

# Cultural Issues Presentation:

## Vaping, JUULing, and Today's Teens

by Justin Worden | 12/6/18 | MAST 6351

Thanks to my wife, who teaches seventh graders at our local middle school, I have come to realize the growing epidemic among students (in middle and high school) related to JUULs and e-cigarettes (or vaping). The following research and applications relate to this issue and how families can head it off before it becomes more of a problem in our nation and among teenagers.

### Cultural Issues Discovered

The following are two articles related to this topic and my findings from this information:

1. **“One in Five U.S. High School Students Now Vapes”** (article from HomeWord)

<https://homeword.com/2018/11/26/one-in-five-u-s-high-school-students-now-vapes/?cat=families#.XARBFZFzIV>  
(originally found at <http://theyouthculturereport.com/category/trends-studies/>)

According to this article and recent research from the CDC, now more than 20% of high school students are using electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), which creates a huge risk of nicotine addiction among these teenagers. From 2011 to 2018 (just 7 years), their usage went from 1.5% to 20.8%, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Talk about an epidemic! The original source for this information was from *HealthDay*, where Alex Azar (the US Secretary of Health and Human Services) is quoted as saying, “By one measure, the rate of youth e-cigarette use almost doubled in the last year, which confirms the need for FDA’s ongoing policy proposals and enforcement actions.” Furthermore, Erika Sward, assistant vice president for national advocacy at the American Lung Association, says, “The youth use of e-cigarettes is at an epidemic level. It’s truly troubling.” Just in the last two years, e-cigarette usage among high schoolers has increased 78%. And, it is not just high school students. Middle school student usage has gone from 1% to 5% in the last few years as well. Something must be done, and that something is not only up to the schools or the churches to speak up. Parents need to take an active role in addressing this issue with their teens and answering any curiosity their kids may have about this newfound cultural epidemic.

2. **“The Price of Cool: A Teenager, A Juul and Nicotine Addiction”** (article from The New York Times)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/16/health/vaping-juul-teens-addiction-nicotine.html> (originally found at [https://cpyu.org/resource\\_topic/e-cigarettes/](https://cpyu.org/resource_topic/e-cigarettes/))

This second article chronicles the journey of a young man (17 years old at the time) who was swiftly induced by a nicotine habit because of the alluring device known as a JUUL. A JUUL is a small USB drive-like e-cigarette. At the age of 17, this young man (Matt) was pressured into trying this high and described his first experience like this = “a pleasing, minty moistness into his mouth. Then he held it, kicked it to the back of his throat and let it balloon his lungs. Blinking in astonishment at the euphoric power-punch of the nicotine, he felt it — what he would later refer to as ‘the head rush.’” Matt continues to recall this journey into JUULing as a toxic relationship for the next two years that became a “painful nicotine addiction that drained his savings, left him feeling winded when he played hockey and tennis, put him at snappish odds with friends who always wanted to mooch off his Juul and culminated in a shouting, tearful confrontation with his parents”. Further into this addiction, Matt describes how he would come to hate himself for being so dependent on this tiny device, which he nicknames his “11<sup>th</sup> finger”.

Some relief came for Matt when it got hard to purchase his favorite mint flavor of the JUUL in stores thanks to new regulations from the FDA, but his addiction was relentless. One staggering fact in this article is that (according to the New York Times) more than 70% of e-cigarette sales are attributed to the JUUL now. The number of middle and high school students who currently vape is up to about 3.6 million students now. Sad. JUULs come with interchangeable cartridges, or pods, and one flavored pod contains the same amount of nicotine that is roughly equivalent to a pack of cigarettes. It only took Matt a few minutes a day to ingest an entire cartridge a day (or sometimes more), which cost Matt about \$40 a week. He even admitted to draining his Christmas money, birthday money, and his paycheck from his part-time job to be able to purchase more. Dr. Rachel Boukan, from the Stony

Brook University School of Medicine, says, “Nicotine may disrupt the formation of circuits in the brain that control attention and learning”. Not only is this habit expensive, it is also dangerous for young minds.

Another factor Matt was sure to point out was that four of his closest friends at this time were also daily JUULers. The more he struggled with this addiction, the more outspoken he became against it. “Matt was open about wishing he didn’t do it,” said Tucker Houston, his freshman roommate. “It was a constant battle for him. People would tell him that they’d want to buy a JUUL and he’d be like, ‘No! You don’t want to, it’s not cool, it’s not fun.’ He became known as the JUULing anti-JUUL advocate.” Finally, it all came to a head when Matt’s mom found his paraphernalia in his open backpack one day when collecting his dirty laundry from his bedroom. After two hours into the epic and tearful conversation between Matt and his parents, he concluded, “I could not justify the addiction anymore. And I realized my parents were my allies. Because I wanted to stop and they wanted me to stop.” Ultimately, because Matt found love and support from his family, he was able to overcome his addiction and is stronger than ever before. This article is yet another testimony to the overwhelming peer pressure to make poor and dangerous choices, such as becoming addicted to nicotine, as well as a reminder to the power of positive parenting.

