

CEDAR GROVE STUDENT MINISTRIES

JOLT

Grades 6-8
Pastor Avie Lingal
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ARISE

Grades 8-12
Pastor Michael Nono
michaeln@the-grove.net

CEDAR GROVE CHURCH

Director Student Ministries
Steve Swaddling
steves@the-grove.net

CG YOUNG ADULTS

Ages 18-28
Pastor Steve Swaddling
steves@the-grove.net



PARENT'S NEWSLETTER

CGYOUTH.CA

Experience Jesus, Build Relationships, Have a Blast!



Hey Parents!

As the youth director it is also my job to assist you. To that end, we are hosting a one hour youth seminar on Tuesday, February 26 from 7:00pm to 8:00pm. This month's topics include:

- Protecting and monitoring Your teen's on-line activities
- How do we get your teen to youth and church activities?

As well I will be available to answer questions and provide you with an overview of what is going on in your. As always open to your suggestions and feedback. If you haven't been to our website then please check it out. www.cg youth.ca Here you can find calendars of events, the youth newsletter which you might like to read, and photos and videos of past events.

If you should need any support or have questions please feel free to email me at steve@cg youth.ca or steves@the-grove.net and I will do my best to provide the support.

We have been very concerned about the hit and miss attendance of most of our youth. The reasons they give us include: homework (we have a homework club from 3-7pm every Tuesday where your teen can come before youth and get help with homework and complete it before youth), or they are busy (whatever that means), or they play sports, or... It is imperative that your teen attend youth every week unless it is an emergency just like the importance of being in church every week. You might wonder why? I have missed a few and it doesn't seem to matter. But, it does, the lack of connection with fellow believers and that could be the week the Holy Spirit shows up and does amazing things and you weren't there to experience it.

Consistency is the only way we can continue to build in to your teen and help them grow. As important as school is.. as important as sports are.. if your teen does not end up in heaven was it worth the stress and distractions from what God needs to do in their lives. I know you know that fact, but we as leaders and parents need to help our child see where their priorities need to be, even if they have to sacrifice or make tough choices to persue God. It isn't easy, but distraction in North America is Satan's best tool.

We have asked you each to complete an on line quick hit information link. We need to get up to date information on you and your teens. We do not have up-to-date email or phone information for most of you. Please send me an email and let me know the details or go on line and complete the quick survey.

Serving You and the King,

Steve, Michael, and Avie

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FOUR GUIDEPOSTS IN INTRODUCING YOUR CHILD TO GOD

Reprinted from Promise Keepers Seven Magazine

No maps. No GPS. Few street signs. Those are three important reasons why I don't drive in developing countries; I'd get lost. Raising our kids to follow Christ is a lot like trying to navigate in an under-developed country — there is no parenting map, no spiritual GPS. We head in the direction that seems best, trying to find our way by trial and error.

But we don't need to feel lost. As we journey through each stage of our children's development, we can point them toward spiritual markers that will help them find true faith — becoming vibrant followers of Christ.

Spiritual marker for early childhood: RESPECT

For parents of young children, the journey of raising Christ followers starts with the task of instilling respect for God and His authority. The psalmist tells us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10).

While most of us enjoy teaching toddlers fun Bible stories, we can't stop there. Early childhood materials may solely emphasize how "Jesus is your friend." Warm fuzzy feelings build affection for Jesus, but they don't build the foundation for spiritual wisdom. Awe, wonder and respectful fear of God lay that groundwork.

So how do you instill this respect? Teach your young children these truths:

- God is strong. He can do anything.
- God always keeps His promises.
- God gives us rules that we must obey.
- Even if Mommy or Daddy can't see what you are doing, God sees it.
- God disciplines us because He loves us.

Spiritual marker for early elementary years: WISDOM

Wisdom is the ability to apply God's Word to life situations. So to grow in wisdom, your children must first learn God's Word. From ages 5 to 8, add biblical teaching to your daily routine. At this age, your children probably love to learn. Make sure you emphasize the following four areas:

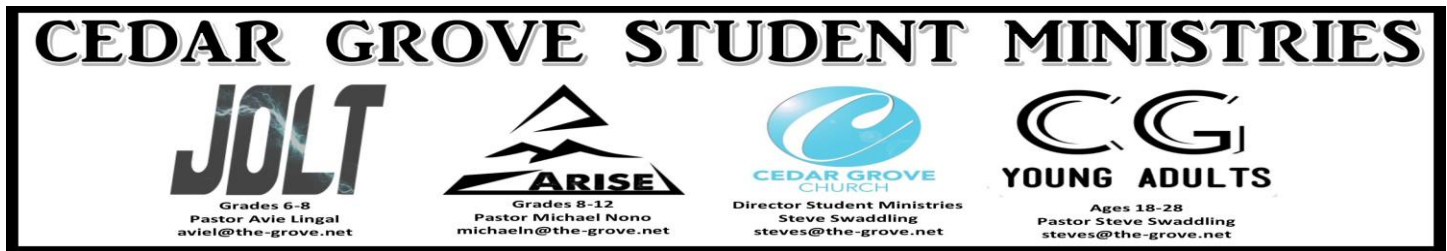
WHO IS GOD? Is He an angry ogre ready to club you when you disobey? Is He a passive observer who is tolerant of everything? Is God what you make Him to be? Or is He the righteous, powerful and loving Creator found in the Bible?

