

# The “End” of Well-Being

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Innovation  
Christian Schools  
Australia



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EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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What are three words that come to mind when you hear the word "Well-being"?



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Waiting for participants

DI

### Menti

Well being

Choose a slide to present





**Graduating Class of 1984**



We have created for the first time in all history a garden of pure ideology, where each worker may bloom, secure from the pests of any contradictory true thoughts.

# Graduating Class of 2038





# AI Won't Make You Happier

And Why That's Not Its Job



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# True Flourishing and Well-Being Life to the Full

7 Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;  
I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**John 10:7-10 NIV**



LOCAL POLICE  
ARE NOW TARGETING  
DISAPPOINTED WEST COAST FANS



Just choose  
happiness??



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AFL  
Dockers fans react to  
elimination final loss



Just choose happiness??

"I don't know if I have the words. I was just sort of adamant that we would keep going and I wasn't ready for it to end."



The West Australian  
**Sport**  
LIONS 101 def  
DOCKERS 44

**STAGE  
FRIGHT**

Freo would be kicking themselves ...  
but they'd probably



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# Just choose happiness?!?!

"HAPPINESS"

In pairs, discuss this phrase/ tagline as a strategy for living a purposeful life and overall well-being ? What are the possible outcomes and consequences of living a life like this?



Well-being is defined as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous” (Merriam-Webster, 2024).



What do students think when they read this definition? Everything is happy, comfortable, and easy. Well-being sounds like **freedom from struggle**.

The problem with this version of well-being is that it does not lead to learning nor true flourishing. We have lied to students about well-being. We have probably done the same thing to ourselves as educators.

– Dr Jon Eckert





# Expressive Individualism

The rise of individualism has wrenched us loose from all the settings that gave meaning to the lives of our forebears; we have been thrown back on our inner resources, but when we look inside ourselves, we find emptiness because we have been cut adrift from everything that once supplied the resources we are seeking”

**- Charles Taylor, 1992; p. 142.**



HEDONIC



v.

EUDAIMONIC



# FULFILLING LIFE

versus

# HAPPY MOMENTS

## Eudaimonic

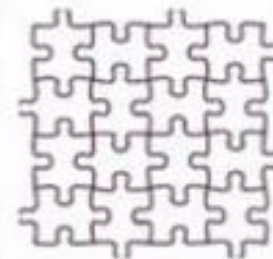


Life

that is satisfying

Holistic

Life as a whole



Feeling your life has meaning / purpose  
Your experiences allow you to learn, grow & reach your full potential

## Hedonic

Experiences

that are satisfying



Fragmented

Elements of life



Pleasure or feeling good in the moment,  
reaching a goal  
feeling temporarily satisfied



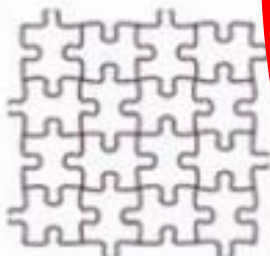
FULFILLING LIFE versus HAPPY MOMENTS

Eudaimonic



Life that is satisfying

Holistic Life as a whole



Feeling your life has meaning / purpose Your experiences allow you to learn, grow & reach your full potential

Hedonic

Experiences that are satisfying



Fragmented Elements of life

Pleasure or feeling good in the moment, reaching a goal feeling temporarily satisfied



# (Don't) Always look on the bright side of life

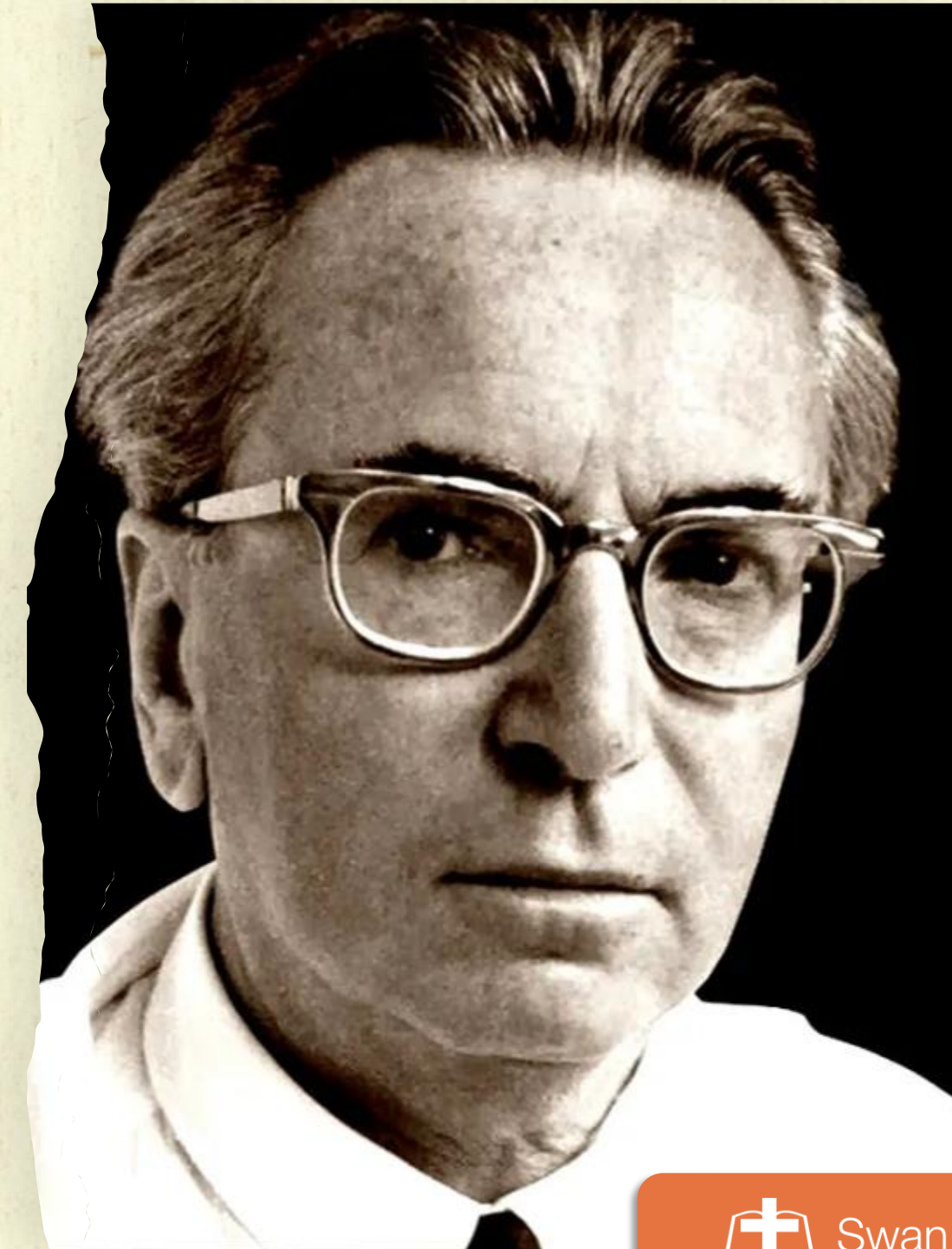


“Depression rates are higher in countries that place a premium on happiness. Rather than being the by-product of a life well-lived, feeling happy has become a goal in itself. Smiling faces beam at us from social media and happiness gurus flog their latest emotional quick fixes, reinforcing the message that we should aim to maximise our positive emotions and avoid our negative ones. If we fail to live up to that, what effect does it have on us?”

Associate Professor Brock Bastian  
(Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences)

# Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue

“Don't aim at success. The more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.” - Victor Frankl



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# The “End” of Well-Being

The Thief Comes only to Steal, Kill and Destroy

Adolescent (Un)well being

**John 10:9 NIV**



**Jeremiah 2:13 NLT**

13 “For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water at all!



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# Our Current Cultural Moment

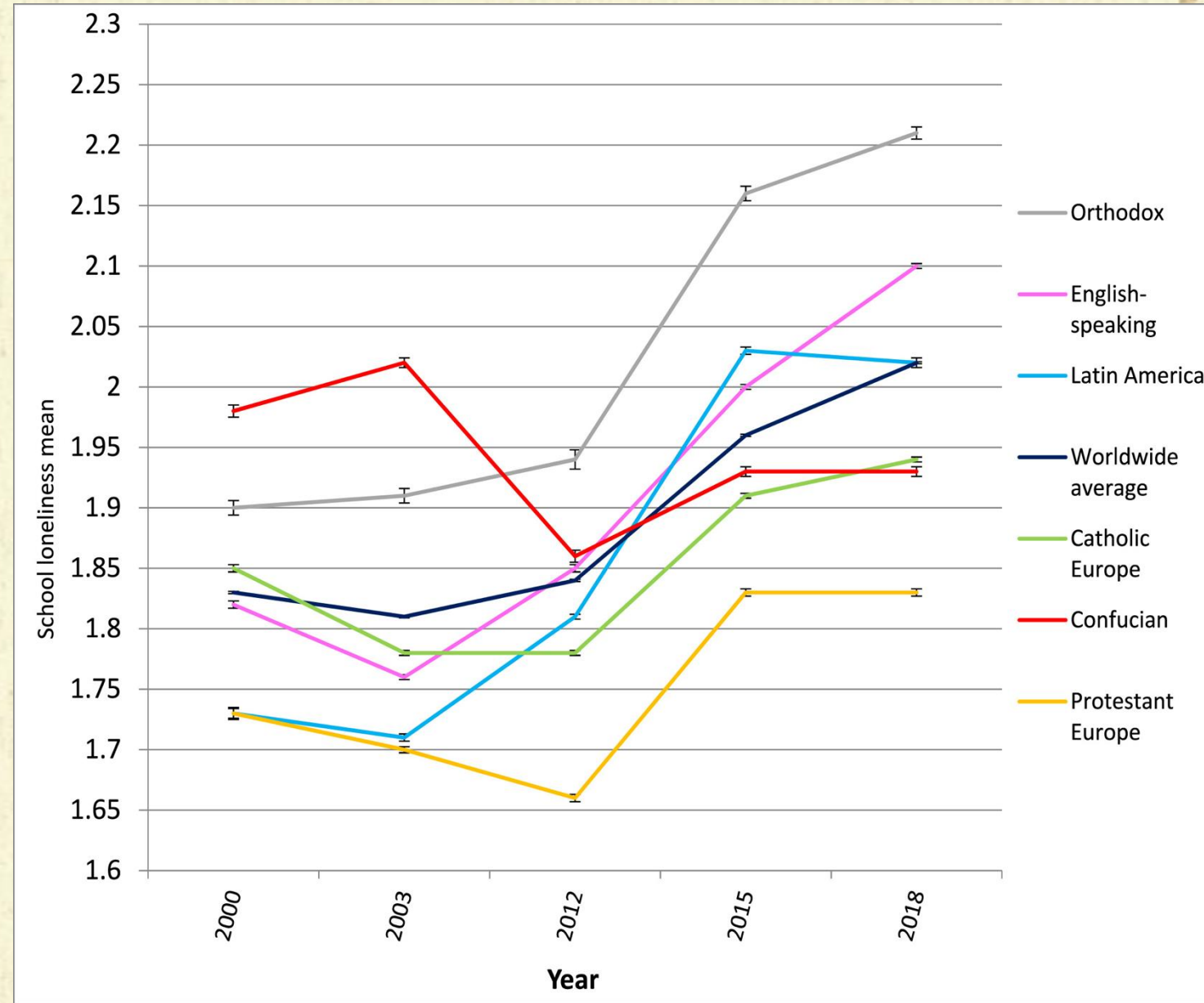
Whenever I am with students I want to say and often do say: the statistics tell us you are experiencing extraordinary levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness.

That is not because you are unhealthy people in a normal world. You are normal people in an unhealthy world.

