

CALLED TO GREATNESS

Guidelines for teens for making choices that protect their safety and well-being

God has made you for greatness! Not an artificial or superficial greatness, like you find in commercials and movies. God has made you for true greatness – a greatness that comes from dignity, freedom and love.

But we live in a fallen world. Much of the media, entertainment, and consumer products presented to you offer a distorted view of what it means to be happy. And the sad reality is that some of the people in your life will seek to manipulate you for their own interests, either in small ways or in ways that can be abusive.

This is NOT God's way! God has created you for love and freedom. The Lord wants you to experience the fullness of life. God wants you to know the deep joy of authentic love, lasting friendships and true self-worth.

The following guidelines are presented as an attempt to make you aware of dangers to your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, and provide you with clear boundaries that will keep you safe.

Guidelines for Personal Safety

- Strive to make safe and **healthy choices**. Be polite to everyone without allowing others to take advantage of you or those around you. Be a model of respect and integrity.
- Always **talk to your parents** about **where you are going** and **who you are with**. Too many young people turn up missing because they failed to follow this simple rule.
- **Avoid going places by yourself**, such as walking to school, going to the mall, etc. You should be with at least one other person.
- No one should ever **touch** you in a way that feels uncomfortable or wrong. If someone ever does, tell them to **STOP!** Be assertive, and get away.
- **Tell your parents** no matter what if anyone touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. Even if someone threatens to hurt you or someone else, you need the help, support and guidance of your parents. If your parents don't believe you, talk to some other adult and keep talking until someone takes action!
- Always **listen** if a friend tells you they feel unsafe, depressed or have been victimized in any way. Take them seriously. Encourage them to seek help, and go with them to talk to their parents or another adult.
- Never feel obligated to keep a **secret** when it involves someone's safety or wellbeing.
- Tell your parents, and an adult in authority, if anyone makes indecent, rude or suggestive comments about your body or bodily activities, or if anyone uses obscene gestures. This is called **sexual harassment**. It is illegal, immoral, and should not be tolerated.
- When you are at a party or some other event, never go off to a **secluded area**, especially with someone you just met. This places you in a dangerous situation – spiritually and physically.
- When you are at a party, **never leave your drink unattended**. This gives someone the opportunity to put alcohol or a knock out drug in your drink. Always finish or throw out your drink and get a new one in case someone put something in it when you weren't looking.

- **Never use drugs or alcohol.** Avoid any situation where drugs or alcohol are being abused. Apart from being illegal and immoral, these situations pose many dangers and risks.
- Never **drive** with anyone who is texting, or anyone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If you drive, don't do this yourself.
- If you are in a situation that makes you feel scared or unsafe, **trust your instincts.** Try to remove yourself from that situation as soon as possible.
- **Be cautious** about adults (or teens who are much older than you) who seem to give you an **undue amount of attention**, or give you special gifts, routinely compliment you about your appearance, or single you out in other ways. This may be the beginnings of an unhealthy attachment or attempted abuse.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help** when you feel unsafe or depressed. Never forget that you are **loved by God** and you can **never lose your dignity as a child of God** – no matter what you do, or what others do to you! There is always hope and healing with Jesus Christ!

Guidelines for Internet and Media Safety

- **Think before you text, email or post anything.** Once something is sent electronically you can't take it back, and you can't always control what problems it may cause or where it may end up. Be aware of the unintended consequences of your media choices.
- Keep in mind that people online are **real people with real feelings.** Don't use the internet to post rude, cruel or obscene things about other people.
- Talk to your **parents** about their expectations for the internet and media use.
- Never take or send **pictures** of yourself or others that are sexy, indecent or immodest.
- Avoid all forms of media and entertainment that **glamorize sex and violence.** The more people are exposed to these messages, the more they accept them. This causes people to lower their standards of conduct, makes it more difficult to enter into genuinely healthy relationships, and causes them to distance themselves from God.
- Don't give your **passwords** to anyone except your parents, not even your best friends. Having your password accessible to others makes you vulnerable to others using your accounts to hurt or embarrass you.
- Set your social network settings to **private.** Only friend people that you actually know.
- Never give out **personal information** that will allow people to identify you.
- Never agree to **meet** anyone in person that you met online.
- Never respond to any **comments** that are rude or obscene.
- **Talk to your parents** about anything you encounter online that makes you feel uncomfortable, scared or dirty.
- **Don't believe** everything you read online, and **don't let yourself see** everything there is to see online. A staggering number of sites on the internet actively seek to expose youth to inappropriate, dangerous and offensive information.

(NOTE: For more information about internet and media safety, visit www.netsmartz.org.)