

CPYU PARENT PAGE

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"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." - Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

PHOEBE AND THE BULLIES

BY WALT MUELLER

TOP 10 MOST DISLIKED PEOPLE IN SPORTS (SOURCE: *Forbes*, June 2010)

1. Michael Vick
2. Al Davis
3. Ben Roethlisberger
4. Tiger Woods
5. Jerry Jones
6. Mark McGwire
7. Terrell Owens
8. Alex Rodriguez
9. Allen Iverson
10. Gilbert Arenas

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

"It's just a matter of your values. Are you going to be stupid enough to make that choice? For me, I didn't feel it was worth it. I like my money. I don't want to get suspended, and I don't want to be labeled as a steroid user, so why take that chance?"

- Washington Redskins fullback Mike Sellers, Associated Press, May 3, 2010

Earlier this year, 15-year-old Phoebe Prince took her own life. Just a few months earlier, the young teenager had moved with her mother and sisters from Ireland to South Hadley, Massachusetts. Already living through the difficult and confusing years of adolescence, Phoebe not only had to settle into a new high school, but she had to adapt to living in a new culture. Her decision to take her own life came after months of being victimized by bullies. Following her death, nine of her teenaged peers who had bullied her were indicted on felony charges ranging from statutory rape, to stalking and criminal harassment. Phoebe's story not only woke the Massachusetts town up to the reality of bullying, but it caught the attention of the world.

According to the most recent research, it's estimated that about one-third of American teenagers have been involved in bullying, either as a perpetrator or as a victim. While bullying spans the full spectrum of the teenage years, it seems to be most intense during middle school. Boys tend to bully in physical ways. Females bully verbally and emotionally, with a tendency to spread rumors or sexual gossip. With the continuing growth of social networking and digital technologies, it's not surprising that bullying now extends beyond the schoolyard to text messaging and Facebook postings. In a nutshell, bullying is far too widespread.

Just a few short months after Phoebe Prince's suicide, Massachusetts lawmakers enacted an anti-bullying measure known as "Phoebe's Law." While the measure should be applauded, it's troubling to know that our kids need to increasingly be supervised and policed as their declining ethical standards have diminished their willingness and ability to exercise personal discipline and do the right thing. This reality should serve to spur

us on to more aggressively and deliberately address these issues with our kids before problems occur.

Of course, a simple internet search will turn up countless suggestions and strategies for dealing with kids who bully and are bullied. But above and beyond those redemptive responses, the home and church should work together to teach kids how to treat each other in ways that bring honor and glory to God, and the preventive education should start when they are very, very young. This education should take place not only through our words, but through the powerful example we set in the way that we treat each other. Our words and actions must reflect the fact that we are followers of a God who finds great delight in those who seek to be instruments of reconciliation and peace.

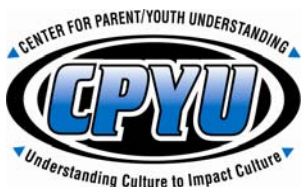
In his wonderful and helpful book, *The Peacemaker*, author Ken Sande reminds us that how we live reflects who it is that we follow. "The apostles understood the importance of peacemaking, and they realized that Satan will do all that he can to promote conflict. The depth of their concern is revealed by the fact that every Epistle in the New Testament contains a command to live at peace with one another."

The world of today's youth culture more often than not encourages a pecking order that is fertile soil for bullying. Vulnerable and insecure kids can fall prey to that way of thinking easily. All too often they are encouraged to fight and claw their way to the top without care and concern for others. Now is the time to instill in them a deep desire and commitment to serve Christ by serving others. In this way, we will be facilitating an environment where kids like Phoebe Prince can embrace life with great joy, rather than "coping" through self-destruction.

CPYU TREND ALERT: CREDIT CARD DEBT

Because of where children are developmentally, it's always a frustrating task to have to explain that credit cards and check books aren't magic money machines. Sadly, there are a growing number of teenagers and young adults whose desire to have all sorts of things has led them to live far above their means, using credit cards to accumulate lots of stuff and lots of

debt. More and more credit counselors are finding themselves dealing with a very young clientele that is buried in debt due to poor stewardship and financial ignorance. God not only calls us to be good stewards of what he's entrusted to us, but to live in ways that honor and glorify him. By teaching your kids these things now, you'll be saving them from trouble later.



LATEST RESEARCH: UNORTHODOX BELIEFS

Late last year, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released the results of a survey of adults in the United States that raises concerns about what people really believe. It appears that attendance at the spiritual buffet line is on the rise, with more and more people making their own fluid version of faith more personal than it is biblical. For example, Pew found that one in five people believe you can find spiritual energy in the mountains and trees. One in six believe in an evil eye where people can cast

curses and spells with a certain look. Pew found that many of these unorthodox beliefs have found their way into the Christian church, a place that should be marked by adherence to orthodox biblical truth, rather than personal preference and opinion. In our efforts to pass on a spiritual heritage to our kids, we must recognize that this spiritual heritage must be unwavering in its commitment to what really is, as what really is is defined by God's unchanging truth.



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FROM THE WORD

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lays out a new way of living. He calls His followers to embrace His Kingdom priorities. The Beatitudes make up a list of eight qualities that are responsibilities for those who are citizens of God's Kingdom. In Matthew 5:9 He lays out one of those responsibilities when He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

Jesus is calling all Christians to seek peace not only with each other, but with others who live in their communities. We are never to seek out conflict nor should we be the people who cause it. Theologian John Stott

says that "on the contrary, we are called to peace, we are actively to pursue peace, we are to strive for peace with all men, and so far as it depends on us, we are to live peaceably with all."

Those who live this way are called "sons of God" because they seek to do what their Father in Heaven has done. Seeking peace clearly reflects the character of God. Reflecting this aspect of God's character before our kids is an important step in preparing them for a lifetime of glorifying God their Father by doing the same.

IN THE NEWS: ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTAINERS

Community leaders, law enforcement officials, and parents across the country are expressing increased concern over a growing number of products that are making it easy for our kids to hide alcohol abuse. Critics accuse the alcohol industry of creating and marketing these new containers in an effort to drum up business by promoting underage drinking. For example, there are all the energy drinks which are packaged with containers and colors that make them virtually indistinguishable from alcoholic beverages. It gets even more confusing when the energy

drinks and alcoholic beverages are sold in the same convenience store aisle. One alcohol counselor believes that the alcohol industry is playing on the popularity of energy drink consumption. Then there are the wine cubes that bear a striking resemblance to juice boxes. These new packaging designs not only attract the attention of kids, but they make alcohol consumption easy to hide from parents and other adults. Are you paying attention to what your kids are doing?