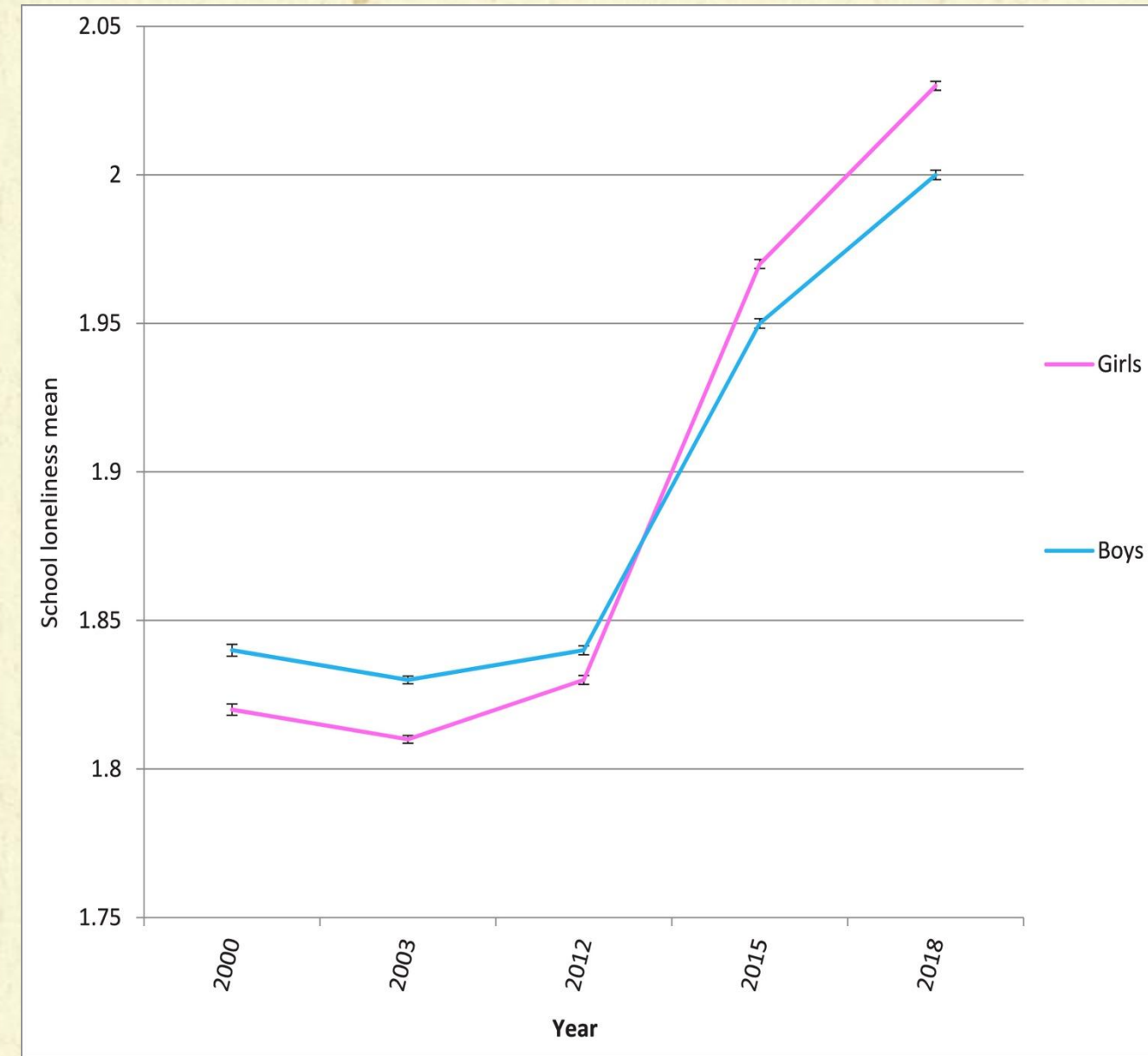
- Andy Crouch



# The Adolescent Well Being Crisis



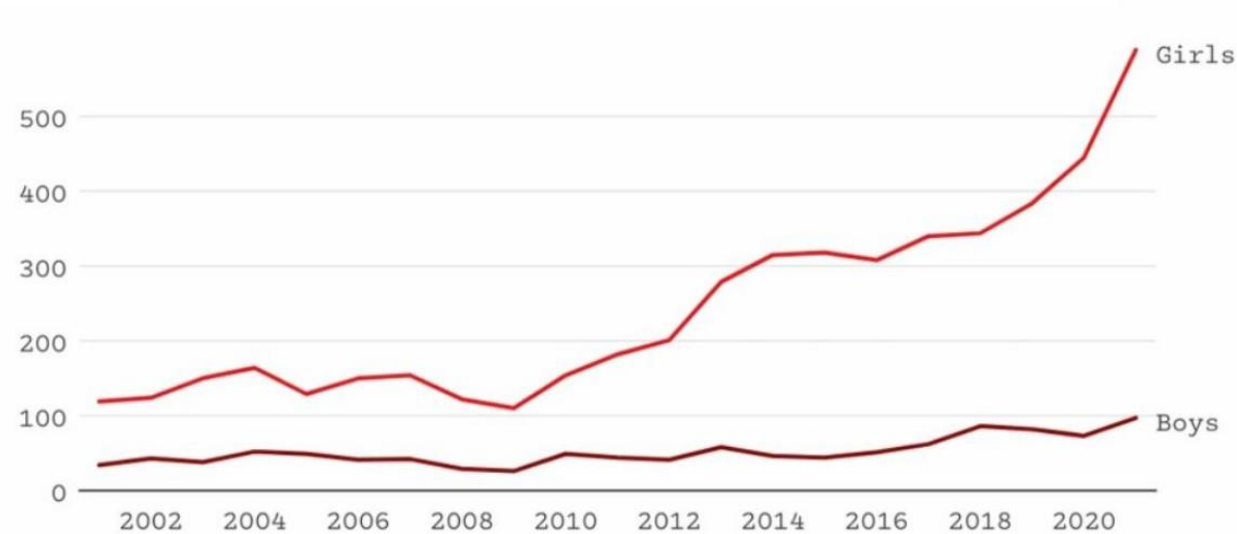
Graph 2: School loneliness mean, by region. Error bars are plus or minus one SE.



Graph 3: School loneliness mean, worldwide, by sex.

# The Adolescent Well Being Crisis

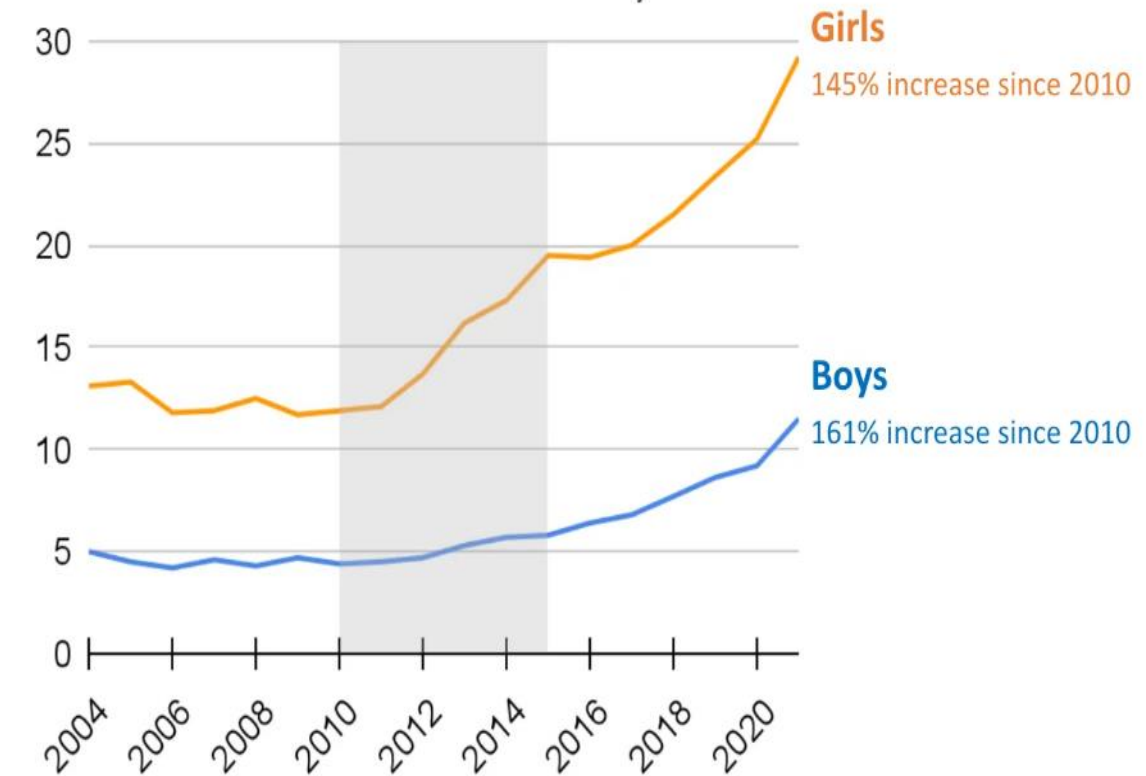
## Self-Harm Rates of U.S. Children Ages 10–14



Number of emergency-department visits for nonfatal self-harm per 100,000 children (source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

A

## Major Depression Among U.S. Teens

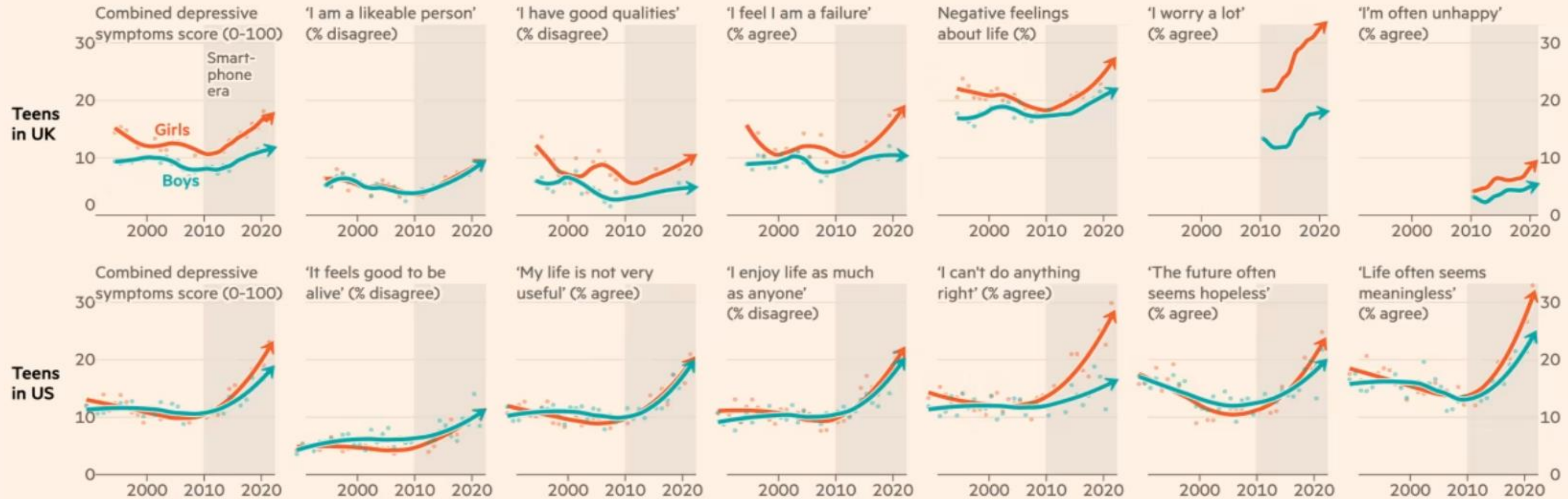


**Figure 1.** Percent of U.S. teens (ages 12-17) who had at least one major depressive episode in the past year (by self-report based on a symptom checklist). Data from *U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. See more on U.S. mental health trends in *Adolescent Mood Disorders Since 2010: A Collaborative Review*.



# The Adolescent Well Being Crisis

Depression, anxiety and other mental health problems are soaring among teenagers in the UK and US, especially among girls



Sources: FT analysis of Understanding Society youth modules (UK) and Monitoring the Future survey (US), based on prior work by Jean Twenge  
 FT graphic by John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch  
 © FT