### **Ministry and Family Applications**

Based on the knowledge gained from these two articles about JUULing and its consistency in the lives of today’s teens, the following are a few ministry and family recommendations for how this issue can be dealt with:

1. Parents and students alike need to be made aware of JUULing (what a JUUL is and how addictive its affects can be) and how to identify those teens who may be in possession of JUULs.
  - a. The following signs may help one identify if a teenager is using a JUUL or e-cigarettes: Excessive amounts of money being spend without knowing where it went, spending more time outside hanging out than in one’s bedroom like normal, spending more time around older individuals with questionable habits or behaviors, and an instant change in mood or attitude toward friends and family members. Be on the lookout for these behaviors.
2. Parents should be calm and collected in their thoughts when confronting a teenager who is currently using e-cigarettes. Parents may have the tendency to want to be a teen’s best friend instead of their parents but need to be reminded that the Bible says parents are to “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it” (Proverbs 22:6, New Living Translation). When looking for Biblical justification to confront the issue with a minor, the following passages can be used:
  - a. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 = “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body” (New Living Translation). This passage reminds us to be aware of how we treat our bodies and to take care of them, as a creation of God, which includes introducing harmful and addictive substances like nicotine into our bodies.
  - b. Romans 13:1 = “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (New International Version). Obviously it is against the law for a minor to possess or use these substances and Bible-believing teens must be willing to follow the laws that God has allowed to be established in our land.
3. Parents and students need to be made aware of the addictive nature and destructive outcomes of this nicotine habit. Nicotine can be deadly to a person, and it is no respecter of age.
  - a. According to LiveScience.com, “Regardless of how the nicotine is delivered — whether through e-cigs or conventional cigarettes — it still has effects on the body. The drug is a cardiovascular stimulant, and can potentially worsen heart disease in people who already have severe heart conditions. However, it’s not known whether nicotine alone can cause heart disease in people who don’t have heart problems, said Dr. Michael Siegel, a tobacco researcher and professor of community health sciences at the Boston University School of Public Health.”  
(<https://www.livescience.com/54754-what-e-cigarettes-do-in-your-body.html>)
  - b. Many view vaping as a gateway to quit smoking for traditional cigarette smokers but there is more of a growing concern about the use of e-cigarettes (like JUULs) as a gateway to smoking

conventional cigarettes, especially for young people, or as a method of getting nicotine that actually diminishes people's interest in quitting.

4. Teens and adults alike need the following suggestions for a means of accountability in overcoming this addiction:
  - a. Find someone you can be honest about this struggle with.
  - b. Check in with this accountability partner regularly.
  - c. Study the harmful effects of a nicotine addiction.
  - d. Find a habit or hobby to replace the urge to use e-cigarettes.
  - e. Pray for wisdom with a trusted friend about God giving you the power to give up this habit.
  - f. Remember that overcoming this addiction cannot be done in your own power, but only by the power of God, even if it seems impossible. Like Jesus reminds us in Matthew 19:26, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (New International Version).
5. Help the teen to consider how this habit began so they can learn to guard themselves against other similar temptations. It is more than just guarding your body against harmful physical addictions, it is about guarding your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life" (New Living Translation).
6. Lastly, parents and teenagers need to be encouraged to be advocates against substance abuse, especially in the lives of their teenage friends and family members. It is all about speaking up and holding others accountable. Regarding accountability, the Bible states, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, New Living Translation).

### YouTube Video For Students

A YouTube video is now available for students, from Pastor Justin, to discuss what a JUUL is, how popular this e-cigarette has become, and what God has to say about avoiding or overcoming this habit. The video is currently available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygdjuW9NKZE>



For an outlined script of this video's content, please see **Appendix A**.

### Interactive Handout For Parents

See **Appendix B** for a one-sided handout to be given to parents as this issue is addressed and assessed related to today's middle school and high school students within a church context, such as a parent luncheon.