Use Bible stories to teach about God. Take the story of David and Goliath for example. What can we learn about God from it? Many children's materials conclude, "You can do anything if God is on your side." But that is backward. The story's application ought to be, "Make sure you are on God's side."

WHAT IS TRUTH? Your kids will be bombarded throughout life by truth claims from the media, teachers and friends. If you are not successful in teaching them that truth and wisdom come from the Bible, they will struggle greatly with faith challenges later.

This means you must regularly include statements like the following in your conversation: "We can always trust what God says"; "God's Word is always right"; "Obey the Bible, and you'll never be sorry."

WHO IS MAN? Our humanistic culture treats man as basically good. That's why children often struggle with accepting the Bible's claim that man is sinful. If they've not experienced abuse, abandonment, addictions or other deep hurts (as I



hope they haven't), they probably see the people around them as good. Your children will not appreciate the need for a saviour until they see themselves and others as sinners.

WHO IS JESUS? Growing up in a society that professes to value tolerance will challenge your children's faith. They may be called "intolerant" and "hateful" for claiming that Jesus is the only way to God. When your children sit in a classroom of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and atheists, will their faith in Jesus stick? To withstand this pressure, your children need a secure knowledge of who Jesus is and why He is the only Way.

Spiritual marker for late elementary: GRACE

The primary goal for 9- to 11-year-olds is to receive God's grace. The majority of people who trust Christ as Savior do so before they are teens. Said another way, if your children do not come to faith in Christ by the time they are teens, the likelihood begins to quickly decrease that they will do so.

That means you must do two things: First, make certain that your children fully understand the Gospel. Second, ask God to help you discern the authenticity of their decision. Countless kids "respond" to the Gospel outwardly because of pressure from a Sunday school teacher or parent, while in their hearts they remain reluctant to submit to Christ.

To understand your children's faith, ask questions: "Can you explain why Jesus died on the Cross?" "What does someone have to do to go to heaven?" "Why do you think you are a Christian?" Responses such as "I prayed a prayer" or "The teacher told me I was a Christian" may indicate they are trusting in the wrong thing.

Beyond accepting God's grace, your children also need to learn how to give grace to others. "That's not fair" may be the most common complaint of middle elementary kids. Siblings war over the size of a piece of pie, who sits in what seat in the van and who has to do the most chores. This age group is especially concerned with getting their fair share. But grace — forgetting what's fair and giving others more than they deserve — is the best way to be like Jesus.

Teaching your kids grace is a tall order. Their selfish nature will battle it. Friends will take advantage of it. So if they are going to learn how to give grace, they will need to see it consistently modelled by you.

Spiritual marker for middle school: TRUST

Young adolescents are beginning to wonder what their lives will hold. These years are a prime time for discussing the importance of trusting God with their future.

Here's one way to begin that conversation: Discuss Proverbs 3:5- 6 with your children. Talk through it carefully: "What does it mean to 'trust in the Lord'? How about 'with all your heart'? Why is God's understanding so much better than yours? What does it mean, 'He will make your paths straight'?"

Buy a plaque with this passage on it and hang it in their room. Have them memorize it. Underline it in their Bibles. Make it a strong focus in your conversations.

When I was 13, I told God I wanted Him to have complete control of my life. I strongly believe that decision kept me out of all sorts of trouble during my teen years. In the same way, God can use your middle schoolers' commitment to Him to guide your children through the coming years.

Spiritual marker for high school: PERSPECTIVE

Older teens may begin wrestling with tough questions for the first time: "Why is there evil in the world?" "Why is my teacher so unfair?" "Why did God let my best friend die in a car accident?" The lack of adequate answers can send their faith tumbling.

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First, provide the perspective that God is sovereign in all things. Your teens need to hear your stories about the times when God worked difficult things out for good. They need to see you trust in God. Always stay open to your teens' questions, even if they are hard to hear. If you don't have an answer, admit it — then find the answer together.

As your children grow, take note of their life stage and adjust your spiritual training accordingly. My prayer is that each of your children will grow up to be, as author George Barna puts it, "an irrepressible follower of Jesus Christ who accepts the Bible as truth, lives by its principles, seeks ways to impact the world and continually deepens his or her relationship with God."

