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NUDGE YOUR TEENAGERS AWAY FROM NARCISSISM

John, a senior in youth group, told me he'd given his sister Erin a ride to a party the night before. Erin ordered John to drop her off around the corner so no one would see her in his used car. I was disappointed because Erin had just returned from a mission trip to a Chicago housing project. She had shared how the experience changed her—especially making her want to strive to not be selfish. Just two days later, her self-centeredness had apparently taken over.

It's disappointing to hear teenagers share about serving tirelessly on a mission trip yet argue about cleaning their room. Although it's frustrating when mission experiences don't seem to stick, it's vital to continue placing young people into situations where the focus is removed from themselves and placed onto others and God. Mission trips provide great opportunities for this but should be seen as starting points, not ends in themselves.

Now, five years later, I can see how Erin's trip to Chicago was a starting point. She just graduated from college with an education degree, and she's currently making plans to become a teacher in inner-city Chicago.

—Hank Hilliard, Young People's Ministries, hhilliard@GBOD.org

THE VIEW

According to research by professor Jean Twenge:

- Compared to their peers from the 1970s, today's teenagers have a stronger belief that they'll be great spouses, parents, and employees.
- Among college students (and especially females), narcissistic personality traits are rising just as fast as obesity.
- Kids today more often describe themselves as straight-A students, even if they're not. They also rate themselves as "completely satisfied" with who they are.

TIPS >>>

Here are some ways to shift your teenagers' focus away from themselves :

- **Re-evaluate your schedule.** Scrutinize your family's routines and see what can go so you can make room to help other people.
- **Walk the walk.** Model how to live out your faith by doing more than just attending worship together. Find simple ways to serve other people and meet their basic needs, such as collecting baby supplies for a crisis-pregnancy center.
- **Offer customized encouragement.** Avoid false praise; kids can see right through it. Instead, provide specific feedback about your teenagers' efforts to use their talents to serve God and others.

- **Practice giving without strings attached.** Let kids see you give merely for the joy of giving—not for seeing what you can get in return.
- **Avoid comparisons and excessive competition.** Instead, focus on commonalities and cooperation.
- **Teach kids to have compassion for themselves.** Instead of self-admiration, young people need to learn to cut themselves some slack and to trust God to care for and forgive them when they mess up.

PONDER THIS

- In a typical day, how much time do you spend focusing on yourself vs. on other people?
- What does selflessness look like? When and where do you see it?
- What have you done to instill self-esteem in your kids, and what were the results? Have any of your efforts backfired?





GOING DEEPER

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Walt Mueller

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, youth-culture expert Walt Mueller discusses selfish vs. selfless living:

Sadly, we followers of Jesus who should be leading the cultural charge against self-centeredness are prone to follow the lead of the culture rather than Christ on this matter. The sad result of our prosperity and desire for even more is that we've become even more prosperous and desiring of even more.

Perhaps The Prayer of Jabez phenomenon is the greatest indicator of how self-centered and materialistic we've become. An obscure Old Testament passage (1 Chronicles

4:9-10) has been marketed effectively to a 21st-century American church that's eager to find biblical justification to have more. It plays well in our consumer-oriented, narcissistic North American Christian culture.

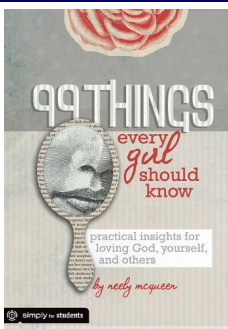
Recently, I stumbled upon another Old Testament prayer that seems timely and worth embracing. Try as hard as I can, I can't get it out of my head, most likely because it needs to be the prayer of my heart. In Proverbs 30:7-9, Agur simply begged to speak the truth and to have just what was necessary for him to remain committed and obedient to his God. Jesus taught his

disciples to pray for the same thing. Agur understood human nature, and he knew his weakness. In wisdom, he prayed to be rich in faithfulness.

I'm not sure Agur's prayer would sell (as books, trinkets, kitsch, etc.) in today's Christian market. That's too bad. It's a challenging prayer that shakes up our prevailing attitudes and reflects God's will, way, and kingdom priorities. It's a God-centered prayer that focuses on his will and not my will, as we ask God to bless by giving and withholding as he pleases.

