

THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

Living In Fear of Teenagers

By Paul David Tripp

I read an article once where the author proposed that if you put the word “Teenage” before any other term, that second word automatically becomes negative. Shall we try it? “Teenage Driver”—did it work? Teenage Drama. Teenage Hormones. Teenage Party. Teenage Decision Making. Teenage Choices. Teens and Technology... You get the picture.

This negativity, or negative association, is everywhere—in movies, television shows, podcasts, news reports, and statistics. Sadly, you’ll even find it in some Christian books or sermon series on the family. I don’t know how else to say it: parents seem to be living in fear of teenagers.

I was at a conference once, and a new parent was excitedly showing off their cute newborn baby to their friends. One of their older peers said, jokingly, “You think he’s cute now—just wait until he becomes a teen!” I probably should give him the benefit of the doubt, that it was a lighthearted and innocent comment, but it made me both sad and mad. Why do we have such overwhelming cynicism about this period of time?

I’m convinced that something is fundamentally wrong with how we think about teenagers. Something is flawed when a parent’s highest goal for a season of life is survival. Is this a biblical view? And how does our perspective shape our parenting strategies during the teen years?

In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul exhorts Timothy to “flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” (ESV) This interesting little phrase calls us to be balanced in how we think about teenagers and define this time of life. On the one hand, the Bible reminds us not to be naive. There are temptations and challenges that uniquely plague young people. These cannot be disregarded.

On the other hand, Paul uses the qualifier “youthful” because each phase of life has its own set of challenges. The temptations of the child, the teen, the young adult, the middle-aged adult, and the elderly are not identical. Therefore, the temptations of the teenager are not exclusively savage and severe. Each person who seeks to please the Lord at each “stage” of their life must watch, pray, stand fast, and fight, lest they fall into temptation. Likewise, are we not all called to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace” at every point in our Christian walk?

I am no longer the “young” parent of four teenage children, but when I was—and in the years long after they left our home—I became more and more convinced that this is a time of unbridled opportunity. Parents, you want to approach these critical years with hope; it’s not a time to head for the bunkers and dread worst-case scenarios of total domestic chaos. Instead, this is an opportunity to jump into the battle and move toward your teenager, not run from them. It’s an opportunity for engagement, interaction, discussion, and committed relationship. You can approach these years with a sense of purpose and calling!

So naturally, when the publisher of my first book, *Age of Opportunity*, approached me about creating an updated and revised edition, I was so excited to say yes! This 25th-anniversary edition features fresh, heart-focused discussion questions for each chapter, as well as a bonus “Ask Paul Tripp About Parenting Teens” Q&A chapter that will help you discover the exciting possibilities about parenting your teens!

Imagine if every Christian parent, when asked what they do, said, “I am the parent of a teenager. It is the most important job I have ever had. Everything else I do for a living is secondary. I have never had a job that is so exciting, so full of opportunities. Every day I am needed. Every day I do things that are important, worthwhile, and lasting. I wouldn’t give up this job for anything!”

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We have a number of copies of [The Age of Opportunity](#). Ask one of the Elders for a copy to read.

North Korean Christian Martyr: ‘Even If I Die, I Do Not Have Any Regrets’

Tony Perkins

Her name isn’t Hae Woo, but—like a lot of traumatized North Koreans—she doesn’t want to take any chances. “I’m a believer,” she says, “because of my husband, because of the things he told me and my children about Jesus. ‘You cannot see Him,’ he would say, ‘but He is alive and working.’”

That became harder to believe when he was taken from them, locked away in a prison where he would die. “The torture he went through was so gruesome that it is unimaginable,” she says. Every single day, the guard would come and punish him for his faith, “with blood,” she explains quietly, “everywhere.” But “even in the midst of these horrible tortures, he had compassion for those who did not know about Jesus Christ,” Hae Woo remembers. “He went into the prison walking, but after all the torture, he was dragged loose on the ground ... Although his body was all torn apart, he handed the last pieces of rotten corn that he had to his prison mates. He spread the Gospel to the inmates. He prayed for the sick, [and] as he continued the good work, God built an underground church in the prison through my husband.”

One of the last times her children saw him, she thinks back, “he wanted to pass on his faith, but there were guards everywhere. So, he did something simple and profound. He wrote three words on his hand: ‘Believe

in Jesus.” Not long after, he was killed by prison guards for giving that same advice to others. “Even if I die,” he had told her, “I do not have any regrets.”

