



# PARENT CONNECT

A BRIDGE BETWEEN PARENTS AND YOUTH MINISTRY



## POT USE ON THE RISE

The number of college students who indicate they've used marijuana has risen nearly 10 percent in the past decade. In fact, nearly one in 22 students say they smoke pot at least 20 times in a given month! And almost two-thirds of college students believe a little weed is safe every now and then.

That trend is filtering down to American high school students, as well, with many choosing pot over alcohol.

Several factors have led to young adults' lax attitudes about pot smoking, including the medical marijuana movement, the legalization of recreational pot in four states, and conflicting reports about marijuana's health risks and benefits.

## HELP PREVENT DRUG ABUSE

Teenagers tend to experiment. They're living a decade of decision, with a decade of consequence just around the corner. Drug use and abuse can have long-lasting emotional, physical, and legal ramifications. So how can you help your teens stay clean?

First of all, bring up the subject often. Many parents don't mention drugs unless something bubbles to the surface or they're giving a one-time "just say no" lecture. Teenagers need ongoing dialogue to remind them you love and care about them and that their choices matter and have consequences.

Don't assume your teenagers won't partake. Watch for signs of drug use, including mood swings, appetite changes, grade fluctuation, friendship shifts, and drug paraphernalia.

Maintain a full schedule. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop," according to Proverbs 16:27 (TLB). Make sure your teenagers stay invested in homework, extracurricular activities, worship and service opportunities, and after-school employment. Those are all ways to help kids set and achieve goals. Responsibilities also serve as a strong deterrent when drugs are offered as a recreational option.

Be honest about your history. Kids desire a close relationship with their parents. So if your teenager asks if you've ever used drugs, don't skirt the issue. Be honest. Share, to the best of your ability, what led you to that decision. And emphasize any regrets or consequences you faced as a result. If you didn't use drugs, be open about why you chose abstinence and why you hope they will, too.

Drugs are prolific in teen culture. Even if your teenager isn't using, they almost certainly know someone who is. Talking about drugs reduces the mystery and the allure.



By Darren Sutton



## YOUTH CULTURE

### A WORD FROM THE WORD

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

Worship the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing with joy.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;

go into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good.

His unfailing love continues forever,

and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Psalm 100, NLT



## GUARD AGAINST INGRATITUDE

Amid the bustle of everyday life, remembering to be grateful can be a challenge. Read 1 Samuel 7:3-14 with your kids. It's a fascinating glimpse into how easy it is to forget what God has done, as well as what one man did to remember.

The Israelites were about to be pummeled by the Philistines...again. The Israelites were in trouble and had forgotten how many times and how miraculously God had cared for them in the past. Samuel instructs the people to focus their hearts and minds on God, even amid trial. True to form, God delivers them... again.

First, remind your kids it's easy to forget. In the middle of worry and concern, we tend to overlook our history with God.

Next, point out that bad stuff will happen—even to Christ-followers. Although the Israelites were

following God, the Philistines were still attacking. Remembering what God has done in the past can help us endure present difficulties.

As the story in 1 Samuel 7 shows, prayer matters. Try not to get so busy “doing” that you forget to take your concerns to God.

Finally, keep a reminder handy. Samuel built an Ebenezer tower to remember a moment when God worked powerfully and miraculously. Recall times like that with your teenagers.

And remember to be thankful at all times and “in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

By Darren Sutton

### EBENEZER STONES

Samuel knew how forgetful people were. So he dragged a huge stone to the town square and named it, essentially, “God took care of us here”—the Ebenezer. To everyone who saw it, the stone was a reminder of the victory God had granted to his people.

Find some smooth river stones, available in the garden section of most home-improvement and big-box stores. Recount some of the ways God has cared for your family. Then use acrylic paints to design stone reminders of God's blessings to your family. Keep the stones in a prominent place as your own Ebenezer.



# IN THEIR WORLD

## ORGANIZE YOUR GIFT LIST

Use these apps to keep track of gift recipients, budgets, purchases, shipping, and more:

**Santa's Bag:** This free iOS app helps track gift lists, budgets, and even wrapping.

**Christmas Gift List:** Similar to Santa's Bag, this free Android app even tracks wish lists and purchases from year to year.

**The Christmas List:** Available on iOS for \$1.99, this app lets you organize shopping by store to improve travel time.

**GiftPlanner:** Free for iOS, this app organizes all types of gift-giving. You can even snap a picture of a wrapped gift and store it in the app so you remember which gift goes to which person.



## GREAT ONLINE CHRISTMAS TOOLS

Though Thanksgiving still looms on the horizon, retailers have already turned their displays and aisles to Christmas. Check out these websites for all things tinsel and lights!

**elfyourself.com:** Create a personalized video using photos of family and friends.

**drawnames.com:** Easily organize a Secret Santa gift exchange without creating an online account.

**yourchristmascountdown.com:** Personalize a Christmas countdown for your computer.

**daves-snowflakes.com:** Start snipping! This website provides free patterns for creating amazing paper snowflakes. (A \$12 annual membership fee unlocks even more patterns).

**jinglebelljunction.com:** Carry your Christmas music in your pocket with these free ringtones.

**freechristmaswallpapers.net:** Deck the digital highway with these free, downloadable computer wallpaper designs.

**planapple.com:** If travel is part of your holiday routine, PlanApple lets you make, share, and store on your mobile device all travel plans.

**christmas.organizedhome.com:** Free printables will help you with menu planning, housework, and other activities.

**goodhousekeeping.com/best-christmas-cookies-recipes:** Put on your apron, and whip up some delicious treats for the holidays!

**pinterest.com/explore/christmas-gift-wrapping:** Present your presents in extraordinarily creative ways with these gift-wrapping ideas.

**wikihow.com/Decorate-a-Christmas-Tree-Elegantly:** Take your tree from Charlie Brown-esque to Christmas-tour worthy with these helpful hints.

**brit.co/christmas-scent-diy:** These recipes and tips will keep your home smelling like Christmas all season long.



# NOVEMBER 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10



We're so thankful, parents!

to know we see that in you!

We're thankful we get to be part of your student's faith story.

Thanks for letting us have a front-row seat in your faith walk.

We're grateful you're part of our church family.

And Happy Thanksgiving!

We appreciate how tenuous raising teenagers can be, and we affirm you as you guide your kids toward faith in Christ.

Your student ministries team

We applaud you, Mom and Dad. Thanks for loving your teenagers through the best and the worst of growing up.

Thank you for being an encourager, a discipler, a challenger, and an accountability partner for your teen.

We know you'll say parenting is the hardest job you'll ever love, and we want you