



## The Troubled Teen

by Virginia Arnold

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. II Corinthians 5:20*

### I. What is the source of the trouble that impacts both our children and us as parents?

*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith. I Peter 5:8-9a*

*The devil . . . was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44*

**Paul says, "in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." II Corinthians 2:11**

#### A. Satan's attacks will come from without - from many varied sources.

*For our struggle is . . . against the rulers, against the powers, against world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having **done everything, to stand firm.** Ephesians 6:12-13*

B. The attacks will come from within – from our sinful flesh. (James 1:14-15)

*But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. James 1:14*

C. We may have unbelieving or believing teens (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 2:12-17)

Your unbelieving teen is in the same spiritual state as you once were as an unbeliever:

**UNBELIEVING:** You – his parent – “*were dead in your trespasses and sins, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince of the power of the air** . . . You lived in the lusts of [your] flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath. . .*” Ephesians 2:1-3

**BELIEVING:** Young men, “*you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*” (but because he is still in the flesh the writer goes on to warn your teen) . . . “*Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him . . . the world is passing away, and also its lusts but the one who does the will of God abides forever.*” 1 John 2:14-17

II. What are some ways that parents are deceived or “troubled” by Satan?

A. When they fail to realize the importance of the God-ordained relationships in the home.

1. The home serves as a “laboratory” where the truths of God’s Word can be completely displayed as they are lived out by parents and children. (Deuteronomy 6)

2. Parents have been ordained to serve as God's ambassadors to their children – to communicate and display God's attributes and to exhort them to submit themselves to His Lordship.

*. . . HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; . . . taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 4:14-17*

## B. When they do not embrace their own God-ordained role of authority over the children in the home.

1. Parents may have refused to accept the Biblical truths that (1) foolishness is bound in the heart of their child and that (2) they are responsible to bring him up in the nurture (discipline) and admonition (instruction) of the Lord. (Proverbs 22:15; Ephesians 6:4)
2. The early failures of a parent to acknowledge their children's sin and then biblically chasten and reprove them may eventually result in power struggles and estrangement between themselves and their teens. (Proverbs 10:1; 15:20)

## C. When they approach the teen years with an entitlement mentality.

1. Parents may feel that they need their children to be what they should be so that they as parents can feel a sense of achievement and success.
2. Instead, parents must acknowledge that their children belong to God. God puts them in the care of parents so that they will point them to the Savior and instruct them in His Word.

### III. What are some ways that teens are deceived or “troubled” by Satan?

#### A. When they lack an awareness of the state of their own heart.

##### **Parents must ask themselves the hard questions:**

1. Does my teen identify himself as a sinner that is under the judgment of a holy God? (John 3:18) Has he responded to God in faith and repentance of his sins? Have we as parents observed spiritual fruit in his life? (Matthew 7:15-20)
2. Does my teen accept the fact that **God** is in sovereign control of all that happens on the earth – including things that negatively impact his life? (Daniel 4:35)
3. Does my teen accept God’s earthly authorities in His life? Is he grateful for God’s choice of his parents and does he acknowledge that they are to be obeyed and honored? (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; Proverbs 12:15)

#### B. When they choose wrong companions

*He who walks with wise men will be wise,  
but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

Proverbs 13:20

*How blessed is the man who does not  
walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor  
stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in  
the seat of scoffers! Psalm 1:1*

*My son, if sinners entice you, do  
not consent. . . My son, do not  
walk in the way with them.*

*Keep your feet from their path,  
for their feet run to evil.*

Proverbs 1:10, 15-16

## IV. How should I respond to the sinful actions of my troubled teen?

### A. Deal with the sin that is evident in his life.

God has given His Word and promised His wisdom. He has commanded parents to apply the Word of God to their children's needs. (Proverbs 3:12; 29:17; Deuteronomy 8:5; Hebrews 12:5-11)

### B. Not fight against my teen but fight against Satan and his devices. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

Parents and teens must stay on the same side in the battle.

