

THE BEAUTY OF A BLOG

After nearly 20 years in the field, I realize I'm not only a pastor to youth but also a pastor to parents. Often, parents feel alone or overwhelmed, so they appreciate any help I can provide. Although I don't have all the answers, I can be a resource and support system.

One strategy I use to inform, guide, and encourage parents is our parent blog. This isn't groundbreaking, I know, but it's a great way to connect and equip.

Here are a few ways to make a parent blog manageable:

- **Find a place to blog.** Popular sites include Blogger, Tumblr, and Posterous. I use WordPress. The basic service is free, but I pay an extra \$18 per year for a personalized domain. I chose a free template, but you can pay to upgrade your blog's look, too.
- **Seek assistance.** Seven staff members help me write our blog. That means less writing stress for me plus more variety and expert advice for readers.
- **Before you begin, have several posts ready to publish.** Readers will lose interest if you stop posting for a period of time, so have a strong backlog of material to pull from. Last summer, I assigned each writer several 200- to 400-word articles. The beauty of this strategy is that I had enough material to post one piece biweekly for a whole year.

- **Proofread and plan.** Keep the blog professional by asking a volunteer to proof the entries. Then schedule which entries will get posted when.
- **Encourage guest posts.** I've asked parents and grandparents to contribute to our blog. They've touched on holiday stories, tragedies, triumphs, and assorted ministry happenings. These entries have served our reading community—and the writers—very well.
- **Stay current.** In between scheduled posts, add tidbits about current issues and resources; otherwise, the blog will appear inactive and stale.
- **Provide pizzazz.** Add photos, links, and video to make your posts pop. One or two per entry is ideal to avoid overload.

If this tech stuff is out of your range, look into The ParentLink: Teen Edition (www.theparentlink.com)—it's produced by the editors of GROUP. Every month, you'll receive a complete newsletter to keep parents educated about adolescent issues and informed about your particular ministry. You can personalize it with minimal effort, and a subscription is only \$99 a year.

No matter which route you take, you'll quickly discover the beauty—and benefits—of a parent blog. ●



BRANDON has been pastor of student ministries at an Illinois church for 13 years. Read his blog at ymtechstuff.com and follow him on Twitter at uthguy9.

FAVORITES

New Toy: *Bamboo Stylus Duo*

Machine at the Gym:
Vending Machine

Website: Kickstarter.com

Guilty Pleasure: "Party in the U.S.A.," Miley Cyrus

tumblr.

posterous®
SPACES™



WORDPRESS