/ LARRY FOWLER is the former executive director of global training for Awana Clubs international and an author.

Why Youth Stay in Church When They Grow Up

Reprinted from Youth Worker Journal Winter 2018

"What do we do about our kids?" The group of parents sat together in my office, wiping their eyes. I'm a high school pastor, but for once, they weren't talking about 16-year-olds drinking and partying. Each had a story to tell about a "good Christian" child, raised in their home and in our church, who had walked away from the faith during the college years. These children had come through our church's youth program, gone on short-term mission trips, and served in several different ministries during their teenage years. Now they didn't want anything to do with it anymore. And, somehow, these mothers' ideas for our church to send college students "care packages" during their freshman year to help them feel connected to the church didn't strike me as a solution with quite enough depth.

The daunting statistics about churchgoing youth keep rolling in. Panic ensues. What are we doing wrong in our churches? In our youth ministries? It's hard to sort through the various reports and find the real story. And there is no one easy solution for bringing all of those "lost" kids back into the church, other than continuing to pray for them and speaking the gospel into their lives. However, we can all look at the 20-somethings in our churches who are engaged and involved in ministry. What is it that sets apart the kids who stay in the church? Here are just a few observations I have made about such kids, with a few applications for those of us serving in youth ministry.

1. They are converted.

The apostle Paul, interestingly enough, doesn't use phrases like "nominal Christian" or "pretty good kid." The Bible doesn't seem to mess around with platitudes like: "Yeah, it's a shame he did that, but he's got a good heart." When we listen to the witness of Scripture, particularly on the topic of conversion, we find that there is very little wiggle room. Listen to these words: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). We youth pastors need to get back to understanding salvation as what it really is: a miracle that comes from the glorious power of God through the working of the Holy Spirit. We need to stop talking about "good kids."

We need to stop being pleased with attendance at youth group and fun retreats. We need to start getting on our knees and praying that the Holy Spirit will do miraculous saving work in the hearts of our students as the Word of God speaks to them. In short, we need to get back to a focus on conversion. How many of us are preaching to "unconverted evangelicals"? Youth pastors, we need to preach, teach, and talk—all the while praying fervently for the miraculous work of regeneration to occur in the hearts and souls of our students by the power of the Holy Spirit! When that happens—when the "old goes" and the "new comes"—it will not be iffy. We will not be dealing with a group of "nominal Christians." We will be ready to teach, disciple, and equip a generation of future church leaders—"new creations"!—who are hungry to know and speak God's Word. It is converted students who go on to love Jesus and serve the church.

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2. They have been equipped, not entertained.

Recently we had “man day” with some of the guys in our youth group. We began with an hour of basketball at the local park, moved to an intense game of 16” (“Chicago Style”) softball, and finished the afternoon by gorging ourselves on meaty pizzas and 2-liters of soda. I am not against fun (or gross, depending on your opinion of the afternoon I just described) things in youth ministry. But youth pastors especially need to keep repeating the words of Ephesians 4:11-12 to themselves: “[Christ] gave . . . the teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Christ gives us—teachers—to the church, not for entertainment, encouragement, examples, or even friendship primarily. He gives us to the church to “equip” the saints to do gospel ministry, in order that the church of Christ may be built up.

If I have not equipped the students in my ministry to share the gospel, disciple a younger believer, and lead a Bible study, then I have not fulfilled my calling to them, no matter how good my sermons have been. We pray for conversion; that is all we can do, for it is entirely a gracious gift of God. But after conversion, it is our Christ-given duty to help fan into flame a faith that serves, leads, teaches, and grows. If our students leave high school without Bible-reading habits, Bible-study skills, and strong examples of discipleship and prayer, we have lost them. We have entertained, not equipped them . . . and it may indeed be time to panic!

Forget your youth programs for a second. Are we sending out from our ministries the kind of students who will show up to college in a different state, join a church, and begin doing the work of gospel ministry there without ever being asked? Are we equipping them to that end, or are we merely giving them a good time while they're with us? We don't need youth group junkies; we need to be growing churchmen and churchwomen who are equipped to teach, lead, and serve. Put your youth ministry strategies aside as you look at that 16-year-old young man and ask: “How can I spend four years with this kid, helping him become the best church deacon and sixth-grade Sunday school class teacher he can be, ten years down the road?”

