



My Son was Addicted to a Smartphone

The patterns I saw in my child's behavior opened my eyes to the damage my phone had done

By Sabrina McDonald

I bought my first smartphone about a year into my journey as a widow. At the time, it felt like a lifesaver.

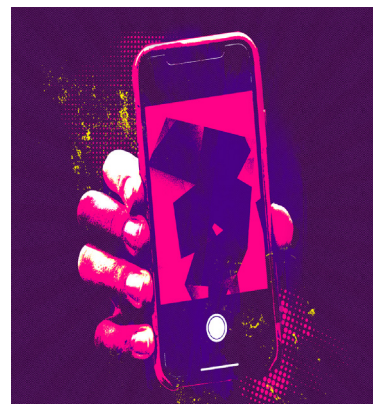
I was a stay-at-home, single mom of two toddlers. My son, Ben, was 3 years old, and my daughter, Katherine, was around a year old. I had very little time away from my kids, and my social life consisted mainly of church activities. So my smartphone companion gave me friends to talk to at any moment, a connection to the outside world.

There was another important benefit that my new smartphone gave me: babysitting. It was like a magic pacifier—especially for my little boy, who was very active and high strung.

When Ben screamed in the grocery store, all I had to do was pull out the smartphone. He sat quietly in the buggy, blissfully occupied for as long as I wanted to shop. When I needed some quiet to deal with business, it gave me hours of peace. It was useful in any situation that required calm—church, doctor's offices, government buildings ... The smartphone provided a guaranteed win over the battle of fits.

I heard all the rhetoric about the dangers of screen usage and how children were turning into zombies. But I reasoned that my child must be exceptional because I saw no signs of problems.

All he did was play child-friendly learning apps and Sonic the Hedgehog. I restricted what he could and could not view, especially after the time he discovered YouTube and came across a hodge-podge Barbie video screaming b****.



Other than content, though, I didn't understand why people were concerned about kids and smartphones. After all, my brother and I played games like Sonic and Mario Brothers as kids. Our brains didn't turn into mush. What was the big deal?

Article continued on Pg 4-5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Article	1
Walt Mueller	1
Trends & Latest Research	2
Feature Films	3
Top Teens	3
Article Cont.	4-5
Marriage Ministry	6
Parenting	7
Ministry Events and News	8
Monthly Calendar	9-10

Transgender Regrets by Walt Mueller

In today's rapidly changing youth culture landscape, more and parents are being blind-sided by children who announce that they want to transition from their biological gender to the opposite gender. Known as gender-reassignment that's accomplished through hormone treatments and radical surgeries, there has been an argument made in the psychological community that patients experience mental health benefits after gender reassignment. Recently, the American Journal of Psychiatry issued a major correction to a prior study. They now say that neither gender reassignment hormone treatments nor gender reassignment surgeries reduce the need of transgender identifying people for mental health services. In her new book, **Irreversible Damage**, Abigail Shrier writes, "nearly all of the detransitioners I spoke with are plagued with regret." Parents, in God's goodness and grace he has created us male and female. Teach your kids to listen to God's message on gender, rather than the culture's.

LATEST RESEARCH: FIGHTING ENTITLEMENT

The trend towards a sense of entitlement is especially prevalent among those children and teens who live on the receiving end of a silver spoon. On the other end are parents who feed their kids an endless parade of opportunities, activities, and things all without ever having to work for any of it. These kids wind up believing that they will never have to work for anything, because, after all, they deserve it. A Harris Interactive Poll found that 90% of parents do think that it's important for their children to work to pay for the things they want. But the reality is that not that many kids had jobs. The survey found that there is a disconnect between the desired end result and what the kids are actually doing. The words of the theologian John Wesley are worth teaching to our children: *"Work as hard as you can, to make all the money you can, to save as much as you can in order to give away all that you can."*



CUTTING AS COOL

Each and every year, editors of the most popular dictionaries have to make some difficult choices. They decide which words should be removed from the dictionary, and which new words should be added.

