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Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers

Chap Clark
Brazos Press (October 2004)
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In a world focused on youth and the concerns that parents have about raising youth to be safe and happy, it may come as some surprise that most teens don't believe that adults really care about them or what their daily lives are like. Parents hoping to increase their teen's spiritual life find that society's apparent lack of concern for what teens face is even more of a problem. This book takes a serious look at teenagers' pain, and offers suggestions for a helpful approach.

The first in a planned series called "The Youth, Family and Culture Series," *Hurt* proposes to examine what's happening to today's teens with an eye towards understanding them and giving them the support they need, spiritually and otherwise. The book focuses on what happens in the everyday life of youth-how school, friendships, family dynamics, extracurricular activities, and ethical dilemmas can both enhance and derail a teen's life.

The author, a parent himself, holds a Ph.D. in human communication from Denver University. His ten previous books include *The Youth Worker's Handbook to Family Ministry*, *Daughters and Dads*, and *From Father to Son*. He is currently a professor of youth, family, and culture at Fuller Theological Seminary; during the 2001-02 academic year he substitute-taught at a Los Angeles high school in order to spend time in the trenches.

What he learned surprised him, both positively and negatively. He learned that teens, in spite of their rebellious natures, want more than anything to spend time with their parents and be guided by them, and that the process of growing through adolescence is much longer than most adults think it is. "Parents need to realize that adolescence now lasts up to fifteen or more years," writes Clark. "They need to see their parental role as a marathon, recognizing that building a relationship in which their child trusts them is even more important than whether they can trust their child regarding the immediate issues of the day."

To drive home his point, Clark uses sidebars and pullouts that quote teens on the different issues and concerns they have, as well as poetry composed by students. The plain speech of the students is a good contrast to the more scholarly approach of Clark's writing, which borders on academic at times. However, his strong belief in the need for attention to teens is apparent throughout, and the spiritual aspect is confined primarily to an appendix, making this book appropriate for parents of any belief structure.

Even while raising alarms about the crises facing teens in their daily lives, Clark provides hope that this generation of future adults can be brought through the difficulties of adolescence safely-if the adults in their lives make the effort to understand them and what's important to them.

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