Watch what you pray for!

RESOURCE



In *99 Things Every Girl Should Know* (Simply Youth Ministry), veteran youth worker Neely McQueen helps teenage girls explore their true beauty and God-given worth.

BIBLE FOCUS

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."

Philippians 2:3-5

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



MASTODON

Background: This heavy-metal band just recently gained major popularity, despite having been around since 1999. Their style is considered progressive rock, with unique time signatures and multiple layers. Their albums are usually based on a concept, such as Moby Dick (*Leviathan*). Lyrics and themes are dark and seem very pagan.

Albums: *The Hunter* (2011), *Crack the Skye* (2009), *Blood Mountain* (2006)

What Mastodon Says: Discussing *Crack the Skye*, vocalist Troy Sanders says, “We kinda strapped on our aeroshells and departed from Earth for a while, and then captained to the ethereal element of the universe and kind of slept on the roof of the world...to get a perspective on this record. Basically, we’re exploring the ethereal world. We’re dissecting the dark matter that dominates the universe.”

Explore: Hear Mastodon’s new single “Black Tongue” and see a sculptor create artwork for the cover of *The Hunter* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwgqenxNUfs.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



DOMINIC BALLI

Background: Singer Balli fuses reggae and rock into a chill mix that will have you tapping your feet. He lists Stevie Wonder, Bob Marley, and Lauryn Hill as influences. Balli’s first album made it onto iTunes’ top reggae albums of 2008. His sound, described as “CaliRockReggae,” is refreshingly different from much of contemporary Christian music.

Albums: *American Dream* (2011), *Public Announcement* (2008)

What Balli Says: “The most common comment I hear is, ‘I don’t even like reggae, but I love your stuff.’ I love that because it means my music has become accessible to fans who might otherwise totally shy away from anything even reminiscent of reggae.”

Explore: You can listen to Balli’s entire new album at www.dominicballi.com.

MOVIE

Movie: *Abduction*

Genre: Action, Thriller

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: A young man who has always felt he’s living someone else’s life sees himself on a missing-persons website. Suddenly he’s running for his life while trying to piece together the mystery of his true identity.

Our Take: The fact that Sigourney Weaver and Alfred Molina are in this film offers hope that it will rise above the typical teen thriller. You could use the movie to launch a discussion about our identity in Christ.

Movie: *Shark Night 3D*

Genre: Horror, Thriller

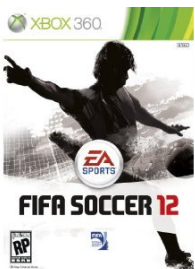
Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: Young, good-looking friends vacation on an island in a lake. They soon discover it’s inexplicably full of massive killer sharks—and must figure out a way to escape.

Our Take: Teenagers love to be scared, so PG-13 horror movies are usually a hit with them. Based on the trailer, this film shows many semi-clothed young people.

For more media discussions and ideas, go to www.MinistryandMedia.com.

VIDEO GAME



FIFA Soccer 12—The last two editions of the FIFA franchise brought huge improvements to graphics and game play. This year, the designers are promising even better artificial intelligence and decision-making abilities from the game, based on specific player attributes.

Gears of War 3—This game will be huge. It’s the conclusion of the ultra-bloody series that launched the Xbox 360. The graphics look gorgeous, and the game play is fast and furious. But the game is full of foul language, blood, and violence. The enormous guns have *chainsaws* on the end, for crying out loud.

SEPTEMBER 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Harvest Hands Outreach: 3:15 to 6:15 Youth Volunteer Training: 6pm - 8:30pm	Fun & Fellowship: 6-7:30			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
ORBIT YOUTH on Sunday nights starts back up: 5:30 - 7:30pm		Harvest Hands Outreach: 3:15 to 6:15	Fun & Fellowship: 6-7:30			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
ORBIT youth at 5:30		Harvest Hands Outreach: 3:15 to 6:15	Fun & Fellowship: 6-7:30			All Church Outreach Day
25	26	27	28	29	30	
ORBIT Youth at 5:30		Harvest Hands Outreach: 3:15 to 6:15	Fun & Fellowship: 6-7:30			