3. Their parents preached the gospel to them.

As a youth pastor, I can't do all this. All this equipping that I'm talking about is utterly beyond my limited capabilities. It is impossible for me to bring conversion, of course, but it is also impossible for me to have an equipping ministry that sends out vibrant churchmen and churchwomen if my ministry is not being reinforced tenfold in the students' homes. The common thread that binds together almost every ministry-minded 20-something that I know is abundantly clear: a home where the gospel was not peripheral but absolutely central. The 20-somethings who are serving, leading, and driving the ministries at our church were kids whose parents made them go to church. They are kids whose parents punished them and held them accountable when they were rebellious. They are kids whose parents read the Bible around the dinner table every night. And they are kids whose parents were tough, but who ultimately operated from a framework of grace that held up the cross of Jesus as the basis for peace with God and forgiveness toward one another.

This is not a formula! Kids from wonderful gospel-centered homes leave the church; people from messed-up family backgrounds find eternal life in Jesus and have beautiful marriages and families. But it's also not a crap-shoot. In general, children who are led in their faith during their growing-up years by parents who love Jesus vibrantly, serve their church actively, and saturate their home with the gospel completely, grow up to love Jesus and the church. The words of Proverbs 22:6 do not constitute a formula that is true 100 percent of the time, but they do provide us with a principle that comes from the gracious plan of God, the God who delights to see his gracious Word passed from generation to generation: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Youth pastors, pray with all your might for true conversion; that is God's work. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry; that is your work. Parents, preach the gospel and live the gospel for your children; our work depends on you.

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Jon Nielson serves as senior pastor of Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Roselle, Illinois. He is married to Jeanne, and they have three children. He has authored five books, most recently Bible Reading with Your Kids.

Vaping The Cool Kids Are Vaping...Safely?

Reprinted from Axis.org

"Any Juuler of this generation doesn't quite understand that they are a guinea pig in a test on what the Juul's effects are on human health.

—Kate Livermore, The Roar

"It's safe!" "It's less addictive!" "It can help you quit smoking!"

Sounds like a great product, right? Thanks to marketing like this, vaping is soaring in popularity. In fact, many teens have begun vaping, believing it to be a safer way to achieve a buzz and look cool. But is vaping really the side-effect-free way to ingest nicotine—a smoker's dream come true? Or are users at risk of addiction, picking up real cigarettes, cancer, or worse? Let's look at what's known about vaping, the controversy, and how to steward our children's hearts to love God through their actions.

What exactly is vaping?

Vaping (i.e. the modern term for using e-cigarettes) is different from traditional cigarettes in that it relies on electricity rather than combustion. Instead of burning tobacco and other materials to create smoke, e-cigarettes have a battery that heats liquid into vapor (hence "vaping").

What do you vape with?

Vaping devices are in many ways the third generation of e-cigarettes (or "electronic nicotine delivery systems" or "ENDS" in the medical community). Whereas the first e-cigarettes were very similar to regular cigarettes in appearance, the modern devices for e-smoking are not. There are "vape pens," which are cylindrical, but can be larger in size than cigarettes and come in different colors. Vape mods (short for "modified") are box-shaped devices that are also larger than the typical cigarette. Here's a helpful chart of the different types of vaping devices and their names.

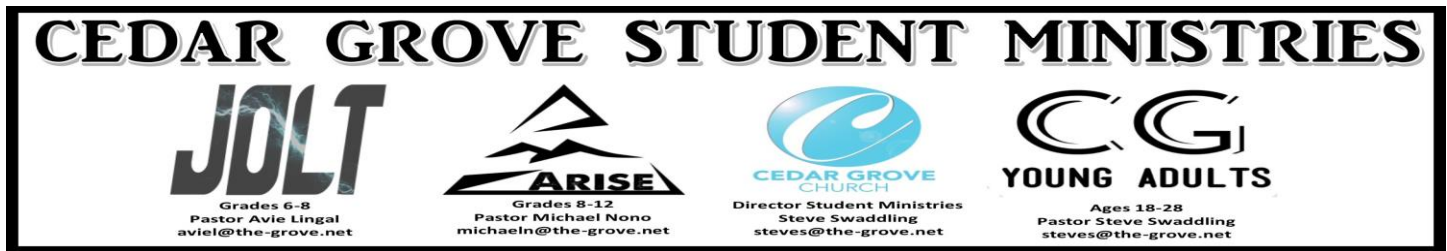
Most vaping devices now have a longer battery life, hold more liquid, offer more customization, and provide a more enjoyable experience than their predecessors. For example, vapers can purchase e-juice in an extensive variety of flavors and can choose what amount of nicotine they want in their e-liquid.

What substances can be vaped?