What makes this task necessary is the rapidly changing nature of our culture. This

year's edition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary has added a host of new food and beverage related words that reflect our culture's growing obsession with carefully curated eating and drinking experiences. Numerous other words relate to all the new technology we've incorporated into our lives. One new word that jumps out is the abbreviation TL;DR, which stands for "too long, didn't read." The addition of TL;DR serves as an indicator that we've filled our lives with so much busyness, that we are always in a hurry. For our kids, a hurried and over-scheduled life adds up and can cause them to crumble. God made us for a rhythm of work & rest. Are you getting your kids to slow down?

Early Onset Puberty

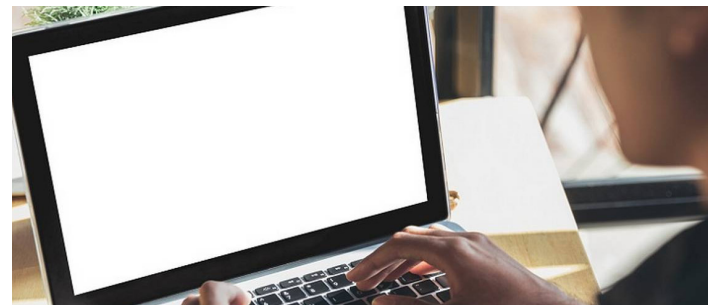
In his new book, *Girls on the Edge*, Dr. Leonard Sax describes four factors that he believes are putting girls at risk in today's rapidly changing culture. One of those factors is what he labels as "environmental toxins." Sax lists some of the environmental factors that are causing girls to enter puberty at a younger age. He mentions how what our girls eat will effect the onset of puberty, with girls who eat high fat and high calorie diets experiencing puberty at earlier ages. Of course there are other factors at play. Pediatricians are now saying that the onset of puberty and breast development as early as age seven is within the normal range. Those of us raising girls need to be aware that earlier onset of puberty puts girls at risk of a host of challenges, including anxiety, depression, sexual victimization, disordered eating, and substance abuse. We need to be diligent in supporting our girls and leading them through changes as we nurture them in the Lord.



Source: CPYU

COVID and CHEATING

Parents, you need to be aware of a concerning aspect of on-line learning during these COVID-19 days. Researchers are reporting that there's been a rise in cheating and academic dishonesty as students engage with learning on-line. Because they are sitting alone in the privacy of their own home, students are able to switch between on-screen windows to look up test answers while they are taking on-line tests. And, in a twist from sneaking a look across a classroom aisle at a classmate's paper, kids are now messaging and texting each other in order to get answers. Parents, you need to monitor and proctor your kids to make sure they aren't taking the easy and dishonest way out. And, you need to instill in them a love for God that results in them seeing academics as a form of worship where honesty is to be pursued. Proverbs 10:9 tells us, "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out." Teach the truth about truthfulness to your kids.





FEATURE FILMS: STREAMING AND IN THEATERS

HOME RELEASE ON DEC. 25, 2020



CAST: YaYa Gosselin; Pedro Pascal; Priyanka Chopra; Lyon Daniels; Andy Walken; Hala Finley; Boyd Holbrook

PG- Violence and Mild Language

CONTENT CAUTION METER

Light Teens **Light** Adults **Light** Kids

PLOT SUMMARY

When alien invaders kidnap Earth's superheroes, their kids are whisked away to a government safe house. The superkids team up to escape their mysterious government babysitter. If they're going to save their parents, they'll have to work together and form an out-of-this-world team.

HOME RELEASE ON JAN. 25, 2021



CAST: Azhy Robertson; Gillian Jacobs; John Gallagher Jr.; Winslow Fegley

PG-13- Terror, Frightening Images and Some Language

CONTENT CAUTION METER

Medium Teens **Medium** Adults **Heavy** Kids

PLOT SUMMARY

Oliver is a lonely young boy who feels different from everyone else. Desperate for a friend, he seeks solace and refuge in his ever-present cell phone and tablet. When a mysterious creature uses Oliver's devices against him to break into our world, Oliver's parents must fight to save their son from the monster beyond the screen.