## Mental Health Hospitalizations, Australia

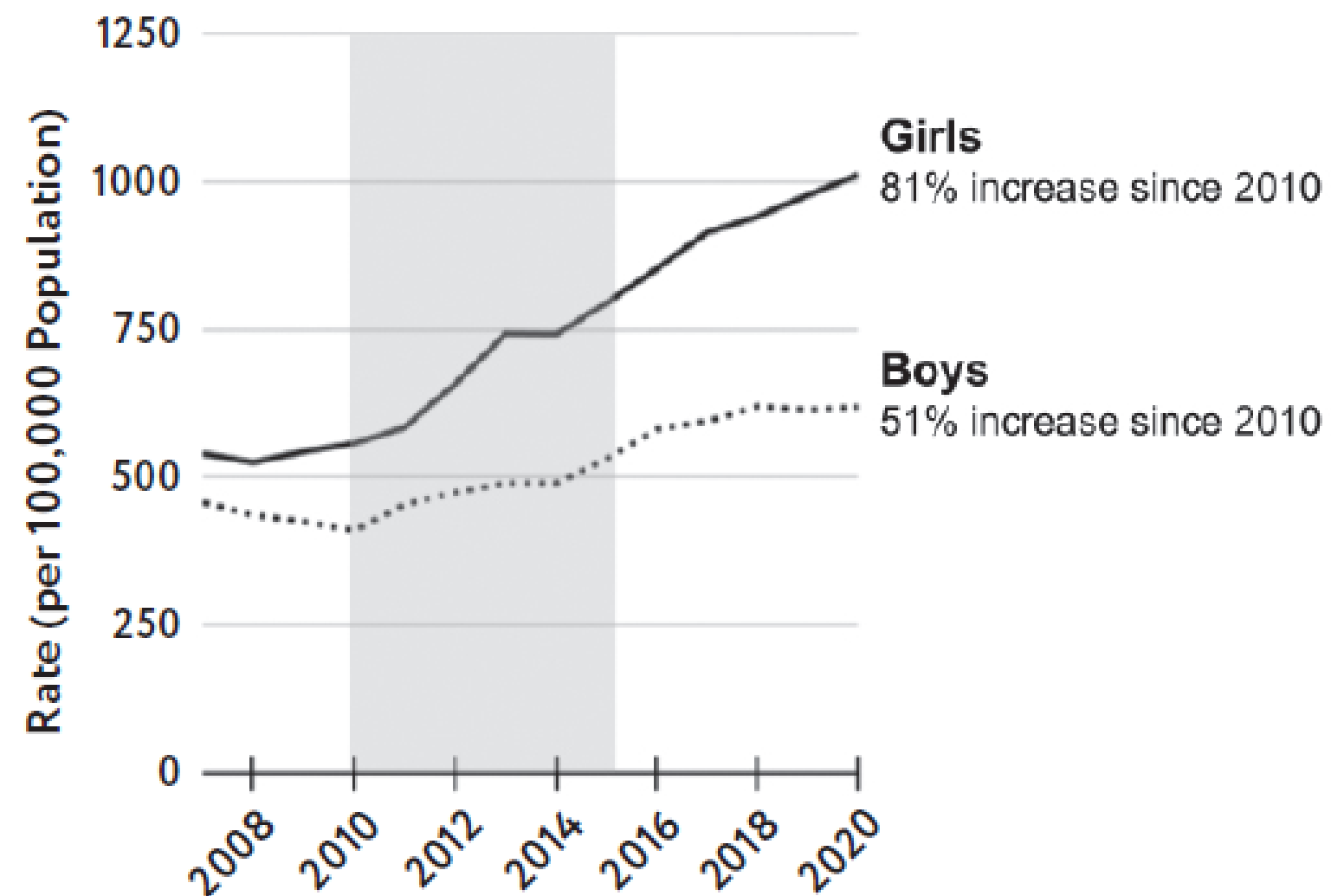
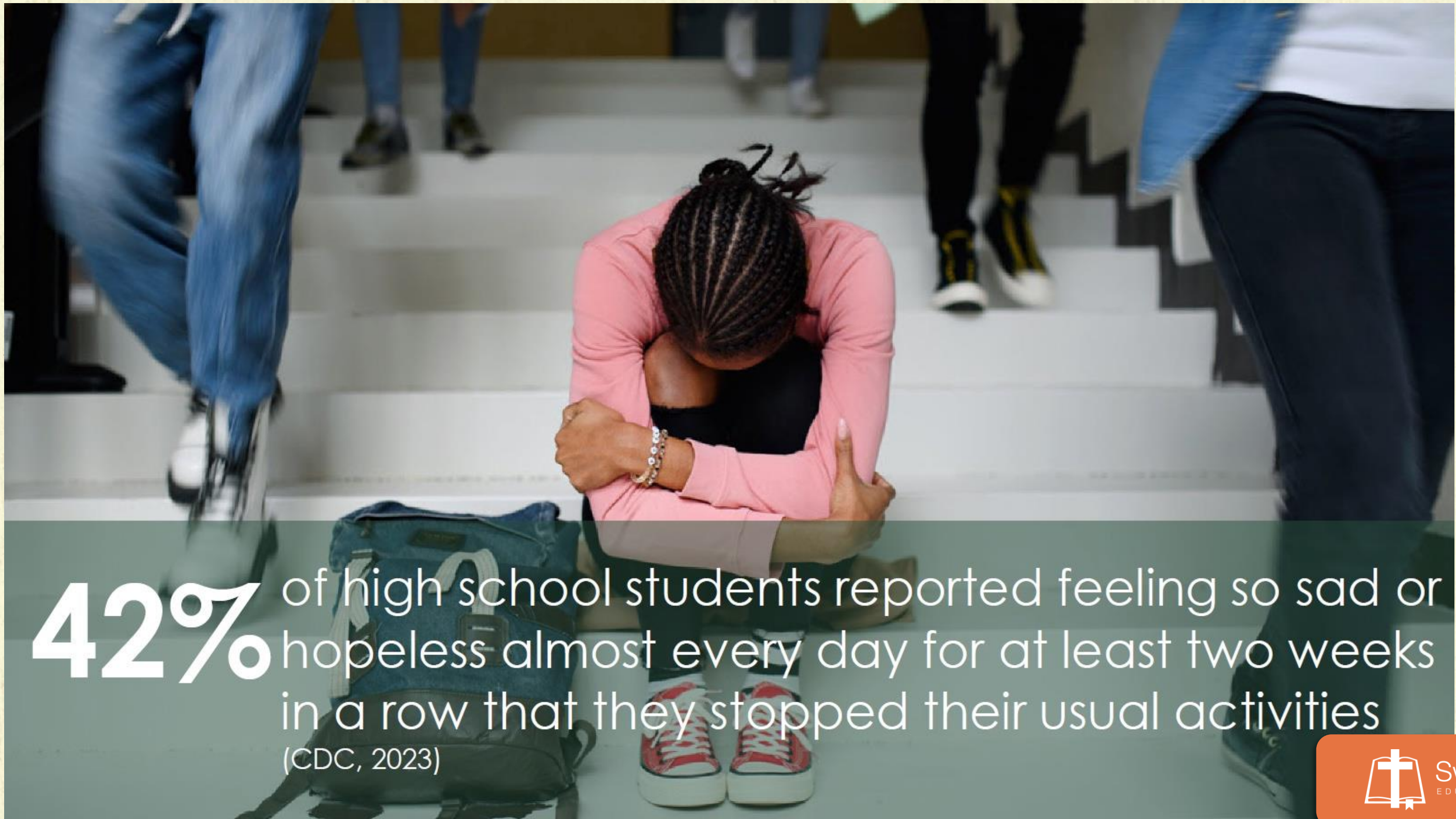


Figure 1.10. Rate at which Australian teens (ages 12–24) were kept in hospitals overnight for mental health reasons. (Source: Australia’s Health 2022 Data Insights.)<sup>53</sup>



**42%** of high school students reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks in a row that they stopped their usual activities

(CDC, 2023)



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“The modern self is exceptionally fragile. While having the freedom to define and validate oneself is superficially liberating, it is also exhausting: You and you alone must create and sustain your identity. This has contributed to unprecedented levels of depression and anxiety and never-satisfied longings for affirmation.”

– **Tim Keller**



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## Discussion Question

How do these trends and statistics make you feel? What has been your personal experience of this expressive individualism in young people? In parents? In colleagues?



# The “End” of Well-Being

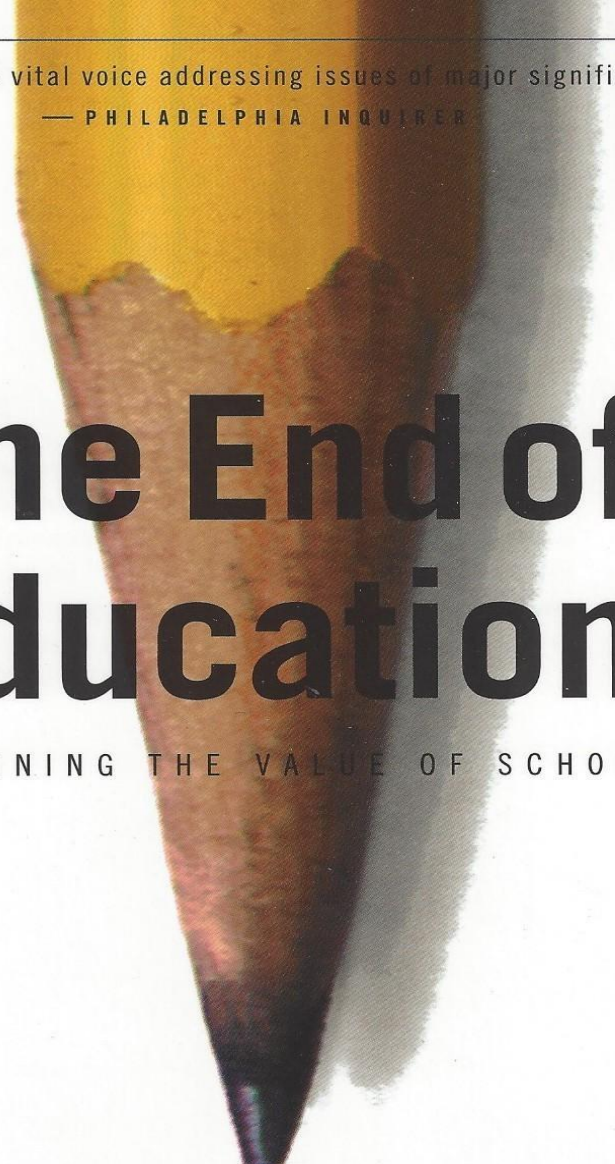
1. Commit to a Biblical Telos for Well-Being in a Christian School

**John 10:10 NIV**



"Postman's is a vital voice addressing issues of major significance."

— PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER



# The End of Education

REDEFINING THE VALUE OF SCHOOL

## Neil Postman

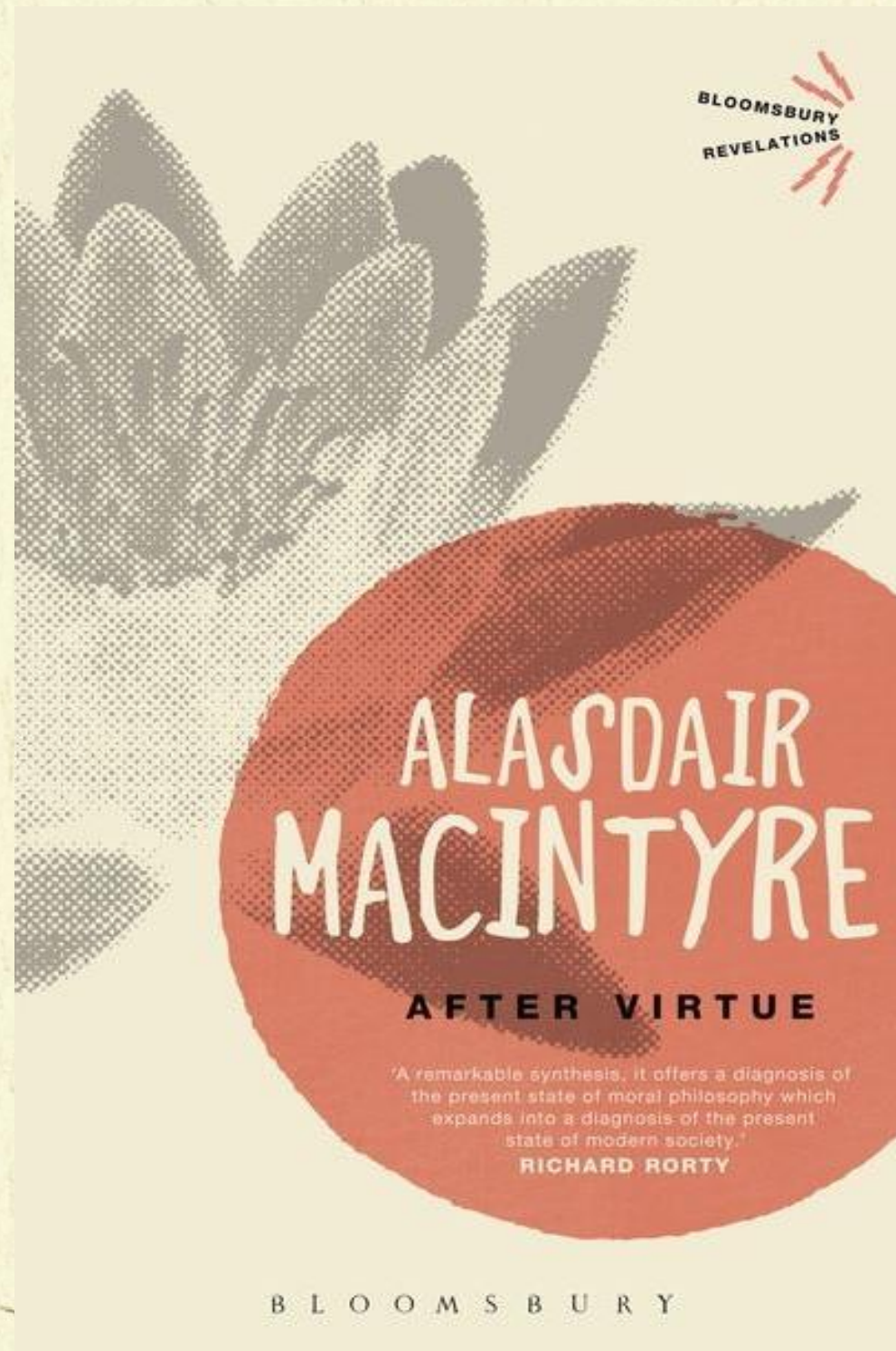
AUTHOR OF *AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH*

Education needs a comprehensive narrative about what the world is like, how things got to be the way they are, and what lies ahead . . . [for] without a narrative, life has no meaning. Without meaning, learning has no purpose. Without a purpose, schools are houses of detention, not attention.

– Neil Postman



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Education requires a larger story that captures the hearts and minds of students and orients them in the world. Indeed, without a sense of who we are (anthropology) and where we're going (telos), educational aims become arbitrary.



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To be human is to be animated and orientated by some vision of the good life, some picture of what we think counts as flourishing. And we want that. We crave it. We desire it.

