



Walt Mueller

Any kid, anywhere

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Yesterday, a friend called wondering what role, if any, CPYU was playing in the unfolding story of the double murder that occurred here in Lancaster County on Sunday morning. “We’re not involved,” I replied. “Well, what do you think of it all?,” he asked. Perhaps the best way for me to sum up my initial thoughts is by simply saying, “Sad, but not surprising.” By this time, you’ve no doubt heard about the local 18-year-old, David Ludwig, who allegedly shot and killed the parents of his 14-year-old girlfriend, Kara Borden. Then, the two took off together only to be caught yesterday in Indiana. The story is loaded with the kind of dramatic twists and turns that make news producers and networks drool. They’ve been telling the story over and over in typical soap opera fashion: a forbidden love affair, a double murder, a kidnapping, access to the kids through their online blogs, their “religious” backgrounds, a multi-state manhunt, and their history as home-schooled kids. Non-stop news network coverage has featured the “expert” pontificators speculating, as usual, in a manner that tells the story before the story is even known. To be honest, we’ve even done a bit of speculating ourselves here at the office. To pass on our speculations would be a waste of space. Instead, perhaps it’s safest to pass on some thoughts that lie beneath my response of “Sad, but not surprising” and how that relates to what I do everyday here at CPYU. Because the story is local, it’s got everybody buzzing. So what’s been the buzz in my head? Simply stated, it’s this: *It doesn’t matter who you and your kids are, where you live, where you work, where you go to church, or where you go to school. You and your kids will be affected by the culture.* Understand that I’m making a general statement that many of you have heard me vocalize for years. My comments aren’t specific to this case. I don’t know the families nor do I know enough about their backgrounds to make comments on their tragedy. However,

this situation and the specifics as we know them so far have cemented some general thoughts I've had for a long time which continue to evolve as I study the Scriptures and observe our Christian subculture. For years we've been challenging Christian parents to stay in touch with their teenagers and their world. To believe that our faith somehow insulates them from the realities of the world is both pragmatically and theologically wrong. Like it or not, we live in the culture and that culture influences and effects us all. There's no escaping it. There isn't supposed to be. Like it or not, God doesn't want us circling the wagons or living in a bubble in an effort to keep ourselves pure. The God-man Jesus prayed the will of the Father the night before his death. That will? . . . that his disciples in all times and all places would be in the world (living as salt and light) while not of the world (John 17). That's not only how we should be living, but how we should be preparing our students to live every day of their lives. Believe it or not, to assume that you've somehow made your kids immune to the influence of culture by shielding them from culture might just produce the exact opposite effect. In other words, by not preparing them to engage the culture with minds and hearts saturated by a biblical world and life view, we actually make them more vulnerable to the negative cultural forces they face both now and for the rest of their lives. Both we (parents and youthworkers) and our kids need to be wise to the Scriptures and street-wise about our culture. Just like he did with his son Jesus, God has made us all particular people who do his particular work in the particular time and place where he's placed us. Over the course of the last few months I've been approached by a growing number of pastors and youthworkers who are dealing with a segment of Christian people who resist this approach and even believe it's morally, ethically, and biblically wrong. Sorry, I don't see it. I'm even more sorry for their kids. I love what theologian John Stott says about every Christian's call to become a double-listener: *"Christian witnesses stand between the Word and the world, with the consequent obligation to listen to both. We listen to the Word in order to discover ever more of the riches of Christ. And we listen to the world in order to discern which of Christ's riches are needed most and how to present them in their best light"* (from *The Contemporary Christian*). This is my calling, and the calling of my kids. When it comes to our kids and their culture, what we don't know (or don't want to know, or refuse to know) can hurt them.