CHECK OUT WWW.PLUGGEDIN.COM FOR MORE INFO ON NEW MOVIE RELEASES

Top Ten Video Games

Sales through November 2020

1. FIFA 21
2. Madden NFL 21
3. Watch Dogs: Legion
4. NHL 21
5. Mario Kart Live: Home Circuit
6. Super Mario 3D All-Stars*
7. Animal Crossing: New Horizons*
8. Star Wars: Squadrons
9. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare
10. Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time

*Digital sales not included Source: NPD

TOP 10 Books Best-selling Young Adult Hardcover Books

1. *Stamped* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
2. *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
3. *A Cuban Girl's Guide to Tea and Tomorrow* by Laura Taylor Namey
4. *One Of Us Is Lying* by Karen M. McManus
5. *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi
6. *All This Time* by Mikki Daughtry and Rachael Lippincott
7. *Dear Justyce* by Nic Stone
8. *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson
9. *Kingdom of the Wicked* by Kerri Maniscalco
10. *Love & Olives* by Jenna Evans Welch

Source: New York Times via CPYU

Trouble brewing

I relied on the smartphone throughout my son's preschool years. My daughter enjoyed it, too, but not to the same degree. (Even though she could work the phone as easily as I could by the time she was 18 months old.) My son almost couldn't live without it.

Each day, we fought over when and how long he could use the smartphone. It was a good bargaining tool, though, because he would do almost anything to get the chance to play with it.

It wasn't until he started school that I began to see the effects of prolonged device usage in my little boy. The fits he used to throw to get phone time as a toddler turned into violent rage. When I picked him up after school, his first question was, "Can I use the phone?" and the begging didn't stop all evening. If I didn't let him have the phone as much as he wanted when he wanted, he would kick, scream, and sometimes even threaten to hit me.

For so long I had excused similar behavior. I thought he was still grieving from his father's death, or maybe it was an issue of "boys will be boys." But I started to worry. Instead of maturing and showing signs of developing self-control, he seemed to be getting worse.

The teachers at school noticed his lack of self-control. Even though he reined in the rage at school, he received pink slips almost every day for everything from not keeping his hands to himself to talking while the teacher talked.

One of his teachers told me to talk to my pediatrician, insinuating I needed to put him on meds for ADD or ADHD. But he was so young. I didn't think it was fair to medicate him when I hadn't tried anything else.

Noticing a pattern

I put him on supplements, vitamins, and tried other diet restrictions. I started looking into therapy. In the meantime, I spanked him and lectured him, took away toys and privileges in order to get him to pay attention and behave. Nothing seemed to get his attention ... except losing phone privileges.

His reaction to taking the phone away was like I had declared I was going to chop off one of his fingers. He begged, pleaded, cried, made a zillion promises, and when the nice stuff didn't work, he started threatening to hurt me, his sister, or break my things.

It scared me. Such violence from a child was mind boggling to me. But I pushed through and stood my ground. Then I began to notice a pattern. On the days when I gave him phone time, he was unreasonable and out of control. But when he lost phone privileges and went 24 hours without access, he became a different child—calm, loving

forgiving. He paid better attention and did what he was told without lashing out. We were able to have rational conversations.

So I experimented a little. I would take away the phone for three or four days and then give it back to him. Without fail, his actions and attitudes matched his phone usage. I couldn't even give it to him for 10 minutes—just that bit of stimulus was enough to ruin his attitude for the entire day.

It was clear. My son had to go cold turkey. No more games of any kind.

Life without games

I sat Ben down, looked him in the eyes, and lovingly explained that his screen games had to go away. He was crushed, of course; indignant, even. I asked him if he believed I loved him more than anything in the world. He said yes. I asked him if he knew I only do what's best for him. He said yes.

And then I told him he was losing his phone privileges. He begged, pleaded, and promised a zillion promises, as usual. But this time, I was resolved. There was no more begging, no more chances. I explained he wasn't being punished. I was doing this because the phone was hurting him.

It took about two weeks for my little boy to recover from his addiction. Like a junkie, he experienced withdrawals that resulted in outbursts, tears, and anything else that would get that phone back.

It wasn't long, however, until he got into the car after school, and instead of asking for the phone, he told me about his day. The pink slips stopped coming home almost immediately. The rage and violence faded away, and my little boy was lighter, freer.