What counts is relative to a goal or an end that is envisioned, a telos, an inclination to act in a certain direction  
– (Smith 2015, 11, 89)



physical

(health)

emotional

(happiness)

cognitive

(meaning)

volitional

(character)

social

(relationship)

material

(financial security)

spiritual

(religion)

**Flourishing**



physical

(health)

emotional

(happiness)

cognitive

(meaning)

volitional

(character)

social

(relationship)

material

(financial security)

spiritual

(religion)

**The relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person's life are good, including the contexts in which that person lives**



# **Biblical definition of personhood:**

Heart, mind, soul, strength complexes  
designed for love  
(Andy Crouch)

**Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:30-31**



# The “End” of Well-Being

*Q. What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Westminster Shorter Catechism



# The “End” of Well-Being

*Q. What is the chief end of well-being  
(Flourishing)?*

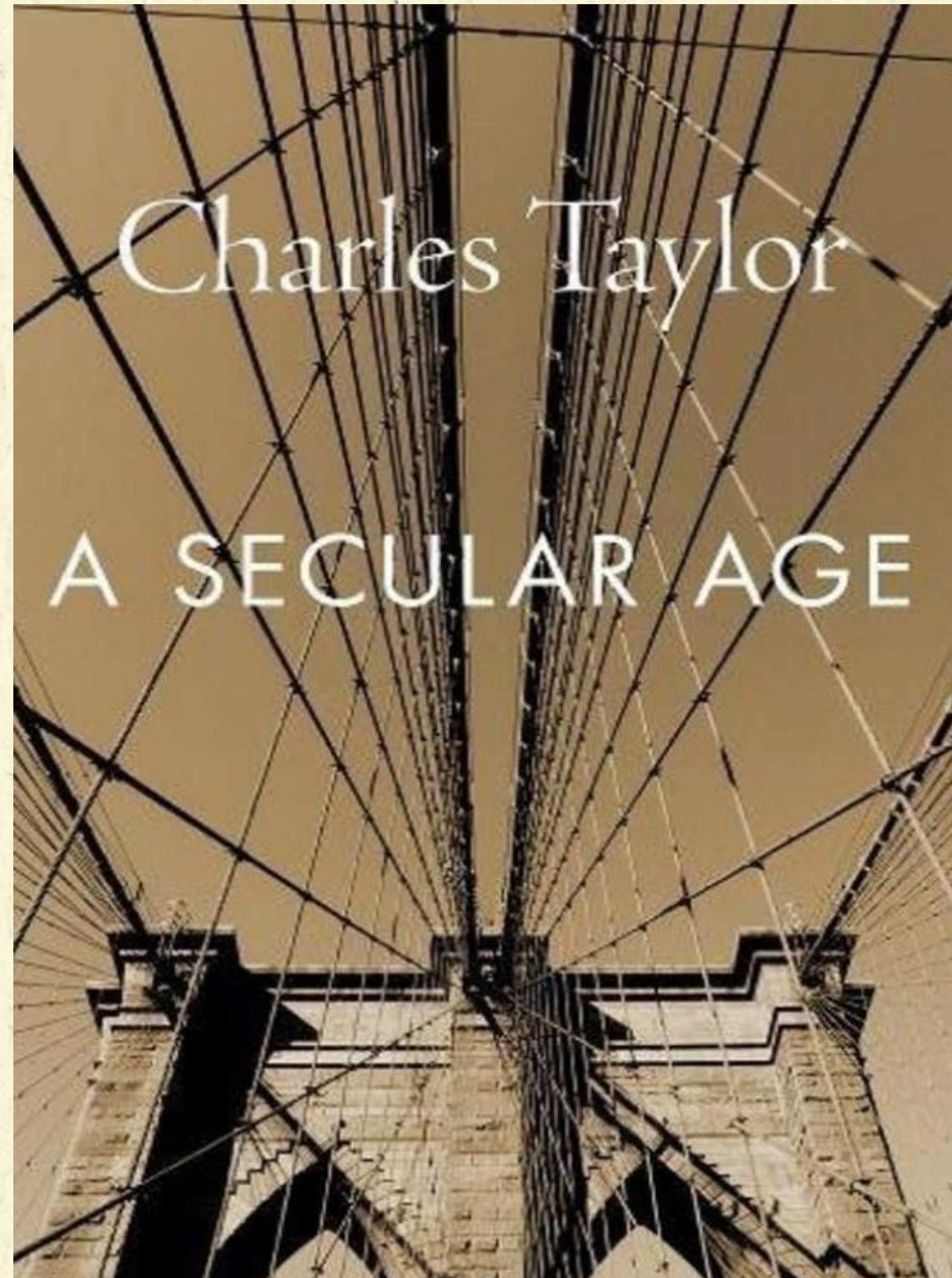
A. To form, in every image bearer, rightly ordered loves that seek to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.



# The “End” of Well-Being

2. Cultivate The Explicit Link Between Spirituality and Well-Being (Flourishing)





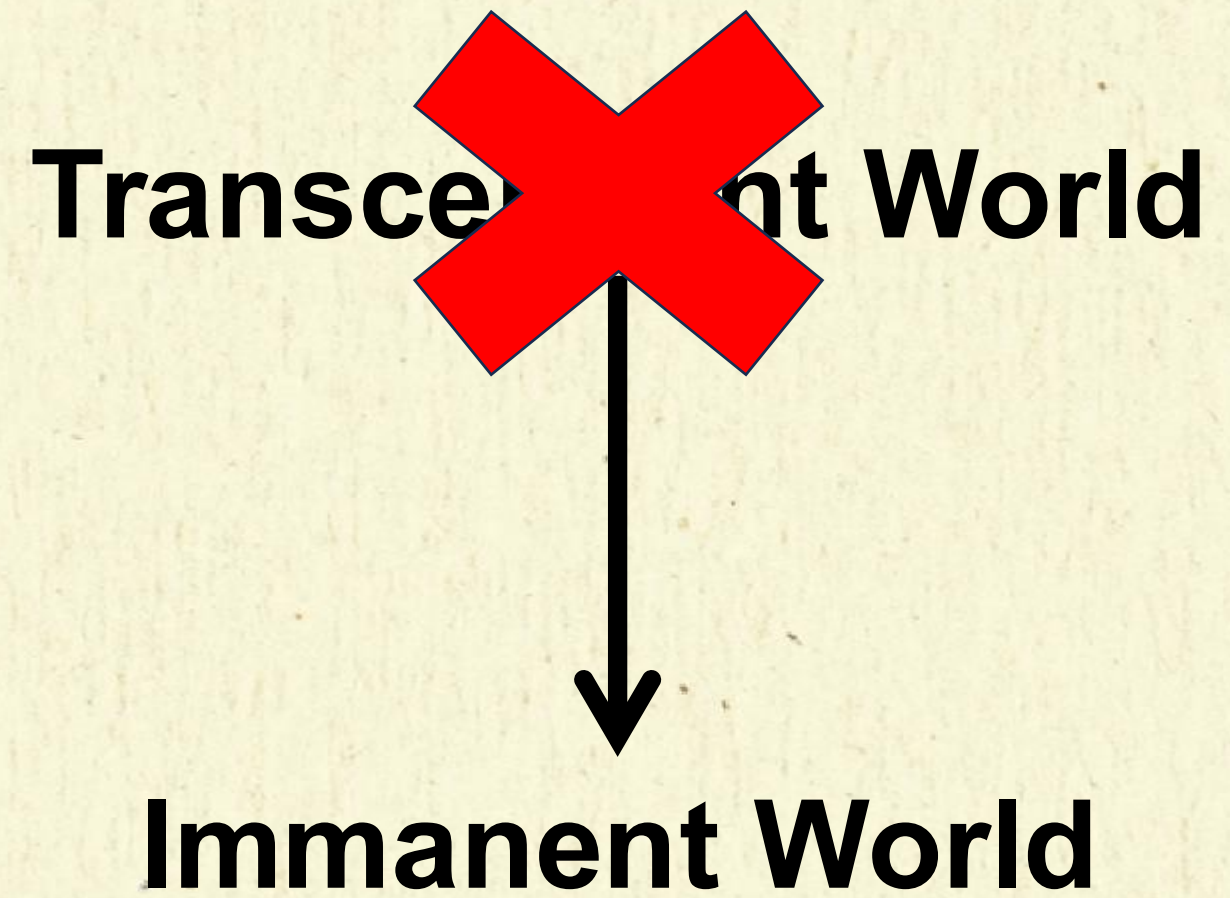
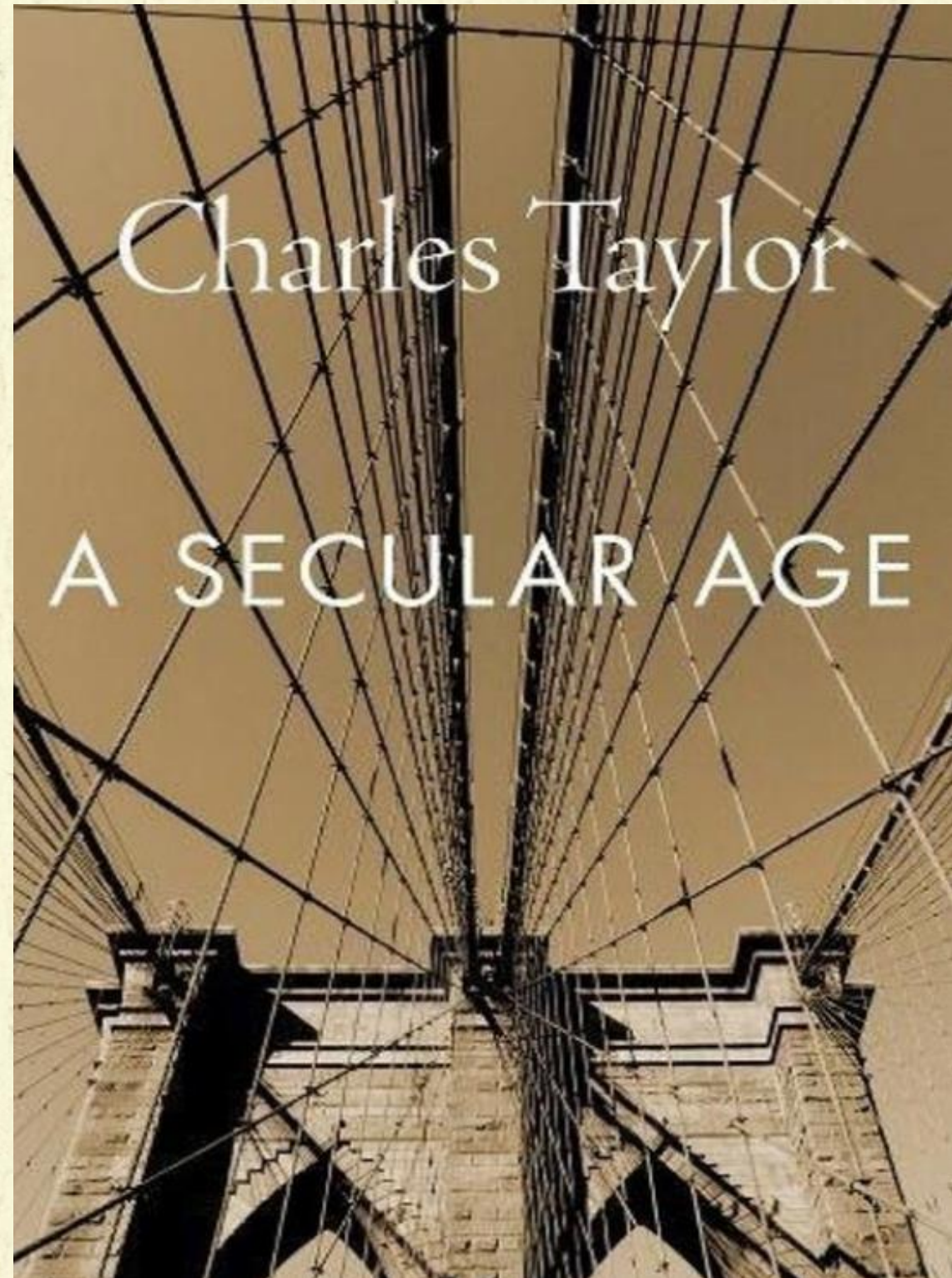
**Transcendent World**



**Immanent World**



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# The Immanent Age of Disenchantment

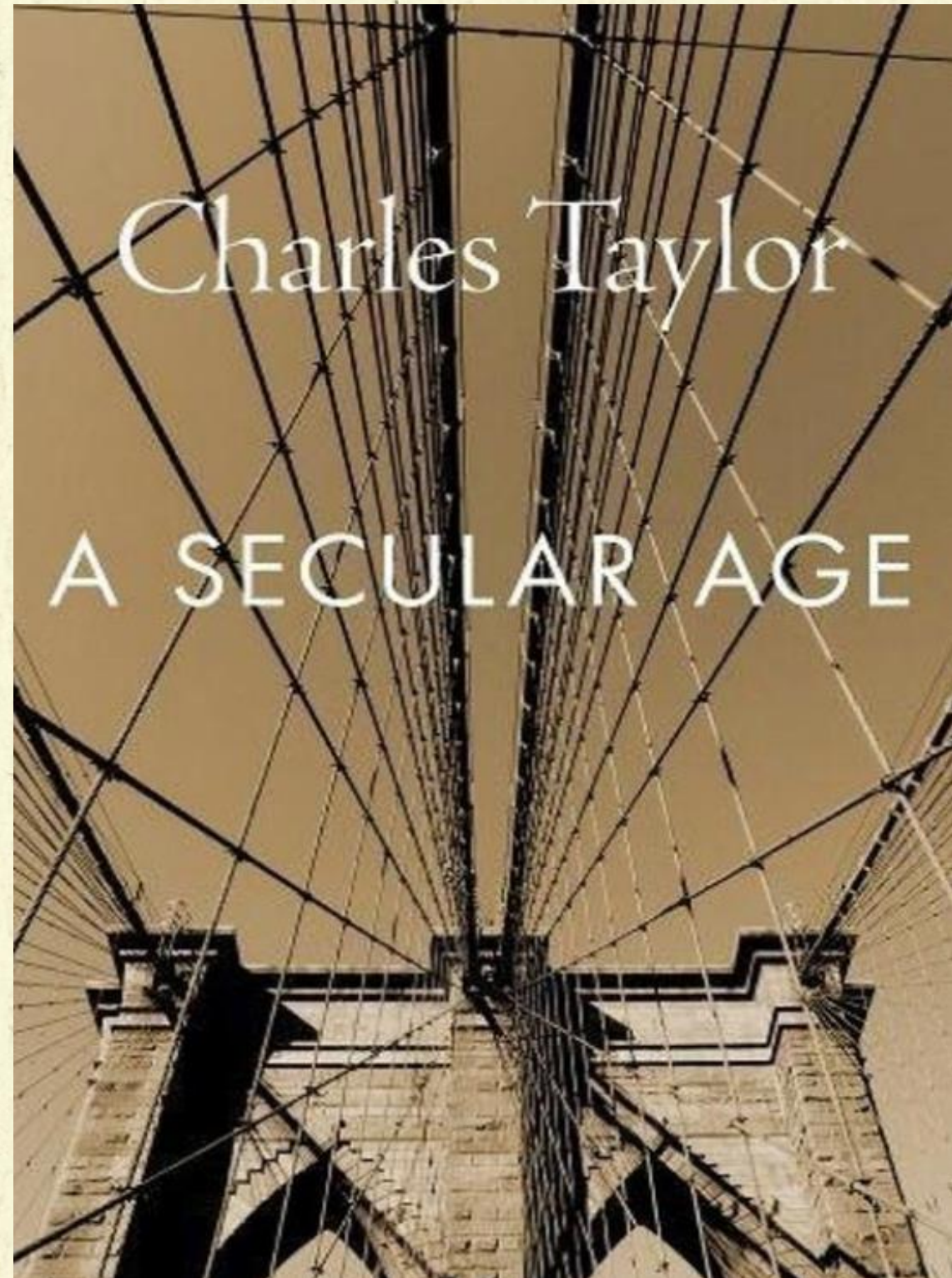
*I don't believe in God...  
but I miss him – Julian  
Barnes*



