



PARENT CONNECT

A BRIDGE BETWEEN PARENTS AND YOUTH MINISTRY

APRIL 2015



FOOL'S GOLD

Easter isn't the only holiday we celebrate this month. Try these easy April Fools' pranks to get a smile—or at least an eye roll—from your kids:

1. Place a rubber band around the spray nozzle of the kitchen sink. When someone turns on the water, they get hosed.
2. Replace your teen's screensaver or iPod wallpaper to something horrifying; a photo of you and your spouse kissing should do the trick.
3. Open the bottom of a single-serving chip bag. Replace the contents with baby carrots or celery sticks, and reseal the bag with double-sided tape.

For a million reasons, our kids need to smile. It's a bonus when parents can be the ones to initiate the grins!

EASTER BASKETS FOR TEENS?

Even if you abandoned egg hunts years ago, you might want to re-invent the time-honored tradition of Easter baskets. They're a great way to communicate love to your teenagers, so get hopping—and get creative!

Geo-cache—These high-tech treasure hunts rely on GPS tracking. Hand your kids each a plastic egg containing nothing but longitude and latitude coordinates. Then let them use a GPS or smartphone to sleuth it out. (Visit this site for helpful tips: www.wikihow.com/Create-and-Hide-a-Geocache.)

All edible—Make the entire creation edible. A quick Pinterest search of “edible Easter baskets” provides ideas about making baskets out of melted chocolate, Rice Krispies Treats, and much more.

All-day delights—Make multiple mini-baskets using muffin cups or single plastic eggs filled with small treats. Leave them in places your teenager will hang out during

the day...the bathroom, the refrigerator, their car dashboard, in their backpack, atop their iPod, etc. Leave a note of encouragement or a Scripture verse in each small find.

Candy-less—Just about all teens love candy, but creating special moments as a family is equally important. If school is out on Good Friday or Easter Monday, consider taking the day off, too. Go hiking, see a movie together, or enjoy a picnic in the park.

Easter baskets, whether traditional or with a new twist, help create memories with kids. As they get older, you may need to let go of some aspects of certain traditions, but never let go of their intent.

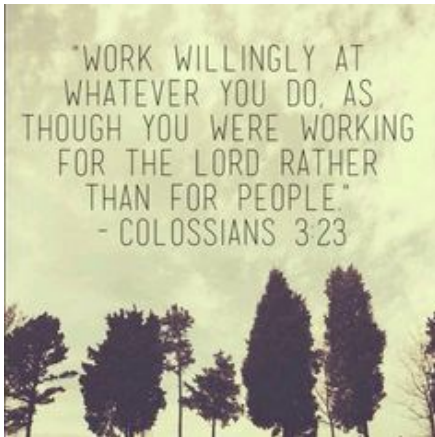


By Darren Sutton

YOUTH CULTURE

A WORD FROM THE WORD

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.



UNBELIEVABLE

At some point, teenagers start to test, question, or doubt what their parents believe. Family discussions and decisions can get complicated when teenagers develop opinions of their own, whether in matters of faith, politics, or moral standards. Navigating this intersection is crucial.

Often, our parental GPS tries to steer kids to change their minds, showing them why we're right. But that route can lead to wrong turns. A better path relies on staying calm and keeping the lines of communication open.

Teenagers often form their opinions on the fly. Those opinions will usually continue to develop for a while. So don't panic when a belief you've spent years cultivating seems antithetical to your own kids.

Instead, realize that teenagers are just trying ideas on for size. They're stretching their ideological wings and wondering if what they've believed all these years as a "child" is worth holding

onto. Because most of these beliefs aren't yet solidly in their hearts, it's important to keep talking to your teens—not to persuade them but to understand them and guide them through the critical-thinking process. The goal shouldn't be to change their minds but to help them use those minds wisely.

As you talk to your teens about important beliefs, ask lots of open-ended questions; for example, "How did you come to that belief?" "What are some things that seem right about it? What seems wrong?" "How would you respond if you were forced to take an opposite view?" "Help me understand where you're coming from."

Although these moments may feel counterintuitive, they'll help you win influence and boost communication down the line. So embrace the opportunity to explore beliefs, and trust Jesus to guide your kids to his standard.