As mentioned, e-liquids/e-juices can be vaped, and these can contain any number of things. It is possible to vape nicotine-free e-liquid, so one can vape without consuming the addictive substance. In addition, marijuana (or just THC, the mind-altering substance in marijuana) can be vaped in the form of hash oils or even from the dried plant leaves. Because of the nature of vaping, it doesn't produce the same scent as when marijuana is smoked, therefore allowing a user to go undetected. Beyond that, a quick search of the internet yields many lists for different substances that can be vaped, including nutmeg, Salvia Divinorum, and other illicit drugs like bath salts. Because of the nature of vaping, many users are willing to experiment with different liquids in their devices. This can be extremely dangerous to one's health and is not recommended, though teens may not realize the dangers and are more willing to experiment.

Are teens vaping?

Yes. The FDA reports that "e-cigarette use rose from 1.5% to 16.0% among high school students and from 0.6% to 5.3% among middle school students from 2011 to 2015." In some places, even elementary-school-aged students are vaping. Monitoring the Future, a national survey of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders that's been conducted each year since 1975, recently found that 1 out of 3 high school seniors has tried vaping in the last year, while 1 out of 6 seniors has vaped in



the last month. Roughly 11% reported having vaped hash oils (i.e. marijuana). Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (which funds the survey), characterizes it as a “very high and very fast uptake of electronic vaping devices.”

Why the vaping craze?

There are a few reasons why we think vaping is growing in popularity:

1. Brands Market to Younger Users

Why is vaping so attractive to younger people? The FDA found that “in 2013-2014, 81% of current youth e-cigarette users cited the availability of appealing flavors as the primary reason for use.”

E-liquids come in a seemingly endless variety flavors. Sweet options, such as different types of fruit, dessert, or candy, are popular. The website Vapor4Life offers e-liquids in flavors that include Candy Crash, Sour Sweet, and Kiwi Apple Strawberry. Many vape shops and sites offer e-juices that are branded in a way that appears to intentionally market to younger users.

2. People See Vaping as a Safer Alternative to Smoking—and It Might Be

It’s not possible to categorically state that vaping is safer than smoking. But there is some evidence that it is. In this study from the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the authors observe that: While there are certainly potential perils associated with vaping, smoking...is likely to be more dangerous than vaping, especially when considering the myriad of known toxins found in cigarette smoke and the diseases which they promote. The same study adds that “the amount of nicotine finding its way into the bloodstream from vaping an e-cigarette has been shown to be less than what you would expect from smoking a conventional cigarette with comparable nicotine content.” The researchers are very cautious, however, to point out that the evidence is not conclusive and that further studies in this area are needed. More on that later.

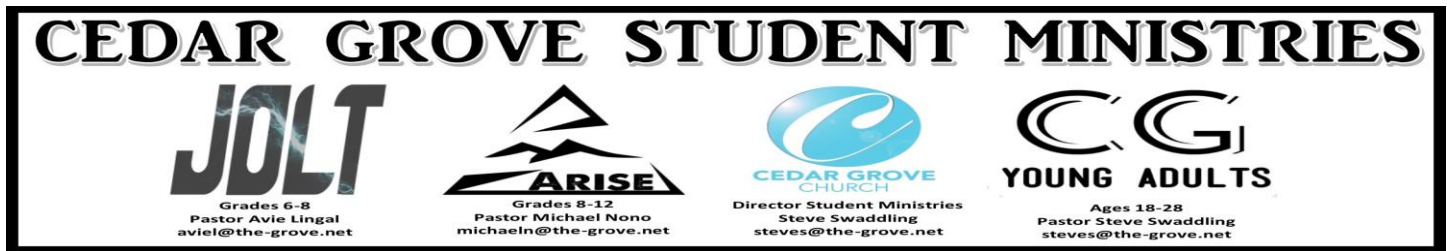
3. JUUL Has Entered the Mainstream

One type of vaping device that is especially popular among students is the JUUL. JUUL’s device is slim and sleek, resembling a flash drive, and the company offers vape pods in the following flavors: mango, cool mint, Virginia tobacco, fruit medley, and crème brulee. JUUL is only about two years old, but the company has been having difficulty producing enough supplies to keep up with demand, despite producing 20 million products monthly. NPR reports one student in Denver saying that while people associate vaping with a certain “crowd,” JUULing is mainstream. One likely reason why JUULing is increasing in popularity among students is that its design makes it easy to hide. And because vapor doesn’t leave the odor that regular cigarettes do, it’s much more difficult for, say, school officials to identify when vaping has occurred in a particular location. There also appears to be a perception that JUULing is safer than smoking regular cigarettes. This assumption could be supported by the evidence indicating that vaping is safer than traditional smoking. But again, the amount of nicotine in each JUULpod is significant. If you were to go online to purchase an e-liquid, most vape sites would allow you to choose how much nicotine you would like in it. A common size for bottles of e-juice is 60 ml, although they can be larger or smaller (e.g., 30 ml or 120 ml). After selecting your flavor, you would then choose how much nicotine you want to add, such as 0 mg, 3 mg, or 6 mg.

