



TEEN CHALLENGE  
CINCINNATI  
*The Proven Cure For The Drug Epidemic*  
www.teenchallengecincinnati.org

September 2010

## From the Wilderness

by Craig Aven

If you were to ask those who watched me grow up to describe me as a child, they would probably tell you I had a heart for God early on and desired to grow in relationship with Him. I grew up in the church and loved to be there. Both my grandpa and my dad were pastors in the church and I looked forward to getting there early with them to help with setup. I made the coffee and even drank it, because dad said it would put hair on my chest. Ministry never felt like a burden to me, but came natural. My dad, mom, two brothers and I even traveled the country for years in a little maroon van, singing in churches and staying in various homes or hotels. The joy and excitement I had growing up was real, and the desire for God was put in me very early on as a result of my parents living out Christ before me. The Christ I saw in them was the Christ I wanted in me.

While it is true that I was a happy child and did desire real intimacy with God even then, deep down there were major wounds. Alongside those happy memories and rich experiences, are also plaguing memories and devastating experiences.

When I was young, while walking towards the woods at the edge of our Dallas farm, I stumbled upon what would keep me stumbling for years to come. It was pornography. It had a magnetic attraction to my soul and before I knew any better or could defend myself, I was trapped. I had no clue then what demonic seeds were being planted at the time, but in hindsight, it's very clear to me now. That single experience sparked in me an unhealthy lust for pleasure in the wrong things. I have learned not to condemn myself for the desire to be filled with pleasure because that comes from God. But, my shame, guilt and pain have always come as a result of not delighting myself in Him. (Psalm 37:4) I cannot even begin to tell you how painful choosing the counterfeit pleasures has been for me.

In 2005, I found another counterfeit. I began putting my hope for fulfillment in medication. I found that pills could make me feel momentarily, very happy. I actually liked myself and others when I took them. I felt great. So I took pills, until they took me. When those didn't affect my feelings enough, I turned to whatever drug would do the job and I spiraled into bondage. I began to experience hopelessness and real despair, using drugs I never thought I'd use. I was hooked and hopeless. But praise God for His Spirit! Where can I go to hide from Him? He was still there calling me back to relationship, and from the pit I responded, "Help me out, I can't even lift a finger to help myself." Being the good Father that He is, He had a cop pull me over while I was under the influence of six different substances, and my deepest fear of exposure was now a reality. God would use this to nudge me out of hiding and today I am so grateful.

I stood in front of the church where I worked and led worship, and asked for forgiveness. I confessed to them, and in full support they surrounded me and prayed for full restoration. I confessed in detail to my good friends, pastors Jeff and John, about the years of wrestling with sin and its many manifestations. They didn't leave my side.



**Craig Aven**

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*Craig Aven, continued.*

I stepped down from ministry and went to work on dealing with who I really was and was not. I entered Teen Challenge Cincinnati on April 10, 2008 and graduated January 2, 2009.

There I learned to stay out of hiding and beneath the shelter of God, and by His Spirit I have experienced great freedom and acceptance. I began to really believe that my sin is what God dislikes, and not me. That it's all about relationship and not rules. At Teen Challenge, through study, prayer and application, my view of God and how He sees me dramatically changed. It is God's love for me that compels me to change, not the fear of being unloved. I don't view instruction and obedience as a burden anymore, but rather freedom and life. And as a result, I'm drawing nearer to God than I ever thought possible. Sometimes, His presence has been so powerfully intimate and overwhelming that I have asked Him to stay His hand. Much of what I have known of closeness and intimacy has been perverted, but God is redefining that for me. I'm so glad He's patient.

My testimony is all about how God continues to Father me to wholeness. He loves me and as Father tells me who I am in relation to Him (not the other way around). I will not let lies dictate or have any say in who I am! I *am* a new creation. To say otherwise would be a lie! Obedience to His will means partnering with Him to destroy the sin in and around me. My purpose and passion for life has been refocused.