By Darren Sutton

CLASSROOM CONTRADICTIONS

Sometimes kids bring home an assignment or lesson that doesn't line up with your family's beliefs or practices. When this happens, help them talk through the "right" and "wrong" of the material. Depending on their age and maturity level, give them freedom to either complete the assignment or request an alternative.

Sometimes forging ahead on a topic that counters deeply held positions helps teens solidify their own beliefs. As they navigate new information, keep the lines of communication open and be available as a sounding board.

If an assignment is too polarizing, however, coach teens about how to respectfully present alternative options to the teacher. Defending their positions and seeking different opportunities can empower kids to take a stand for important beliefs.

IN THEIR WORLD

HELP FOR CYBERBULLYING

Because parents hurt when our kids hurt, bullying can be excruciating for families. And though the realm of social media isn't foreign to most moms and dads, it's not something most of us experienced as teens.

If your teen is being bullied, harassed, or stalked online, turn to these websites for helpful advice:

connectsafely.org

safeteens.com

cyberbullying.us

stopbullying.gov



UNFRIENDED

This movie, scheduled for April 17 release, takes horror flicks to cyberspace. Told entirely from a teenage girl's desktop, *Unfriended* follows the story of six friends being stalked from beyond the grave. The "culprit" is a girl who committed suicide after an unflattering video made its way to the Internet.

Horror movies rarely have redeeming value, and most parents probably discourage kids from watching them. But even seeing the trailers can provide great opportunities to talk to kids about the nature of cyberspace.

Open dialogue.

- Remember, what's posted on the Internet lives forever—even when you think it doesn't.
- Posting about other people, even when it's just a joke, can be devastating to the person who's the punchline.
- Being bullied or harassed online is serious. Tell someone.
- Is there anything online about you that I should know about?

Take the conversation to a spiritual level.

- *Luke 6:31* (NCV) says, "Do to others what you would want them to do to you." How can you live that out at school?
- *Matthew 5:9* (NIV) says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." When someone is being bullied, how can we bring peace?
- *Job 16:5* (NIV) says, "But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief." In context, Job is talking honestly about what little comfort words can offer when life is a disaster. What are some tangible ways to bring comfort to someone who's hurting?

Offer support.

- Have you ever been cyberstalked? Let's report it together.
- Have you ever felt suicidal because of a bully? Let's ask for help.
- Do you know someone who's being bullied? Let's talk to school officials.

APRIL 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 Teen Sunday School 9:45a.m. in The Hub Philippians 3:1-11	30	31	1 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. God Can Be Trusted...	2	3	4
5 Teen Sunday School 9:45a.m. in The Hub Philippians 3:12-4:1	6	7	8 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. God Can Be Trusted...	9	10	11
12 Community Birthday Party Sponsored by THE HUB!!! 4p.m. - 6p.m.	13	14	15 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. Walking Wisely...	16	17	18
19 Teen Sunday School 9:45a.m. in The Hub Philippians 4:8-9	20	21	22 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. Walking Wisely...	23	24 Open Hub Night 6p.m. - 10p.m. games/movie/food See "what to bring" list in Resource Hub.	25
26 Teen Sunday School 9:45a.m. in The Hub Philippians 4:10-23	27	28	29 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. Walking Wisely...	30	1	2
3 Teen Sunday School 9:45a.m. in The Hub	4	5	6 The HUB Midweek 6:30-8p.m. Walking Wisely...	7	8	9



APRIL 2015

Dear Parents,

Easter's almost here! So dig out those colorful plastic eggs and all that fake grass—even though your kids are no longer children. No matter our age, holidays are wonderful memory-makers. Traditions you've been observing in your family will likely play a role in your teenagers' homes someday.

Among the commercialization of Easter, remember that as followers of Jesus, we celebrate his sacrifice, redemption, and forgiveness during this season.

Even though your kids will mark the events of Holy Week and Easter at church, tell them your own salvation story, too. Remind them about how Jesus has redeemed you. Express thanks for his intercession on your behalf. Revel in your story—and encourage kids to identify theirs, as well. That way, Easter becomes personal.

Remember: You're the greatest influence your kids will ever have. No matter how many special moments and events we create for them at church, none will be as powerful or as "impacting" as yours.

Thanks for allowing us to be a small part of that story. Your student ministries team wishes you and your family a blessed Easter!

Your Youth Ministry Team,
 Frank Bowden, Student Pastor