In comparison, one JUULpod is 0.7 ml and its nicotine content is 59 mg/ml per pod. This is equivalent to the amount of nicotine in one pack of cigarettes. So someone who vapes a JUULpod is almost certainly consuming a much higher amount of nicotine than the average vaper. The result is that the most popular method for vaping among younger people also happens to be the way to vape the largest amount of nicotine at one time.

4. Let’s Not Forget the Cool Factor

Part of the appeal of regular cigarettes has always been that they look cool, and the same is true of vaping. Take as an example this video of Austin Lawrence, so-called “Vape God.” Lawrence took up vaping in order to get over his addiction to cigarettes. He has since become an expert at manipulating vapor into a variety of spectacular shapes. As of this



writing, Lawrence has around 1.2 million followers on Instagram. He even caught the attention of rapper Drake, who flew Lawrence out to his mansion just so Lawrence could teach him about vaping.

Why is it so controversial?

Unlike cigarettes, vaping has not been extensively researched and studied. In fact, the FDA is still trying to figure out how to classify and regulate electronic smoking. Because of the lack of definitive research, vaping has both its passionate supporters and detractors. Here's a summary of the arguments both for and against it, as well as relevant research.

What Vaping Advocates Say

The most common argument that defenders of vaping put forward is that vaping is a better alternative to smoking regular cigarettes, which have toxic chemicals in them. Employees at one local vape shop we visited said that helping smokers is an important part of what they do. It is also JUUL's primary reason for existing, as stated on the company's home page.

Those in the vaping industry are concerned about the FDA's recent moves to regulate vaping more strictly. Their fear is that tighter regulations will hurt e-cigarette businesses and be harmful to people who are trying to quit smoking. But are e-cigarettes really a good way to help people to stop smoking?

England's National Health Service says, "Public Health England's 2015 independent evidence review found that, based on the available evidence, vaping is around 95% less harmful than smoking." And England's Royal College of Physicians states that "e-cigarettes appear to be effective when used by smokers as an aid to quitting smoking."

Another study conducted collaboratively by institutions such as the CDC and University College London found evidence that former smokers who turned to e-cigarettes "have significantly lower levels of toxins than those who continue to smoke regular cigarettes."

There is additional research that smokers who switched to e-cigarettes saw an increased life expectancy.

What Vaping Opponents Say

On the other side of the argument is the point that, while vaping might be better for you than traditional smoking, it is still not good for you. For one thing, nicotine is a known addictive substance that damages people's bodies. While consuming lower quantities of nicotine is better than taking in larger amounts, it's still better not to consume it at all.

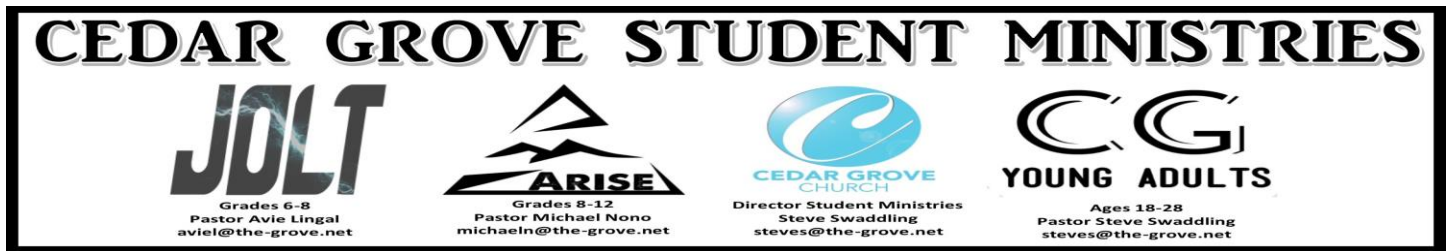
Also, it is troubling that so little is known about the other chemicals present in e-liquids. Most companies don't list every single ingredient in their e-juices, so people are unaware of exactly what chemicals they're consuming. That lack of transparency is in itself a problem. There is evidence that some of these chemicals, such as diacetyl, can be harmful to vapers, as well as to those who consume the vapor second-hand. And while there is evidence that suggests e-cigarettes help people stop smoking, there is also evidence indicating that e-cigarettes increase the likelihood that non-smokers will start smoking combustible cigarettes.

A study by the American Academy of Pediatrics "found that having used an e-cigarette in the past month significantly and strongly predicted combustible cigarette use," but that cigarette use did not predict the use of e-cigarettes. A different study from the American Journal of Medicine found that e-cigarettes made it four times more likely that people would take up combustible cigarettes, versus the likelihood that non-users would take up smoking.

What should we conclude from this evidence?