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**Vision of St  
John**  
*by El Greco*





**Transcendent World**



**Immanent World**

In what ways has living and being formed in only the immanent frame (world/ things we see are all there is) impacted upon students? Upon teaching? Schools? Parenting?



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# The Human Flourishing Program

at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science

[ABOUT US](#) ▾ [FLOURISHING](#) ▾ [OUR RESEARCH](#) ▾ [COURSES](#) [EVENTS](#) ▾ [NEWS&MEDIA](#) ▾ [GIVE](#)



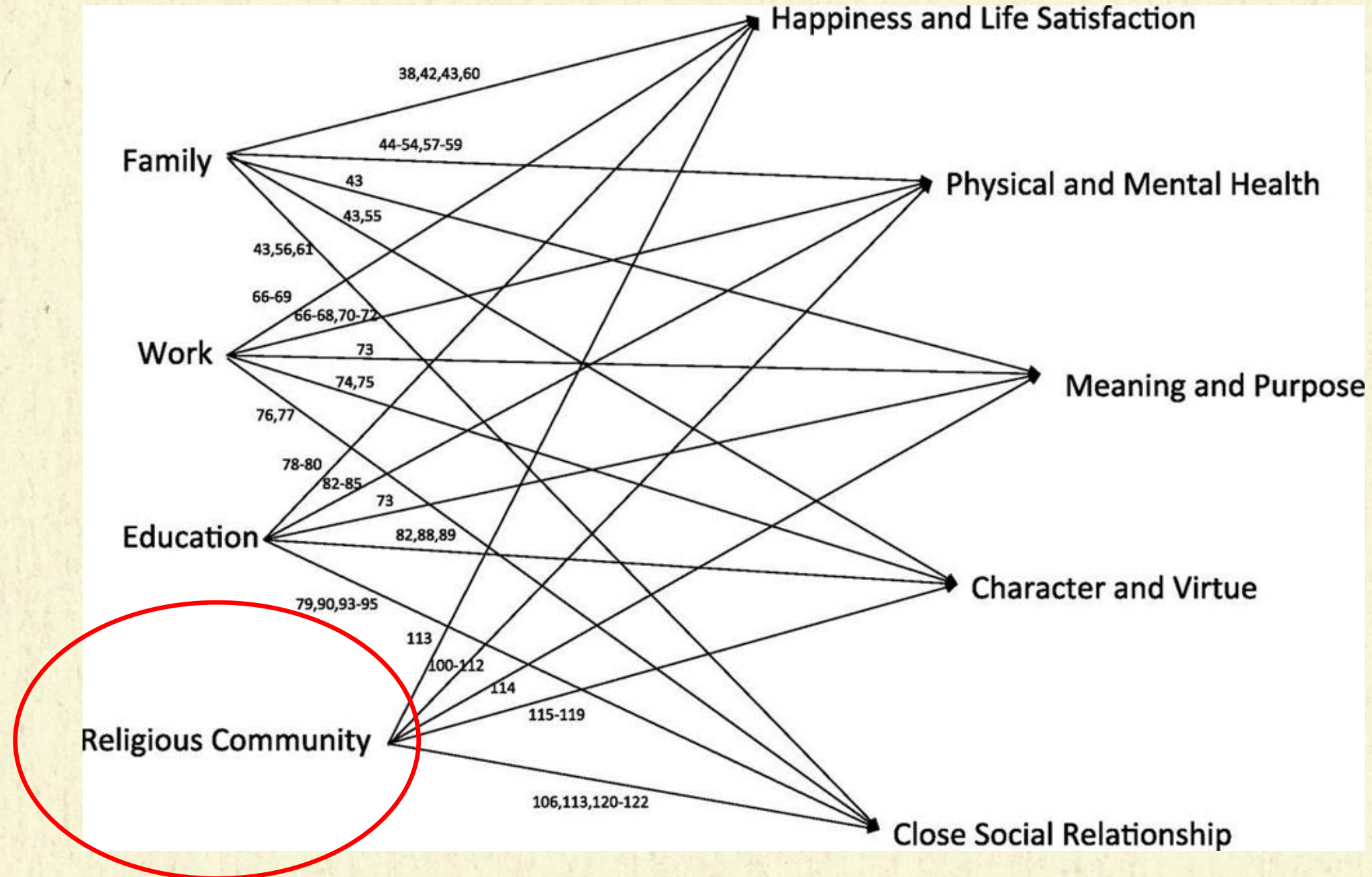
## Integrating Knowledge Across Disciplines

The Program aims to bring together various academic disciplines across the university together on important questions.



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# Pathways to various human flourishing outcomes



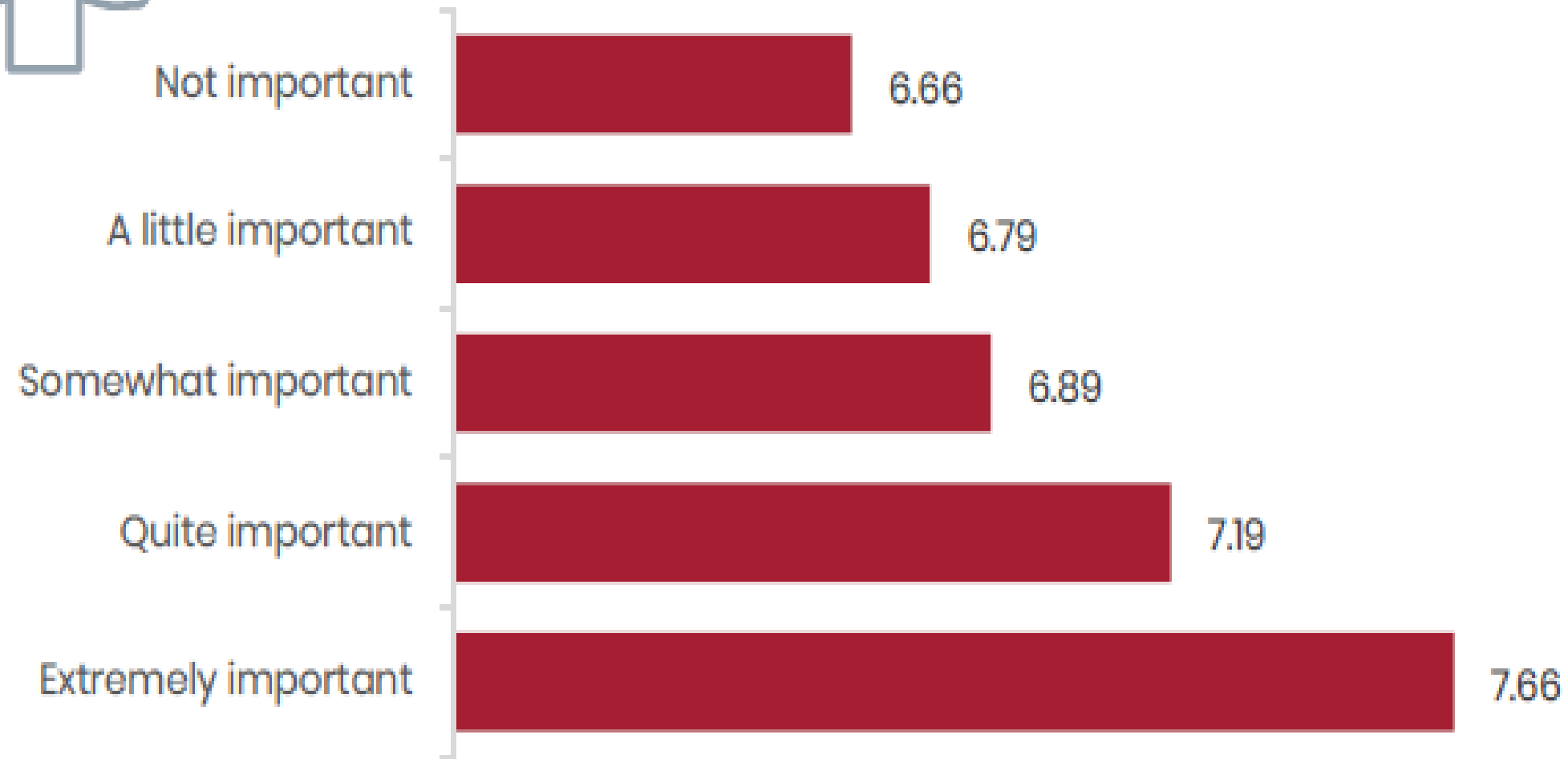
# 22,092 students from across 57 Australian Christian schools

