you can support our writing ministry and the production of similar resources by giving a one-time gift today. Online gifts can be made at harvestusa.org/donate and checks can be mailed in the enclosed reply envelope.

With joy and gratitude,
Lauren Berkhouse
Development Associate



CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE
IN JESUS' NAME