## Social Media Follow-Up

The following social media campaign has been planned to promote this information and YouTube video to parents and students. The following posts have been created for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

### A. Facebook post targeting parents:



### B. Facebook post targeting students:



### C. Instagram post targeting students:



### D. Twitter post targeting students:



“Ever been tempted to try a JUUL? Check out what happened with Pastor Justin’s first experience:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygdjuW9NKZE>”

## Appendix A: YouTube Video Script Outline

The following outline was used in creating the video now at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygdjuW9NKZE>

### **Welcome and introduction** of the JUUL:

- Introduced by JUUL Labs in 2015 (where it gets its name). “JUUL is a type of e-cigarette that uses nicotine salts that exist in leaf-based tobacco for its key ingredient. The JUUL became the most popular e-cigarette in the United States at the end of 2017 and has a market share of 72% as of September 2018. Its widespread use by youth has triggered multiple investigations by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JUUL>)
- According to an article from the Youth Culture Report and recent research from the CDC, now more than 20% of high school students (that is 1 in 5 students) are using electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), which creates a huge risk of nicotine addiction among these teenagers. From 2011 to 2018 (just 7 years), their usage went from 1.5% to 20.8%.
- *Display the JUUL box, the JUUL, and the cartridge* (one cartridge is said to contain about as much nicotine as an entire back of cigarettes). Cost of JUUL is \$40-\$50, and a pack of pods is \$16.

### *Prepare to take a hit of the JUUL (pretend)*

Did you get scared your youth pastor was about to use a JUUL? Then why aren't you that uncomfortable about trying it yourself? Here are **some things you need to remember**:

- It is illegal for you as a minor = Romans 13:1 = “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (New International Version). Obviously it is against the law for a minor to possess or use these substances and Bible-believing teens must be willing to follow the laws that God has allowed to be established in our land.
- It is harmful to your body = 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 = “Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body” (New Living Translation). This passage reminds us to be aware of how we treat our bodies and to take care of them, as a creation of God, which includes introducing harmful and addictive substances like nicotine into our bodies.

**Side note for parents watching:** Parents may have the tendency to want to be a teen's best friend instead of their parents but need to be reminded that the Bible says parents are to “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it” (Proverbs 22:6, NLT). It's the hard choice to be the parent. Do it!

If you have **already fallen into this temptation** or know of someone who has, what should you do?

- Know the dangers of continual nicotine use... heart issues, lung issues, etc
- Seek accountability from someone godly you can trust (parents, Christian friend, mentor, youth pastor)
  - “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NLT).
- Find ways to replace those temptations with better habits or hobbies
- Surround yourself with godly friends all the time and remove yourself from the influences that introduced you to e-cigarettes or JUULs
- Pray and trust God will give you the strength to overcome this addiction, even if it seems impossible. Remember what Jesus said: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26, NIV).

Finally, **how should you react when tempted** to try a JUUL (or any substance like it)? *Throw the JUUL and run.*

Run! Flee! = “Save yourself like a gazelle escaping from a hunter, like a bird fleeing from a net.” (Proverbs 6:5, NLT)

## Appendix B: Parent Luncheon Handout

The following handout will be used for parents to fill in the blanks during a luncheon where JUULing is discussed:

### FIRST BAPTIST STUDENT MINISTRY PARENT LUNCHEON 2018

#### “Vaping, JUULing, and Today’s Teens” (Session One)

1. What is a **JUUL**? A) Contains as much nicotine in one \_\_\_\_\_ as in one pack of cigarettes. B) Was created and introduced in \_\_\_\_\_. C) Now makes up \_\_\_\_\_ % of the e-cigarette market.
2. Research shows that now \_\_\_\_\_ % of high school students use e-cigarettes (that is \_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ students)!
3. **Matt’s story** (from the New York Time article). When his parents confronted him, he finally admitted: “I could not justify the addiction anymore. And I realized my parents were my \_\_\_\_\_. Because I wanted to stop and they wanted me to stop.” (Age 17)
4. How to **be your student’s ally** when it comes to this:
  - a. Don’t be \_\_\_\_\_ to ask them what they know or have seen about e-cigarettes/JUULs.
  - b. Discuss the Biblical issues about using ( \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ ).
  - c. Help them find accountability (from you, a godly friend or relative, or a mentor/pastor).
    - i. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 = “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble” (NLT).
  - d. Help them replace those ungodly friends or bad habits with good, fulfilling friendships/hobbies.
  - e. Consider your \_\_\_\_\_ addictions or bad habits and how your student is learning from you.
  - f. Be reminded that with God \_\_\_\_\_ things are possible (Matthew 19:26).
5. Above all else, **guard your student’s heart!**
  - a. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life” (NLT). It may not be fun to parent your teen, but it is eternally important!
  - b. How a Christian parent guards the heart of their teenager:
    - i. **Pray** for them and WITH them \_\_\_\_\_ .
    - ii. Be open and **honest** with them about \_\_\_\_\_ struggles so they can learn to be open and honest with you or others about theirs.
    - iii. Show them and **talk** with their about how your walk with the Lord is growing, as you encourage the same of them.
    - iv. Question them about their **influences** constantly, \_\_\_\_\_ they spend their time with (in person or online) and \_\_\_\_\_ they are watching and listening to.
    - v. Seek to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord **together** with them (at church or elsewhere).



Learn more from our new YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygdjuW9NKZE>