Today, a lifetime after Hae Woo was hauled into prison to experience the horrors for herself, very little has changed. David Curry of Open Doors USA told me on “Washington Watch”: “Every year, I keep hoping that we’ll have some signs that [the persecution of Christians] is receding. But all of the driving forces ... that are oppressing the expression of faith—all of these things are still in place.” In North Korea, which is once again at the top of Open Doors USA’s 2020 World Watch List, nightmares like Hae Woo’s aren’t rare. The Christian community is significant there, he explains, but they’re “deeply underground.” “There are many Christians,” he explains, but “they’re facing every kind of pressure you can imagine.” Tens of thousands of Christians are in labor camps—a nightmarish place that Hae Woo describes as like Nazi-era holdovers. “Each person received one handful of rotten corn, [and] there was nothing else to eat. We got something watery. It wasn’t even a soup. We got those as food for the whole year. Nothing else. People are obligated to work more than cows or animals.” Usually, they’re on the verge of death. They’ve been starved, beaten, and abused.

“They’re there,” Curry explains, “for things Americans take for granted every day: owning a Bible, being a Christian, or talking about their faith. The reality [is] to be registered as a Christian or to be thought of as a Christian, it means you are the No. 1

enemy of the state,” he said. In the Middle East and Africa, places like Afghanistan (No. 2 on the list), Somalia (No. 3), and Libya (No. 4), the situation isn’t much better. The punishment for being a Christian is quick and decisive.

“It’s not uncommon for believers to be beheaded. There’s no trial,” Curry said. “There’s no kangaroo court [or] anything like that. This is where Islamic extremism really shows itself in that top 10 and even beyond, so many of these countries ... It may not be the government itself, but either the government is powerless or impotent to respond to these non-state actors within their boundaries.”

Here at home, where practicing our faith is second nature—something we never think twice about—it’s hard to imagine a life of constant terror. If anything, that should drive us all to our knees—in gratitude, for one thing—but also for our brothers and sisters overseas.

“Every year,” Curry said he wanted people to know, “there are silver linings. Faith is growing deeper in these places where people are being persecuted for serving Jesus. Communities are getting smaller but stronger. And I think it’s causing people to [reflect] on the cost to faith.”

When I asked him what people can do, miles away from the stories like Hae Woo’s, Curry’s answer was simple. “We need everybody praying,” he said. “I would love to see people pray daily—even, at a minimum, weekly—for the persecuted church. Adopt a country, a cause, a person. Let’s pray. Let’s talk. Let’s advocate for these individuals and make a big difference.”

FUNNIES

When Albert Einstein was asked to explain how radio waves worked, he said, "You see, wire telegraph is a kind of like a very long cat. You pull his tail in New York and his head is meowing in Los Angeles. And radio operates exactly the same way, only there is no cat.

Her grandson was visiting and Grandma was doing everything to make him happy, including letting him eat all the pancakes he wanted. Finally after a goodly number, she asked, "How about some more?"

"No, thanks Grandma," he replied. "I don't even want the ones I already had."

A husband, the owner of a new car, was somewhat reluctant to allow his wife to drive his prize possession, even to the grocery store, which was a few blocks from the house.

After she insisted, he finally relented, cautioning her as she departed, "Remember, if you have an accident, the newspaper will print your age."

A man and a little boy entered a barber-shop together. After the man received the full treatment—shave, manicure, and haircut—he boosted the boy into the chair.

"I need to pick something up," he said.

"I'll be back in a few minutes."

When the boy's haircut was done, the man still hadn't returned. "It looks like your daddy forgot about you," the barber said.

"That wasn't my daddy," said the boy. "He just walked in here when I did and said, 'Come on son, we're going to get a free haircut!'"

Early one morning Ted, an avid hunter, woke up ready to bag the first deer of the season. As he entered the kitchen for breakfast, he was surprised to find his wife, Debbie, sitting there, fully dressed in hunter's camouflage.

"What are you doing?" Ted asked.

Debbie smiled, "I'm going hunting with you!"

Ted reluctantly decided to take Debbie along. Upon arriving at the hunting site, Ted set Debbie up in the tree stand and said: "If you see a deer, take careful aim and fire. I'll come running back as soon as I hear the shot."

Ted walked away expecting not a sound from Debbie's stand. But within ten minutes he was startled to hear an array of gunshots. As Jake ran back to Debbie's location, he heard her yelling: "Get away from my deer!" Then Debbie let loose with another volley of gunfire.

Coming into sight of Debbie's stand, Ted was shocked to see a cowboy, with his hands held high in the air. The distraught cowboy, trying to defuse the situation, said: "Okay, lady, okay! You can have your deer! Just let me get my saddle off it!"