It has been about four years since I took games away. I have begun to give him access to a smartphone, but he only has the ability to play music and take pictures. The rest of the apps and internet access have been removed (with the exception of the weather app, which is a recent addition).

Since I took the gaming away, Ben has excelled in school and learned to control his compulsivity. He's one of the teachers' favorite students. Sometimes I can't believe he's the same child, but mostly, I can't believe I didn't see it when he was struggling.

My advice, for what it's worth

I am not a technology expert by any means. I'm not a child psychiatrist. But I can recognize a pattern when I see one.

In the last six months or so, I have talked to a handful of moms who have confided in me that their sons and/or daughters are out of control. A couple of the kids are on all kinds of medication that has done little to no good.

Another child was asked not to come back to church functions because she's not able to control her outbursts. One child is young like Ben was, and he's struggling in school and the teachers are suggesting medication.

Each time I talk to a mom at the end of her wits, I ask, "Does your child like to play video games on a console, smartphone, or tablet?" Without fail, mom gives a resounding yes.

As we talk about the issue, each mom begins to see the similarities in my child and hers. Her eyes open to the possibility that her child might have a game addiction. It's hard to believe something seemingly so innocent—so helpful, even—could do so much damage to a child's mind and emotions.

There is more research coming out daily about the dangers of excessive screentime for kids, particularly young children. The Center for Parenting Education reports children and teenagers who are on technology for more than two hours a day "may develop a stimulus addiction" and may display hyperactivity, aggression, fear, insensitivity, and an appetite for violence.

Here's a quote from Psychology Today:

When every finger swipe brings about a response of colors and shapes and sounds, a child's brain responds gleefully with the neurotransmitter dopamine, the key component in our reward system that is associated with feelings of pleasure. Dopamine hits in the brain can feel almost addictive, and when a child gets too used to an immediate stimuli response, he will learn to always prefer smartphone-style interaction—that is, immediate gratification and response—over real-world connection.

I can certainly vouch for both of these findings.

Interestingly, not long ago, Ben went to a friend's house for the first time after school one day. When I picked him up, I could tell something was wrong with him. I saw the same frustration and aggression from phone use. Turns out, he and his friend were playing racing games most of his visit.

Not all kids struggle like my son and these other kids. My daughter could play video games to her heart's content, and she wouldn't care to pick it up again for a month. But, in my opinion, the potential for bad outweighs the good. So, neither of my kids are allowed to play games on the smartphone or anywhere else. For what it's worth, here's my best advice to moms about screen usage:

1. If your child is struggling, take devices away permanently.

Before you try drugs or therapy, take away all devices. It never crossed my mind that the problem with my child could be outside stimuli. Give your child's brain a chance to heal naturally. Stand your ground, and take it away for your child's own good. Wait two weeks for improvement. If you don't see progress by that time, then consider other forms of help.

2. Don't worry about computer illiteracy.

Children get healthy, monitored screen time at school. They will probably get better computer literacy skills with educational programs than what they learn with video games at home.

3. Find out what your child likes to do (other than games) and indulge it!

I have discovered that kids with device addictions are usually above-average smart. The games are appealing because they can keep up with the child's fast-paced thinking. The problem is that when the screen goes away, the world seems to slow down. It's boring and under stimulating. So, your child needs something to occupy his or her hungry brain.

My son has developed all sorts of hobbies that are far outside of my capacity for thinking. He has conquered about 10 different types of Rubik's cubes. He builds complicated marble runs and elaborate domino towers. At one time, he was creating intricate mazes that filled an entire page, and another time he got on a map-making kick. Once, he taped six pieces of paper together and drew a detailed highway map with on and off ramps and figure eight interchanges. If you channel your child's mind onto something other than video games, you may be surprised at what he or she can do that you never thought possible.

4. Restrict, restrict, restrict.

If your child must have a device (schools may require them, for example), use the restrictions built in to the operating system. Remove apps from the smartphone (It's easy to Google, "How to take YouTube app off smartphone.")