## Student Flourishing in Australian Christian Schools 2024



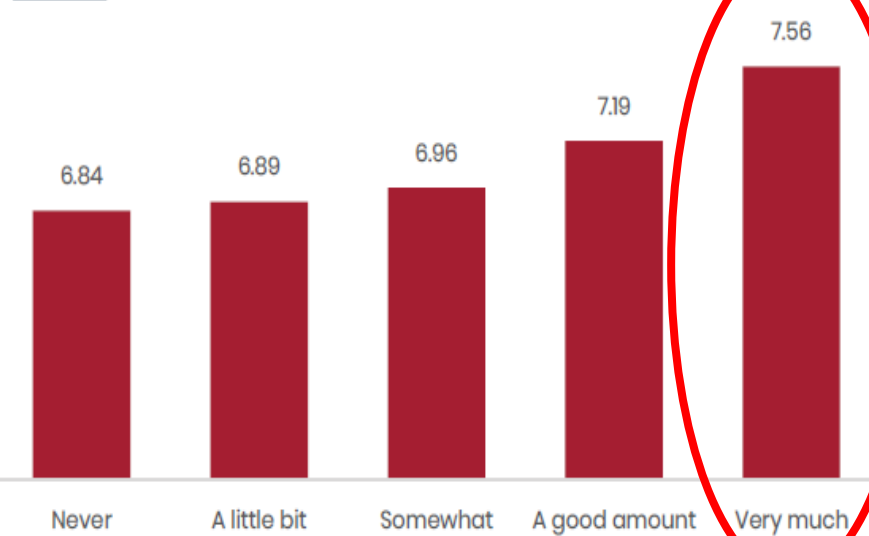


## Flourishing scores and importance of spirituality ( $p < .001$ )

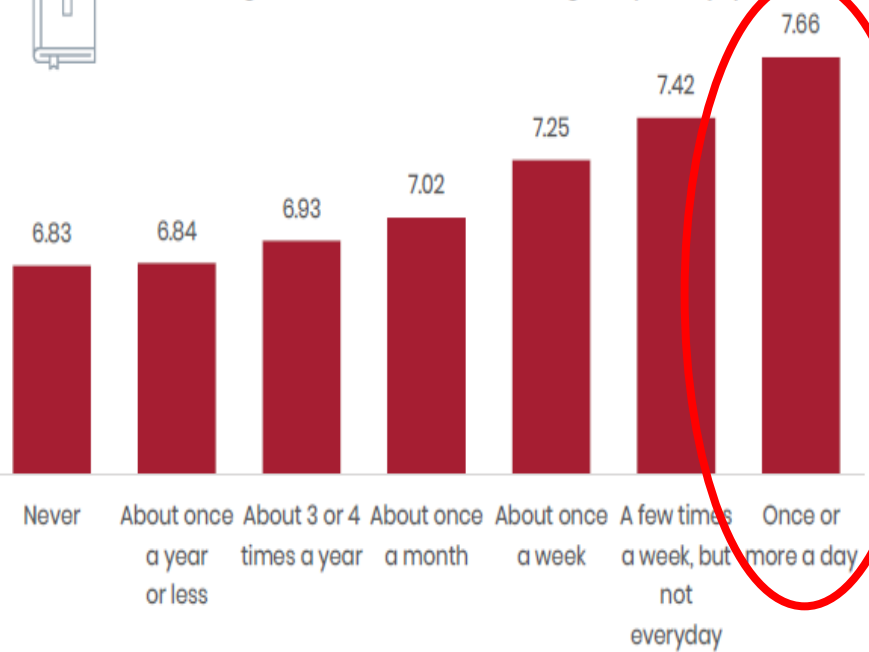




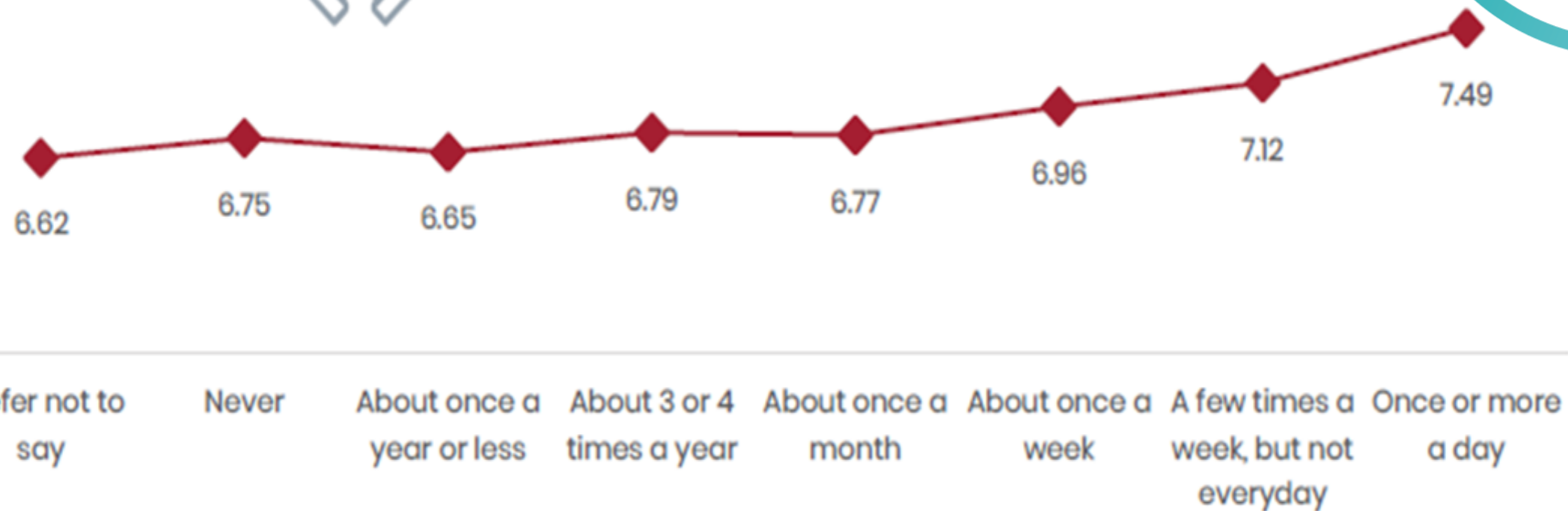
Flourishing score across frequency of students with family that engages in religious practices ( $p < .001$ )



Flourishing scores and Bible reading frequency ( $p < .001$ )



Flourishing scores and praying frequency

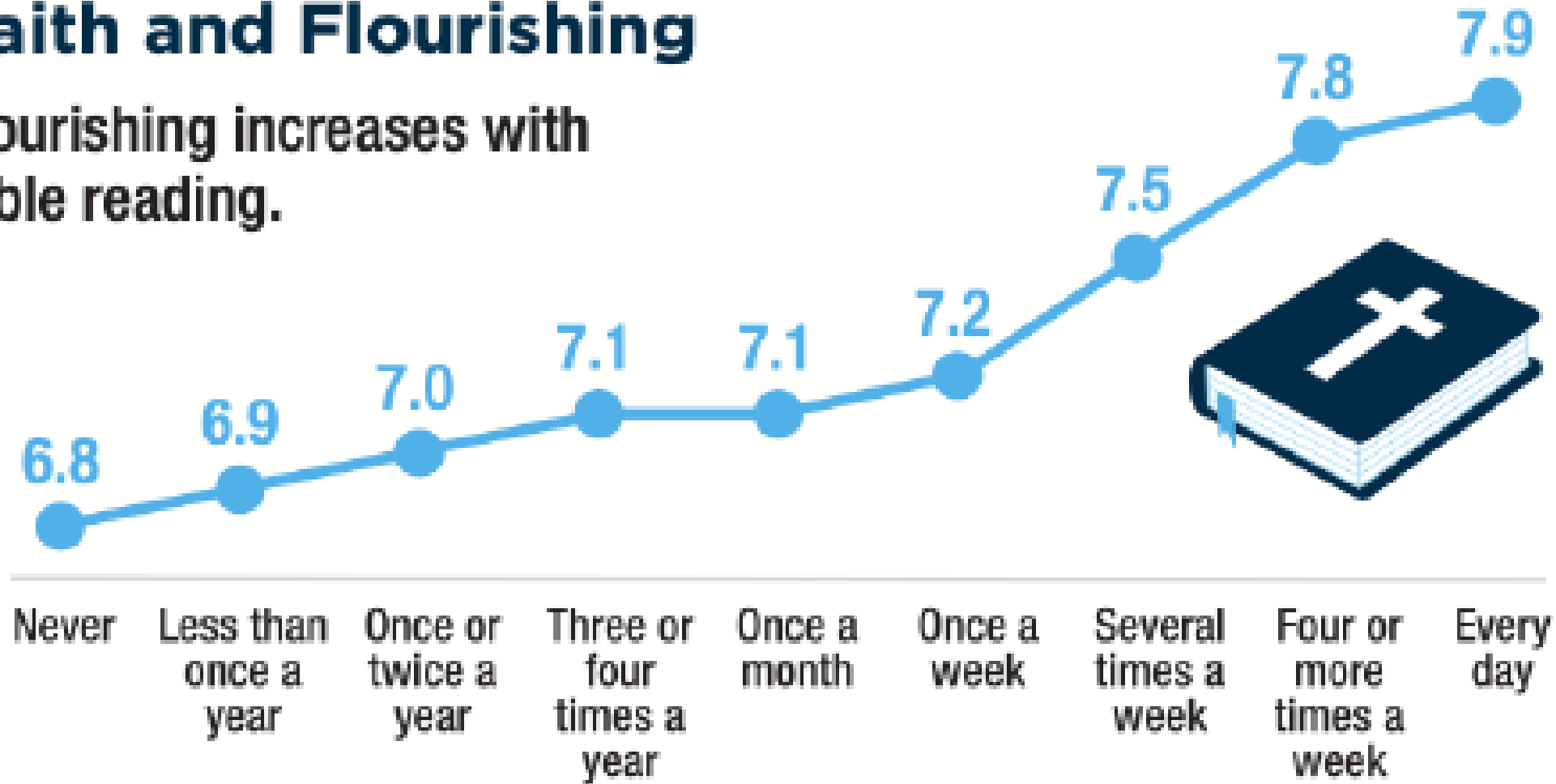


Spirituality  
Practices of Expressing



## Faith and Flourishing

Flourishing increases with Bible reading.



*And* Scripture-engaged Gen Z & Millennials are flourishing:

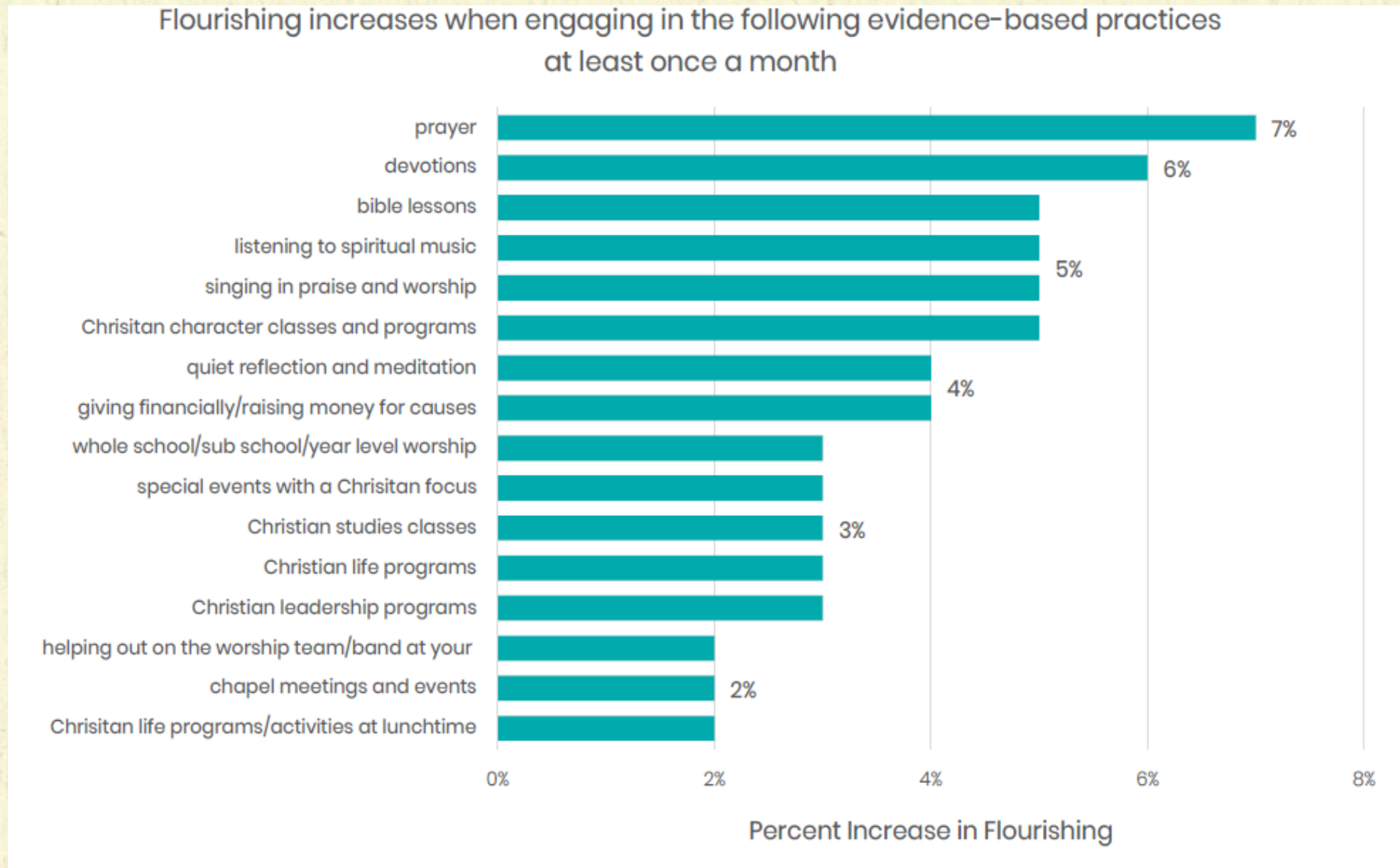
**8.1** Scripture Engaged

**6.7** Unengaged

**6.9** All



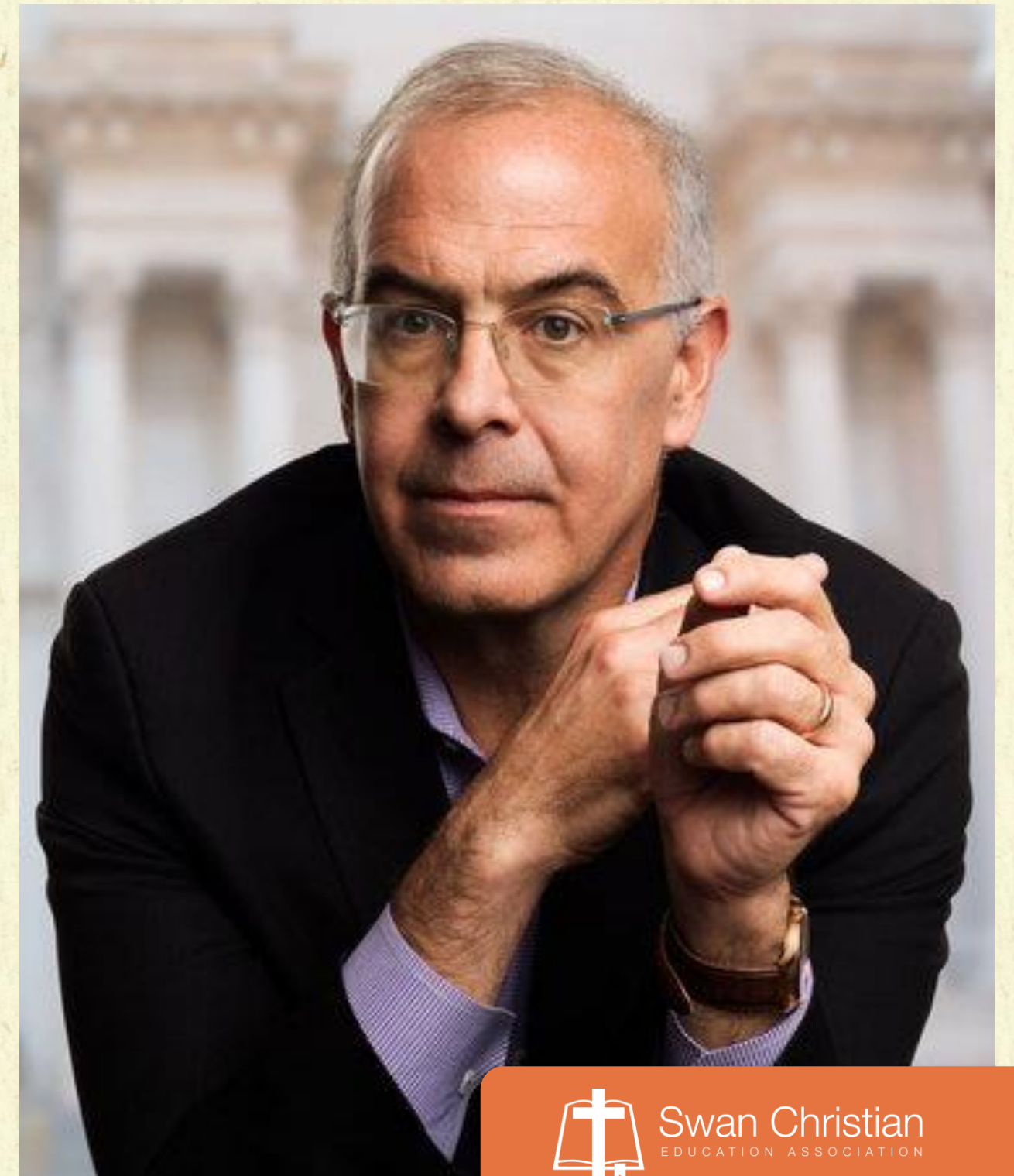
# Positive Impact of Christian Practices on Flourishing