Whatever the confusion surrounding the current research on vaping, we believe there are several conclusions we can draw about the use of e-cigarettes:

- While e-cigarettes are arguably better than regular cigarettes, it is still best for people not to smoke or vape at all.



- Minors should not be consuming nicotine because doing so is illegal.
- It is unwise to consume nicotine-free e-liquids because there is inconclusive research about the impact of the chemicals in them, and some of the research suggests that this impact is harmful.

Ok, so how easy is it for minors to access vape products?

Federal law prohibits minors from purchasing and consuming nicotine. Vape shops and sites are not supposed to sell any products, with or without nicotine, to people who are underage. But if someone is resourceful enough, these restrictions are not, in the end, that restrictive.

There are two main strategies the video's creator suggests. One is getting someone else to buy vape products for you. The other is ordering them online and figuring out how to get the package delivered without your parents being aware. Students could send the package to a friend's house or come up with a reason for not showing it to their parents. For example, teens could order a gift for their parents (that they will actually give to them later) in addition to the vaping device. That way, the parents won't be suspicious when their kids hide the package from them.

What precautions are sites taking to ensure that minors don't buy nicotine underage?

Some vape websites now require an SSN or a picture of a photo ID in order to verify the age of the person making the purchase. But it's really not that difficult to sneak a parent's ID at an opportune moment. If students have PayPal accounts, they can make purchases without them showing up on a bank statement. Also, eBay (which does have JUUL products) doesn't require age verification for purchasing.

And how easy is it to hide?

In a word, very—that is, if parents and other adults don't know what to look for. Often referred to as "stealth vaping," there are plenty of websites (like this and this) and YouTube videos that offer tips and tricks for concealing one's habit. These include different inhalation techniques for minimizing vapor, less conspicuous devices to purchase, e-liquids that have less-obvious scents, and how-to guides for concealing devices in cups or bottles. The bottom line is that if teens want to get away with vaping, they can and will, thanks to the Internet and current lack of regulations to keep minors from purchasing the products. The best thing we can do is educate ourselves, be alert, and never stop reminding our children that we want the absolute best for them, not just to keep them from having fun in the moment.

What can I do to keep my kids from vaping?

There are a number of steps you can take as a parent to help your children avoid vaping.

1. Educate Yourself

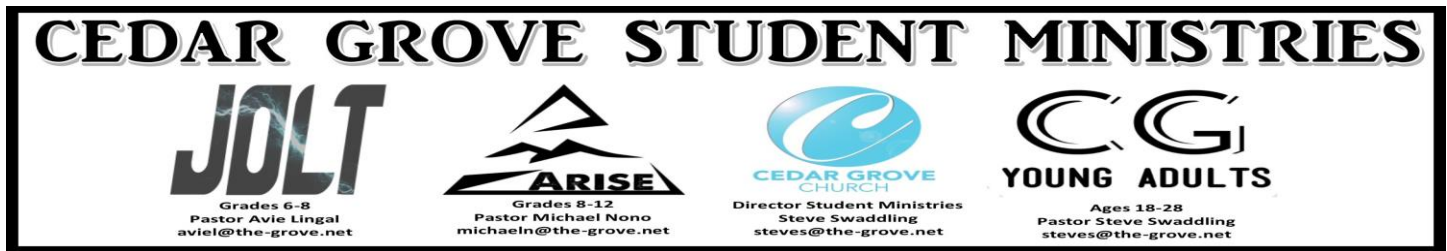
First of all, you should educate yourself about vaping, which you're already doing by reading this guide—so good job! You also can find a parent guide from the Surgeon General here. The guide includes tips for talking to your kids about e-cigarettes.

2. Don't Assume Anything

It's important to be open to the idea that your children might currently be vaping without your knowledge or that they might be interested in doing so in the future. It would be naïve to assume there is no way they would do something like that. Be on the lookout for ways your children might be concealing a vaping habit. Even if your children are not using e-cigarettes, it's still a good idea to talk to them about the issue. Vaping is popular among younger people, and there is a lot of misinformation floating around. It would benefit your kids to be educated about it.

3. Pursue Relationships with Your Kids

Ideally, a conversation with your children about vaping should take place within the broader context of your relationships with them. If you are pursuing and getting to know your kids, then you will have some idea of where they



are spiritually. You'll be aware of their desires and struggles and have a greater likelihood of knowing whether or not they'd be prone to try vaping out.

4. React Out of Love, Not Condemnation

If you suspect or discover that your underage (or of age) children are vaping, it is crucial that you do not react out of anger or condemnation. Focus on understanding why they are vaping and/or why they hid their actions from you. The issue is not merely that they broke a rule; it's that by doing so, they are not loving God with their whole hearts or their neighbors as themselves. How can you encourage their affections in the right direction?

Also, keep the future in mind. One day, your kids will be able to legally consume nicotine.