Your child won't like restrictions. That's okay. They don't like it when we make them eat their vegetables, or make them go to bed on time, or force them to do their homework, either. But we do it because it's good for them. We do it because we love them.

And one day, they will be thankful we did.

~Article found at www.familylife.com

Ministering to our Marriages

FAMILYLIFE® presents
weekend to
remember

GREAT MARRIAGES DON'T JUST HAPPEN



CHOOSE FROM OVER 90 GETAWAYS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



COMING TO

Burlingame

DATES

4/16/2021 – 4/18/2021

LOCATION

Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport

GROUP NAME

CVFirstMarriages

Register at WEEKENDTOREMEMBER.COM or call 1-800-358-6329

PRAYING FOR YOUR SPOUSE

Lifting your Wife through Prayer

"Lord, thank you for my wife. I ask your will for her in these things, according to your Word. Fill my wife with love for you, that she would love you "with all her heart and with all her soul and with all her mind. " (Matthew 22:37-40)

Lifting your Husband through Prayer

"Lord, thank you for my wife. I ask your will for her in these things, according to your Word. Cause him to delight in Your Word (Psalm 1:2) and open his eyes that he may behold wondrous things out of your law (Psalm 119:18). Give him understanding (139:73).

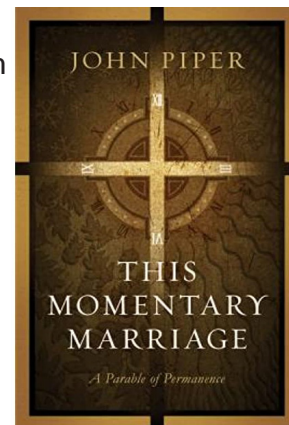
To get full prayer cards, visit www.shop.familylife.com

Source: FamilyLife

Recommended Reading

The chasm between the biblical vision of marriage and the common human conception is — and has always been — gargantuan.

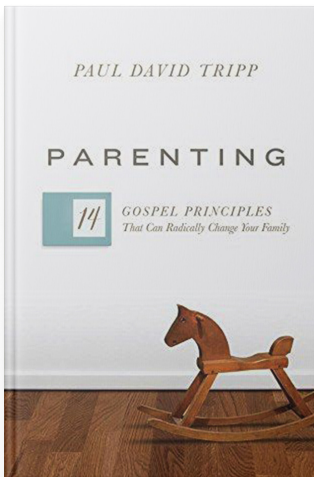
Reflecting on over forty years of matrimony, John Piper exalts the biblical meaning of marriage over its emotion, exhorting couples to keep their covenant as a display of Christ's covenant-keeping love for the church. He aims to lift the church's low view of marriage to something infinitely greater, namely, a vision of Jesus's unswerving allegiance to and affection for his bride. This *Momentary Marriage* unpacks the biblical vision, its unexpected contours, and its weighty implications for married, single, divorced, and remarried alike.



Source: DesiringGod.org

Ministering to our Kids

Recommended Reading



In the midst of folding laundry, coordinating carpool schedules, and breaking up fights, many parents get lost. Feeling pressure to do everything “right” and raise up “good” children, it’s easy to lose sight of our ultimate purpose as parents in the quest for practical tips and guaranteed formulas.

In this life-giving book, Paul Tripp offers parents much more than a to-do list. Instead, he presents us with a big-picture view of God’s plan for us as parents. Outlining fourteen foundational principles centered on the gospel, he shows that we need more than the latest parenting strategy or list of techniques.

Rather, we need the rescuing grace of God—grace that has the power to shape how we view everything we do as parents.

Freed from the burden of trying to manufacture life-change in our children’s hearts, we can embrace a grand perspective of parenting overflowing with vision, purpose, and joy.

Source: paultripp.com

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”
Deuteronomy 6: 4- 7, ESV

PRAYING FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Lifting my Children through Prayer

“Lord, thank you for my children. I ask your will for them in these things, according to your Word. Train my children to love deeply, sincerely, and sacrificially, seeing and loving others as you do (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:16). Empower me to daily model your love and compassion for them.

To get full prayer cards, visit www.shop.familylife.com
Source: FamilyLife

GREAT AND SAFE MINISTRIES

All the below ministries are great sources for continued edification, guidance and encouragement as we all seek to be more Christ-like.