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## Hope for Troubled Teens and Parents

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### A. There is hope for troubled teens.

1. God gives parents the responsibility and the privilege of serving as "Ambassadors for God" in their application of His Word to the needs of their children.

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Hebrews 4:12

2. The issue for parents is not "IF" they should deal with their children's sin, but "HOW" they should deal with their children's sin.

*For the weapons of our warfare are **not of the flesh**, but divinely powerful **for the destruction of fortresses**.<sup>5</sup> We are destroying speculations and **every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God**, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.* II Corinthians 10:4-5

3. Confrontation by parents should be marked by gentleness and patience with the goal of leading their children to the realization that there is only one remedy for the problem of sin – repentance and faith in the work of Christ on the cross.

*But we proved to be **gentle** among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, **we were well-pleased to impart to you** not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.*  
I Thessalonians 2:7-8

4. Our loving confrontation should progress from Scriptural “Reminders” to “Exhortations” to “Expressed Concern” to “Admonition and Warning” to “Pleading and Urging” and finally to “Rebuke.” (See supplement: “Steps of Loving Confrontation”)

## B. There is hope for troubled parents of teens.

1. Parents must wait on God
  - a. We must focus on the opportunity that we have been given to serve as God’s ambassadors.  
(II Corinthians 5:20; II Timothy 3:15-16, Proverbs 4:3-5; 7:1-3)
  - b. We must unreservedly give our children to God, allowing Him to work in His perfect way and time in their hearts.

*Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.* Psalm 27:14

2. God holds children responsible for their sinful choices – including the disobedience and dishonoring of their parents.

*It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself if his conduct is pure and right.* Proverbs 20:11

- a. The book of Proverbs appeals to young people to choose wisdom over folly.

*Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.* Proverbs 1:8

- b. In the first family God held Cain responsible for his disobedience when he offered the wrong sacrifice and then murdered his brother. God spoke directly to him twice and he refused to obey. (Genesis 4:1-16)
  - c. The prodigal son was held responsible for his wicked choices. (Luke 15:12-32)
- 3. Parents must **take comfort** in God's unfailing commands and promises.
  - a. Repenting of their sins of omission and commission in the training of their children. Willingly asking their children to forgive them for past wrongs.
  - b. Clinging to God and feeding on His Word.
  - c. Trusting God even when they don't understand His work in the lives of their children.
- 4. Parents must **welcome the counsel and encouragement of God's people.**

*Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6*

- 5. Parents must remind themselves that **God, the perfect father, understands the grief** they are experiencing over their rebellious teen and that HE alone has the power to change their teen's heart

*Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. . . . Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him." Isaiah 1:2-4*

*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. Ezekiel 36:25-27*

**5. Parents must PRAY** and ask others to pray that God will work in the heart of their teens and young adults.

*... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

James 5:16

Augustine's mother, Monica, is an example of a parent whose fervent, persistent prayers for her son were heard by God. She said on her death bed: *"There was indeed one thing for which I wished to tarry a little bit in this life and that was that I might see you a Christian before I died. My God has exceeded this abundantly."*

## Helpful Resources for Parents and Teens

### Parents

*Age of Opportunity: Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* by Paul D. Tripp

*Heart of Anger* by Lou Priolo

*Proverbs (Commentary)* by Charles Bridges

*Teach Them Diligently* by Lou Priolo

*War of Words* by Paul David Tripp

*Wellsprings of Life* by Donald Orthner

*When Good Kids Make Bad Choices* by E. Fitzpatrick and J Newheiser

### Boys

*Behind the Ranges* by Mrs. Howard Taylor

*Borden of Yale* by Mrs. Howard Taylor

*Christian Heroes: Then and Now series* by Geoff and Janet Benge

*Fight to the Death* by Wayne Mack

*Shadow of the Almighty* by Elizabeth Elliot

### Girls

*A Chance to Die* by Amy Carmichael

*Girl Talk* by Mahaney and Whitacre

Isobel Kuhn books

*Stepping Heavenward* by Elizabeth Prentiss

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