How can you encourage them to make wise choices when they are adults?

It is essential you communicate that you are concerned about them vaping because you love them and because you don't want them or others to be hurt in any way.

How do I talk to my kids about vaping?

When discussing vaping with your kids, consider these angles: our spiritual obligations to God and others, our legal responsibilities, and the importance of living with wisdom. Does God say consuming nicotine is a sin? No, but the Bible does say a lot about self-control. It talks about being good stewards of what God has given us and emphasizes loving God and our neighbors. It mentions honoring our governing authorities.

And even if something isn't morally wrong, that doesn't mean we should do it. In 1 Corinthians 10:23, Paul writes that while all things are lawful, he will not let anything master him. We should make all of our decisions out of reverence for God and love towards those around us.

Here are some questions you might raise when you talk with your children:

- What do you know about vaping? Do your friends vape, and if so, why? Have you ever been interested in vaping?
- Why, in general, do you think people like to vape? Why do some people vape nicotine-free e-liquids? Do you think they have good or valid reasons for doing so?
- How often do you think we make decisions about our habits based on how those habits will affect those around us? Is it practical to expect people to do that with all their habits?
- Why do some people vape even though doing so is illegal? What does this say about their view of authority? Can you think of laws that might seem trivial that Christians are comfortable with breaking? If so, why do you think this is the case?
- What are characteristics of someone who has a habit of self-control? Consider any area of life—time, money, relationships, food, etc. What do you observe about people who don't live with self-control?
- Do you think there is a valid place for vaping if someone is using it to stop an addiction to regular cigarettes? Why or why not?
- How can we have wisdom with what we put into our bodies? Discuss what this might look like when it comes to the food we eat or even the amount of caffeine we consume.

Final thoughts

As a parent, you are probably already aware that, while you can do your best to protect your kids, you can only do so much. You simply cannot control everything that happens to them, and you can't make their decisions for them. They will probably go through temptations and trials of which you have no knowledge. Some far more troubling than vaping. This is a scary truth. But it comes with another truth that is just as real and is immensely encouraging: God does know everything that is going on with your kids, and He is actively engaged in their life, whether they recognize His presence

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or not. He knows them, loves them, and also wants the best for them. As parents, our task in all of this is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He leads and guides our children into a deeper knowledge of and relationship with Christ. We know a woman who is a retired school administrator, as well as a mother and grandmother. She says that when her kids were growing up, there were times when the Holy Spirit would wake her up in the middle of the night and prompt her to intercede for them. She didn't know why, but she would stand outside her kids' bedroom doors and pray for them.

Most of what she prayed for still remains unknown to her, and some she didn't find out about for years. But God was working in the lives of her children nevertheless. She has observed many times that God is faithful to work out His testimony in the lives of the people she knows. In Eph. 6 where Paul famously describes the armor of God, he says that our battle is not "against flesh and blood," but "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (6:12). Christians should therefore pray "at all times in the Spirit" and "keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (6:18).

Do not underestimate the ability you have to influence and protect your children through seeking the Lord on their behalf. Despite everything else we've said in this guide, this is probably the most important advice we have to offer. As parents, we are in divine cooperation with God in the teaching, admonition, and training of our children. God, the Father, loves our children even more than we do, and He is able to do more than we ask, think, or even imagine.

EXCELLENT RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

<http://www.focusonthefamily.ca/parenting>

<http://www.kidsofintegrity.com/>

<http://www.heartlightministries.org/blogs/markgregston/>

<http://familymatters.net/blog/>

Top 10 Ways to Teach Your Teenagers to Put God First

1. Let them see you serving God with a joyful and uncomplaining attitude.
2. Encourage them to serve God in substantive and regular ways that cause them to lean on Him for strength and courage.
3. Avoid solving all of their problems for them. Force them to turn to God to sort out relational conflicts and cultural dilemmas.
4. Avoid placing unrealistic expectations on the youth leaders in your church. Regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, make sure your kids are a positive presence in the youth group.
5. Permit your teenagers to wrestle with the more perplexing problems of life, remaining calm while their faith is on trial.
6. Let them find you reading your Bible on a daily basis and acting on what you are learning.
7. Don't be afraid to design dilemmas that force your kids to trust in God and test their faith (what movies to watch, what clothing they choose, working part-time in a very secular environment, etc). Be careful to use your personal veto sparingly and graciously.
8. Encourage them to think big when it comes to trusting God for a major need in someone else's life or their own (health, money, safety, etc)
9. Encourage them to team with other teenagers who believe in a big God and serve side by side with them (mission trips, inner-city outreaches, care for the unfortunate, etc)
10. Humbly share some of your own battles about who was going to be the master of your life, and walk your children through the process you went through to arrive at your decision.