None of them, via their articles, tips and resources are a substitute for daily reading and studying of God’s Word.

In future issues, the plan will be to highlight each ministry in more detail. In the meantime

FAMILYLIFE®
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

A Cru Ministry

TGC THE GOSPEL
COALITION

FOCUS
ON THE
FAMILY®



DARE 2 SHARE

 **desiringGod**

IX **9Marks**



TreeHouse Kids News

* Have you been catching the weekly TreeHouse Kids lesson videos? We sure hope so. You can go to cvfirst.org each week to see the latest lessons from our amazing THK team!

* Coming soon! The brand new THK Show, which will happen every second and fourth Monday of the month. It will be packed with fun and silly things but most importantly, time with God. It will be streamed live, starting at 7 pm til 7:30 pm.

Characters of the TreeHouse



Make sure your whole family is tuned in on Sunday mornings, especially the last Sunday of each month! Beginning January 31st, we will be having a special TreeHouse Kids Spotlight during worship service.



**If you haven't heard,
AWANA is back!**
We are meeting
virtually via Zoom each
Wednesday at 6:30 pm.
To register,
go to cvfirst.org.

CV FIRST YOUTH WINTER/SPRING EVENTS

January

30th- Service Day- 10 am-3 pm

February

13th- Virtual Movie Night- 7 pm

March

20th- Board Game Night- 6pm—9pm

April

23rd-25th- Spring Retreat

May

2nd- YG Dinner- 5 pm

**Pick up a full Winter/Spring schedule in the youth room or main office.*

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING AT YOUTH GROUP

Jan. 3	Colossians 1
Jan. 10	Love Does Week 3- Audacious Love
Jan. 17	Love Does Week 4- Be Not Afraid
Jan. 24	Love Does Week 5- Follow Me
Jan. 31	Life in 6 Words- GOD
Feb. 7	Life in 6 Words- OUR
Feb. 14	Life in 6 Words- SINS
Feb. 21	Life in 6 Words- PAYING
Feb. 28	Life in 6 Words- EVERYONE
March 7	Life in 6 Words- LIFE
March 14	Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 1:1-11
March 21	Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 1:12-21
March 28	Palm Sunday/Easter Study
April 11	Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 2:1-10a
April 18	Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 2:10b-22

JANUARY 2021

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
					1	2
3 CV Youth @ 1pm	4	5	6 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	7	8	9
10 CV Youth @ 1pm	11	12	13 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	14	15	16
17 CV Youth @ 1pm	18	19	20 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	21 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	22	23
24 CV Youth @ 1pm 31 CV Youth @ 1 pm	25 THK SHOW @ 7 pm	26	27 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	28	29	30 YG Service Day

FEBRUARY 2021

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
	1	2	3 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	4 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	5	6
7 CV Youth @ 1pm	8 THK SHOW @ 7 pm	9	10 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	11	12	13 YG Virtual Movie Night
14 CV Youth @ 1pm	15	16	17 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	18 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	19	20
21 CV Youth @ 1pm	22 THK SHOW @ 7 pm	23	24 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	25	26	27
28 CV Youth @ 1pm						

MARCH 2021

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
	1	2	3 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	4 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	5	6
7 CV Youth @ 1pm	8	9	10 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	11	12	13
14 CV Youth @ 1pm	15	16	17 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	18 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	19	20 YG Board Game Night
21 CV Youth @ 1pm	22	23	24 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	25	26	27
28 CV Youth @ 1pm	29	30	31 AWANA @ 6:30 pm			

APRIL 2021

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
				1 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	2	3
4 EASTER No Youth	5	6	7 No Awana	8	9	10
11 CV Youth @ 1pm	12 THK SHOW @ 7 pm	13	14 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	15 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	16	17
18 CV Youth @ 1pm	19	20	21 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	22	23 YG Spring Retreat	24 YG Spring Retreat
25 YG Spring Retreat No Youth	26 THK SHOW @ 7 pm	27	28 AWANA @ 6:30 pm	29 YG Zoom Hangout @ 7pm	30	