*I say this when I go to a Christian college that you have what the world is hungering for. You have a formula for spiritual formation and flourishing.*

*You have a moral vocabulary. You have a moral order. You have a way to have access to your heart and your soul. And so be not afraid. The rest of the world is just hungering for that...*

**- David Brooks**



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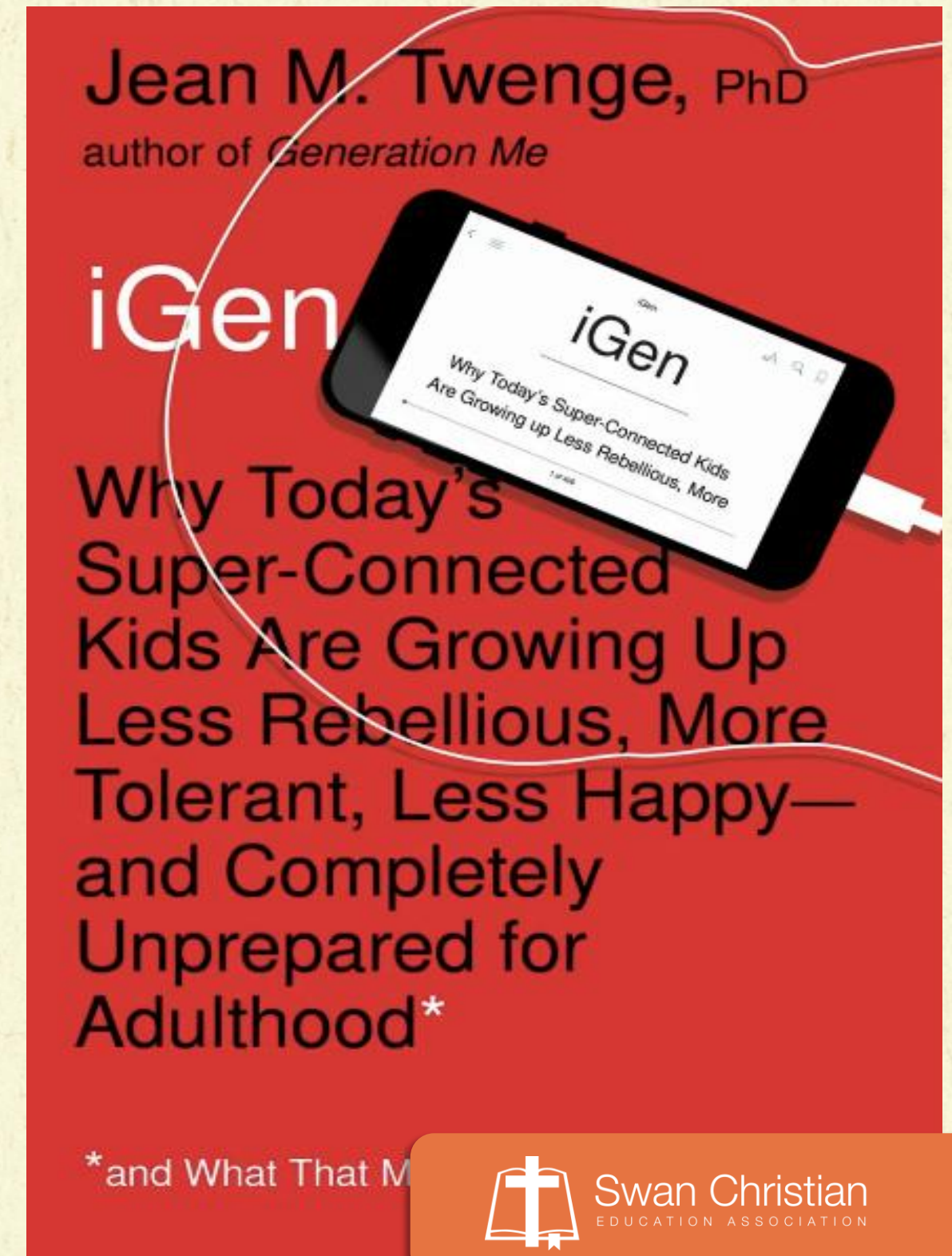
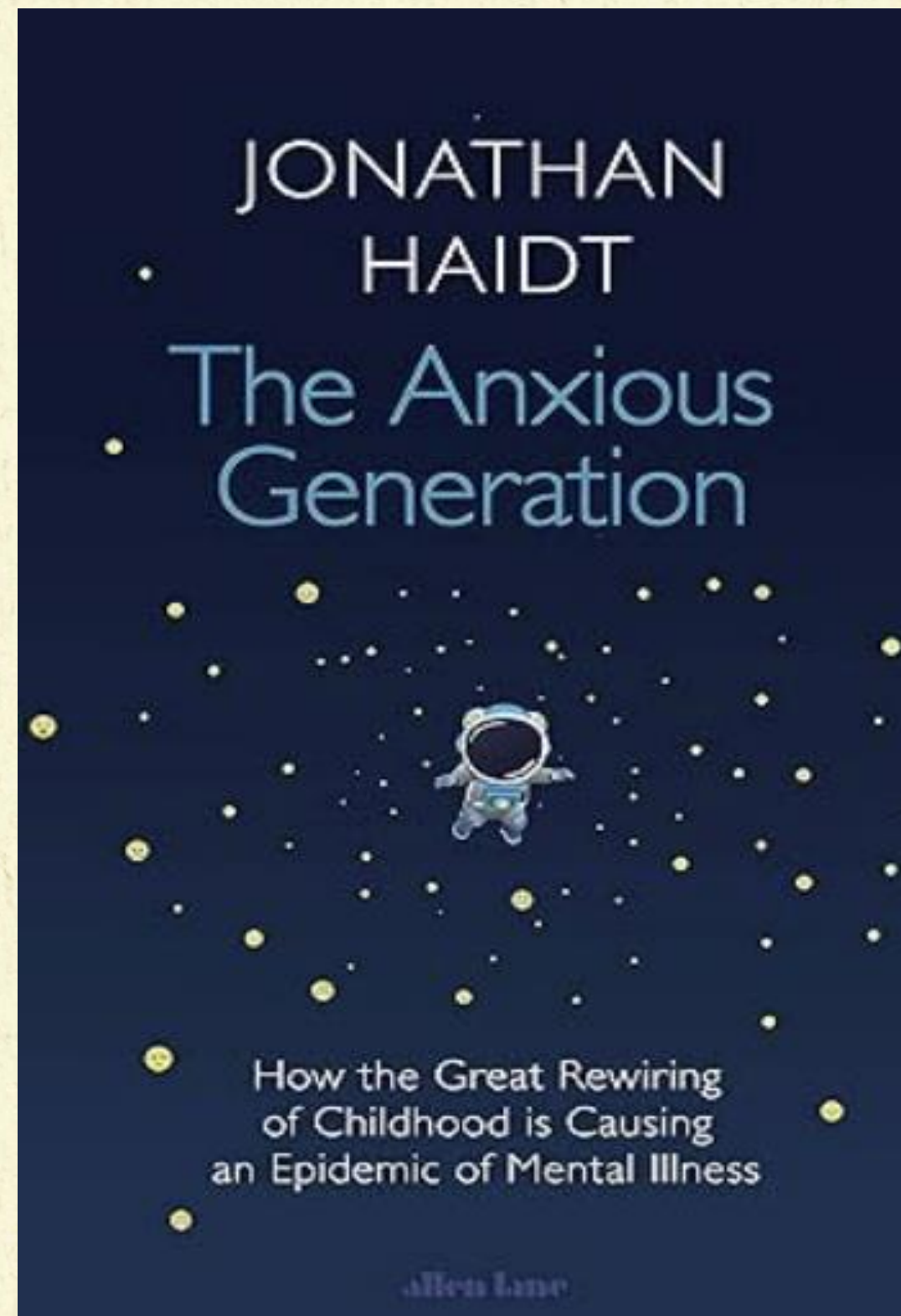
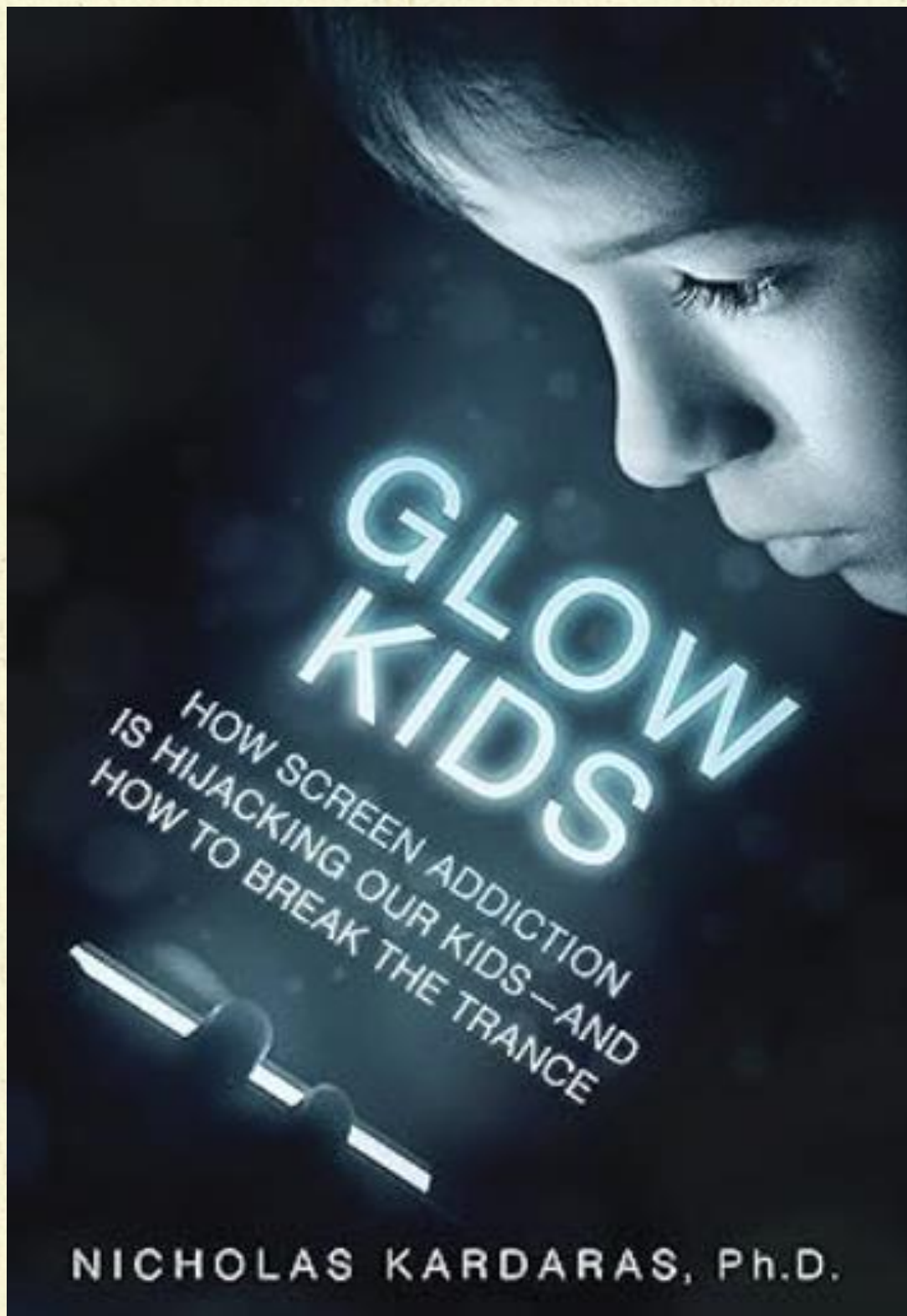
# The “End” of Well-Being

3. Recognise that true flourishing and wellbeing always occurs in the struggle and the stretch

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4 NIV





“My central claim in this book is that these two trends—overprotection in the real world and under protection in the virtual world—are the major reasons why children born after 1995 became the anxious generation.”