Today, I know I'm not alone, although I'll admit there are days when I feel like I'm still trying to get my full stride, but I now cling to the truth. As followers of Christ, we all have to fight our flesh and face temptations from the enemy. It's great to know that none of us needs to hide, but together we can help carry each others burdens. I have never had more resolve to turn from sin and keep my eyes on Jesus. Today, I can say with all those that have gone before me that He is faithful and He will never leave nor forsake His own.

*Ed Note: Craig is a professional singer songwriter. His newest CD "Songs From the Wilderness" is available on our web site or download on iTunes*

## Adventure Camp 2010!



This newsletter is dedicated to David Gangloff, graduated April 2005, now in Glory.



*This year's Adventure Camp for boys 8 to 12 was filled with leadership driven excitement. To see more about Adventure Camp go to our web site and click on Recent Events.*



Two students volunteer for the fun job of helping grade the Adventure Camp go-cart track.



Students respond to their new commitment in life with river baptism.



Learning history and aviation at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base Museum.



Students work at Poplar Creek baling and stacking hay.



### **Who Are We?**

Located on 165 acres of beautiful countryside in Milford, Teen Challenge Cincinnati is a mission of hope, offering a 7 -12 month residential treatment program for men ages 18-35 dealing with the issues of drug and alcohol addictions.

### **Mission Statement**

Evangelize people who have life controlling problems and initiate the discipleship process to the point where the student can function as a Christian in society applying spiritually motivated biblical principles to relationships in the family, local church, chosen vocation and the community. Teen Challenge endeavors to help people become mentally sound, emotionally balanced, socially adjusted, physically well and spiritually alive.

## "The Good Report!"

(We want to highlight noteworthy accomplishments from alumni. Please submit items for our next newsletter.)

**Tyler Wylie** (2006) is cooking at a local Applebee's restaurant while attending the University of Cincinnati as he pursues a degree in Math Education.

**Ray Van Hoosier** (2008) is active in his church and is currently a Supervisor for a lawn care service. He is planning to enroll in college soon to study industrial diesel mechanics.



**Restoring  
God's dignity  
and destiny in  
the hearts and  
minds of men.**

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU...** Alumni of Teen Challenge (grads and non grads) ... we want to organize, come together in unity and lift each other up! Please call us with your contact information and an update on how you are doing.



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## Remember Teen Challenge when Estate Planning

**Our endowment fund, "Securing their Destiny" is growing steadily and stands as an excellent opportunity for your giving consideration be it wills, stocks, or as a named beneficiary to an insurance policy. This financially wise method of stewardship helps ensure the long-term financial stability of Teen Challenge and provides a planned means for the Ranch to continue its much-needed outreach to the lost, bound in the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction. For more information call (513)248-0452 x105**

## Needs List ... We Need Your Help!

### Volunteer Needs:

Local Churches are involved in our ministry in a variety of ways...  
Serving (not cooking) the food at a monthly Family Night dinner  
Preparing a meal and serving it to our students  
Praying for monthly prayer requests from the students  
Bringing a men's group to do an evening devotion with the men

### Financial needs:

Please consider sponsoring the full cost of discipling a young man for an entire month - \$2,200.  
Gas cards to fuel our 15 passenger vans.

### We can always use:

Nice, clean men's dress and work clothing and shoes  
Cars or Trucks in good working condition for staff and Graduates  
Automotive mechanic's tools and tools in general



Visa  
Mastercard  
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and  
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Check out our informative and dynamic new web site!  
[www.teenchallengecincinnati.org](http://www.teenchallengecincinnati.org)

Monitor current events, **listen to chapel speakers, testimonies** and direct others to it who are in need, email, and donate easily and securely online! Would you like to also get this newsletter electronically? What an opportunity to "forward" the work of the Ranch to your friend! Just let us know by emailing us at [email@teenchallengecincinnati.org](mailto:email@teenchallengecincinnati.org)