

A PARENT'S GUIDING INFLUENCE

Mark Gregston

A parent's desire to hold on to a child's innocence in his early years is normal and necessary. Early childhood is obviously not the right time for them to know certain things. But kids today are exposed to negative influences at earlier and earlier ages, and it is often out of a parent's control.

Age 16 used to be the benchmark for teens. It was the age most could begin to drive, and when given a set of car keys, the influence a parent has on how much of the world their teen experiences changes dramatically. But today, a younger teen has the keys to "drive" on over to some of the seediest places on earth, with the click of a mouse button. The Internet has changed everything.

While I applaud parents who protect their teen by having safeguards on their Internet use at home, the reality is that kids can and do access the Internet elsewhere -- at their friend's house, at school, or at the library. And even if they don't, their friends do, and share what they've learned. After all, kids want to appear more "grown up" by talking about adult things.

Some parents don't see the backlash from this coming, don't properly prepare their teen, and therefore have some catching up to do. Perhaps they never thought their teenager would become attracted to pornography, so they never talked about it. They didn't think they



would smoke pot, so they never talked about it. They never imagined their teen would become sexually involved, so they never discussed it. They couldn't conceive that their princess would be sexually attracted to another girl, so they never revealed the pitfalls of such a relationship. When parents don't train and talk to their teen about these common issues in their world, they often find themselves having to clean up a few messes.

More than ever, parents need to have frank discussions with their younger teens about drugs, sex and alcohol. Sounds cliché, but these issues and other potential pitfalls need to be discussed, without you or them feeling ashamed or embarrassed for bringing them up. You may not think some topics are appropriate to talk about, but believe

WINTER CALENDAR

December 10 [Saturday]

A Catapult Christmas 5

December 23 [Friday]

Broom Balling

January 13 [Friday]

the HUB (Session 1)

January 20 - February 10 [Friday]

the HUB (Session 2)

February 17-20, 2012

Impact Winter Retreat

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me, the kids themselves are talking about them, texting about them, and posting them on their website.

Training your teen in the early years and guarding his heart can help him avoid falling prey to the worst influences in today's world. That kind of support can help protect him from the dares of his peers, since teens in their immaturity often spur one another on to poor decisions.

Mark Gregston is an author, speaker, national radio host, and the founder of Heartlight, a residential counseling opportunity for struggling adolescents, where he lives with 50 high schoolers. Mark's blog can be read at www.markgregston.com. and his radio program can be heard at www.parentingtodaysteens.org.

B-TEAM'S NEWEST MEMBER

We're excited to have Peony Kim join our Catapult staff! Before coming to Living Hope, Peony served in youth ministry in various capacities both at her home church in SoCal and also as a college student in Houston, Texas. What makes Peony so unique is her long term goals. Here's what she said:

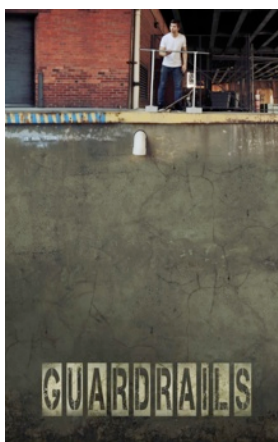
Do I sound like an 8 year old when I say, "I want to be a vet!"? I've always loved animals, but I've only recently discovered that God has given me a great joy in working with them as well. (After working at an animal hospital for over 1.5 years, I have come to realize that there is a difference between just loving animals and having the desire and love to actually work with them). But I don't just love the science of veterinary medicine and the fact that my patients are really very cute. I was also drawn to the practicality of this profession in bringing aid to those in rural areas of the developing world. Ever since I started struggling through the "What should I do/be in the future?" question in college, there was only one thing I was sure of: I knew I wanted to do something that could somehow be translated into cross-cultural missions, particularly in rural areas. Through my minor in Global Health and through various short-term trips, God really opened my heart and eyes to those in remote areas who lack access to care and resources. I believe God gives us certain experiences and desires for a reason! Whether it is through short term trips or a longer term, I know I want to be involved in some capacity in God's work overseas with this skill and knowledge.

THE HUB [WINTER SEASON]**Session 1 | What Went Before**

We have all made some decisions we would like to forget. Whether it's cheating on a test, breaking a friend's heart or something much more destructive, regret can haunt us and keep us from being able to move forward. But God has promised us that we have been forgiven and His glory allows us to switch our focus from what we've done and who we were, to who He is. And that allows us to move forward knowing that we serve a God who holds our future and shields us from our past.

**Jan.13 | Lesson 1**

Shielded

Session 2 | Grow Up

Guardrails are "a system designed to keep something from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas." Just like the guardrails we see on the roads we drive everyday, the guardrails we place in our lives are designed with a simple purpose; to create a small accident to protect us from a larger one. We don't often spend a lot of time thinking about or paying attention to them, but when we need them, we are very glad that guardrails are there.

In the same way that guardrails protect us on the road, when we establish them in our lives, they can help to both protect us and direct us. Most likely our biggest mistakes in life could have been avoided if we had guardrails steering us in the right direction. The goal should never be to see how close we can get to a guardrail without crashing but rather to keep us from ever going "too far," in the wrong direction.

Jan.20 | Lesson 1

Shift

Jan.27 | Lesson 2

Swerve

Feb.3 | Lesson 3

Brake

Feb.10 | Lesson 4

Steer