— **Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness***



# The Play Crushing Power of Safety-ism

*The administrators at this elementary school don't trust their students to play tag without adult guidance, because . . . what if there's a dispute? What if someone is excluded? The school offers similarly inane lists of instructions and prohibitions to help children play other games. The administrators seem to be committed to preventing the sorts of conflicts that are inherent in human interaction, and that would teach children how to manage their own affairs, resolve differences, and prepare for life in a democratic society."*

— Jonathan Haidt, **The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness**





Adversity not trauma

Learning is productive struggle

**The depth of our struggle determines the peak of our joy**

Joy > Happiness



Jon Ed



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# THE Happiness CRISIS



HOW ADVERSITY CAN BUILD A RESILIENT  
AND JOYFUL NEXT GENERATION

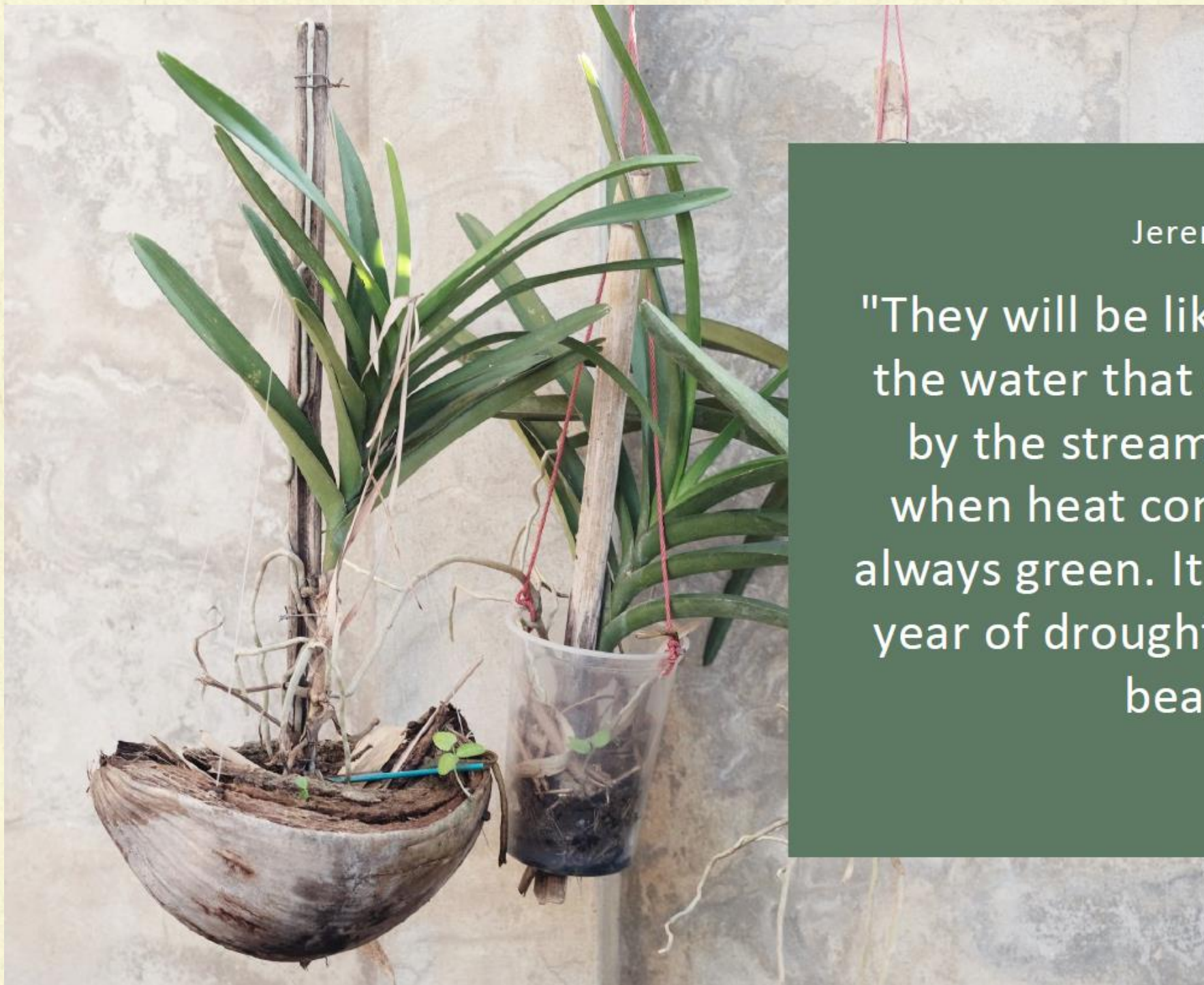
**JONATHAN ECKERT**

*JOY IS NOT  
FREEDOM FROM  
STRUGGLE. JOY IS  
THE FUEL TO  
STRUGGLE WELL.*

**- JON ECKERT**



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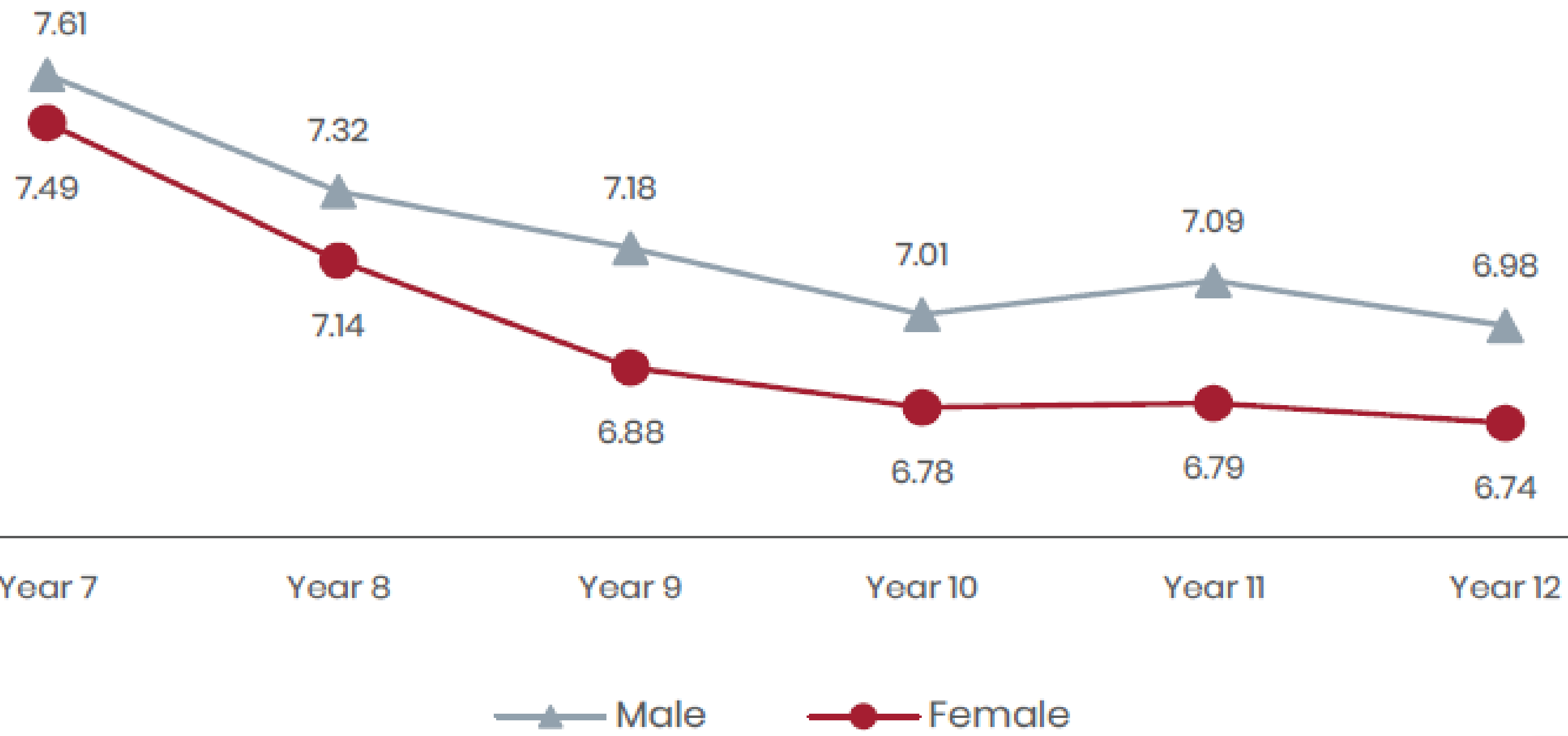


Jeremiah 17:8

"They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."



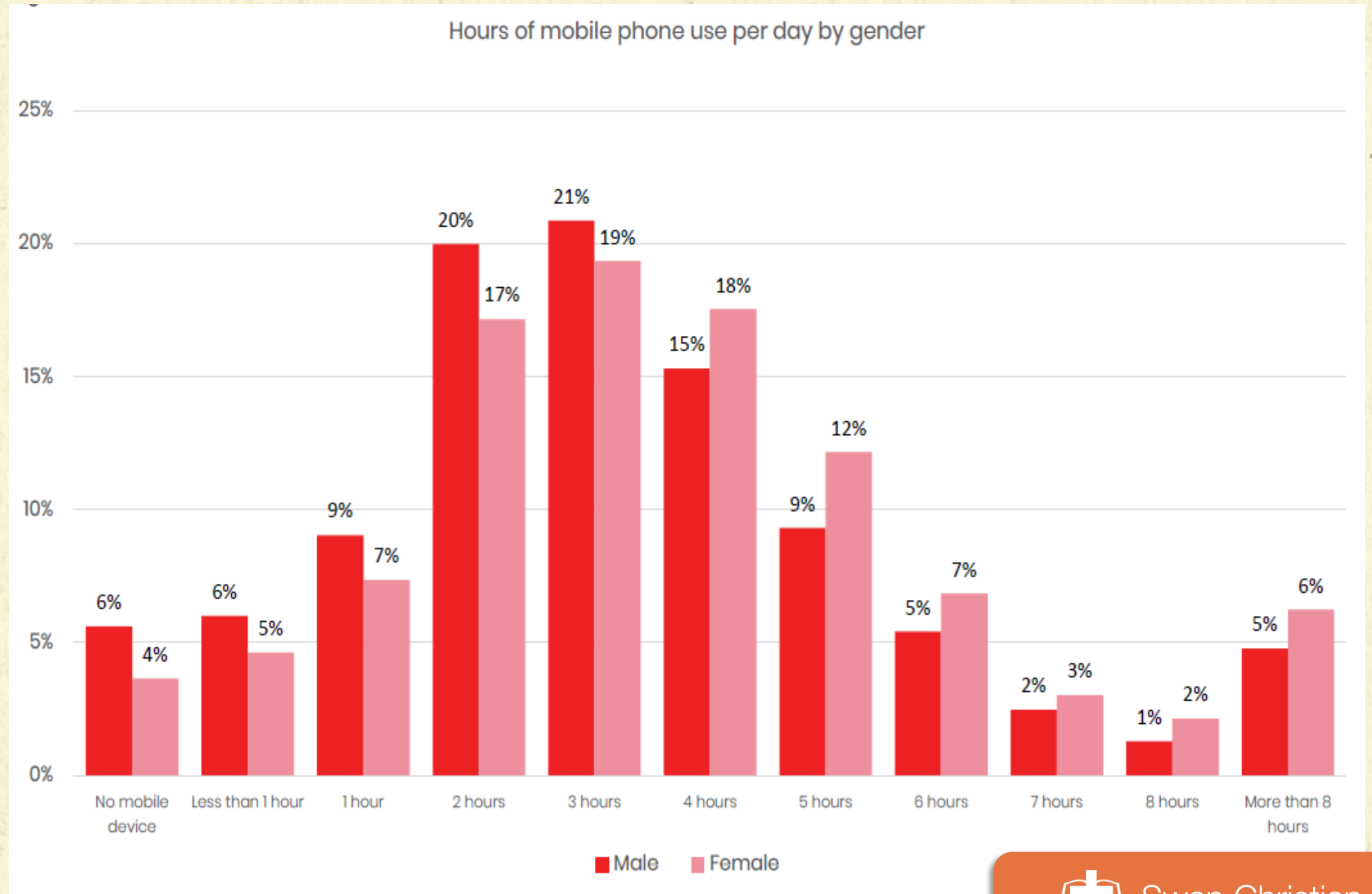
## Flourishing scores by year for male and female students ( $p < .001$ )



48% of girls reported being on their phones 4 hours or more each day



37% of boys reported being on their phones 4 hours or more each day





## Discussion Question

In what ways have you seen this shift to an over emphasis on ease, and freedom from struggle occur in well-being? What practical things can Christian schools do to change this incomplete perspective of flourishing and well-being?



# Graduating Class of 2038



# The “End” of Well-Being

1. Commit to a Biblical Telos for Well-Being in a Christian School
2. Cultivate The Explicit Link Between Spirituality and Well-Being (Flourishing)
3. Recognise that true flourishing and wellbeing always occur in the struggle and the stretch



# True Flourishing and Well-Being Life to the Full ... a better life than we ever dreamed of

*Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep rustlers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.*

**John 10:7-10 MSG**



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# Celebration

Day 2026

*Living in the light of*  
**CHARIS**

