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BRING OUT THE HERO LURKING INSIDE YOUR TEENAGERS

Mr. Bumpers was a great youth minister and a true hero. He was in his 60s when I became a youth pastor. I quickly recognized that he cared deeply about the youth ministry and young people. Mr. Bumpers often asked how he could help and was our ministry's biggest fan. He organized the older adults to host youth group meals and support our fundraisers.

When I asked Mr. Bumpers if he would serve more regularly, he was hesitant, no doubt envisioning lock-ins and weeklong trips. I assured him I just wanted him to come to church 15 minutes earlier and walk through the youth area before Sunday school. The next week—and for many more that followed—Mr. Bumpers showed up, slapping the boys on the back and complimenting the girls. He gave every young person a moment where they felt valuable and loved.

We recently lost Mr. Bumpers to cancer. There won't be an action figure designed after him, but he is a true hero to me and many others.

Who are some adults in your church who might be a hero to young people? And how can you be a hero to the young people in your life?

—Hank Hilliard, Young People's Ministries, hhilliard@GBOD.org

THE VIEW

- Every week, nearly six in every 10 teenagers is engaged in some kind of group spiritual activity. But the percentage of teenagers who are inclined to have conversations with non-Christians about their faith decreased from 63% to 45% between 1997 and 2009.

(barna.org)

- In a survey of nearly 20,000 Christian teenagers, kids listed their top need as help with building a positive relationship with God. Number six on the list was needing help with how to share faith with friends and others.

(Group Magazine)

TIPS >>>

Not all superheroes have abs of steel. The small-group resource *Guy Talk, Girl Talk* (Simply Youth Ministry) offers these insights into real-life heroes:

- **Strength comes from recognizing God, the source of strength.** Heroes shouldn't rely on themselves; only God is omnipotent, or all-powerful (see Isaiah 50:2).
- **Strength comes from weakness.** This seeming contradiction shows that when you recognize that you need help, you become willing to rely on God's strength (see 2 Corinthians 12:10).

- **Hard times build strength.** God uses troubles and challenges to test and grow our faith (see James 1:2-4). During tough times, we learn to trust God with our weakest moments so that other people can see his strength.
- **Real-life heroes recognize that they're significant enough to be part of God's plan.** God doesn't need our help, but he does use us. He created each of us with value, and that means we're equipped to fit perfectly into what he wants to accomplish here on earth (see Jeremiah 29:11).

FOR DISCUSSION

- How might your definition of a hero differ from your teenager's definition? from God's definition?
- What "hard things" have you done? Have you shared the experiences with your kids?
- Who has been a hero in your life, and how? In what ways can you be a hero for God, your family, and other people?





GOING DEEPER

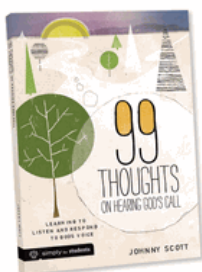
Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

SimplyYouthMinistry.com

During summer, theaters are filled with action flicks and heroes—two things that attract teenage fans. Use the blockbuster-movie season to convey messages about heroism:

- Watch a new flick together and turn the post-movie conversation toward spiritual things. With the final “Harry Potter” installment, for example, discuss the battle between good and evil—and which side wins out.
- Write the screenplay or storyboard of your life. Answer these questions: If your life story were turned into a movie, what would be the key scenes? Who are the main characters? What role does/has/is God playing in your movie? What hero-like qualities do you have? What qualities do you need? What is the next scene after the one you’re currently in? How does the story end?
- Plan a movie night. Let teenagers invite friends over for a movie “theme” night. For example, rent *Soul Surfer* (due out on DVD in August) and hold a beach-themed get-together. Afterward, talk about how Bethany Hamilton faced her fears, showed heroism, and trusted in God’s plan for her life.
- Stay young at heart. If your kids are animation fans, enjoy a matinee show together. After watching *Kung Fu Panda 2*, for example, discuss the spiritual battles Christians wage, the difference between fighting offensively or defensively, and how the armor of God protects us (see Ephesians 6:10-18).
- Enjoy some “oldies.” Dig up copies of classics such as *The Ten Commandments*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Chariots of Fire*. Then share thoughts about the heroes and deeds each film portrays.

RESOURCE



In *99 Thoughts on Hearing God’s Call* (Simply Youth Ministry), author Johnny Scott explores how teenagers can live extraordinary lives for God. Through explorations of the lives of biblical heroes, teenagers will discover how to go on their own spiritual adventures.

BIBLE FOCUS

“I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works.”

Psalm 77:11-12

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



LIMP BIZKIT

Background: Since 1995, these rockers have sold an estimated 33 million albums. Their metal/hardcore/rap sound is similar to that of Korn. Be warned that their lyrics are crude; the song “Hot Dog” uses the f-word 48 times, for example.

Albums: *Gold Cobra* (2011), *The Unquestionable Truth, Part 1* (2005), *Chocolate Starfish and the Hot Dog Flavored Water* (2000)

What Limp Bizkit Says: The band had broken up but decided to get back together because “We decided we were more disgusted and bored with the state of heavy popular music than we are [with] each other.”

Explore: If you must, check out this video for “Break Stuff,” which features guest stars and teenagers lip-syncing to a censored version. It will give you a pretty clear idea of what Limp Bizkit is all about: youtube.com/watch?v=ZpUYjpKg9KY.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



BLINDSIDE

Background: These Swedish rockers have achieved some serious crossover success. They’ve toured with heavyweights such as Linkin Park and P.O.D., and, despite years between releases, their new albums are always highly anticipated.

Albums: *With Shivering Hearts We Wait* (2011), *About a Burning Fire* (2004), *Silence* (2002)

What Blindside Says: Drummer Simon Grenehed says, “When we started, we were just having fun. We’re still having a lot of fun together, but you just want to dig deeper.... For us it’s always been about trying to get a positive message out there, some kind of hope. That’s the main purpose in both writing music and playing live. That’s the thing that we always come back to.”

Explore: You can hear the entire new album at the band’s website: withshiveringheartswewait.com.

MOVIE



Movie: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*

Genre: Action-Adventure

Rating: To come (probably PG-13)

Synopsis: The epic series comes to a close as the forces of good and evil face off for the final time. It will take great personal sacrifice to defeat Lord Voldemort—maybe the ultimate sacrifice.

Our Take: Some parents are put off by the magic inherent to the “Harry Potter” series, but if you can get past that, it’s really a story about the overcoming power of love and friendship.

For more media discussions and ideas, go to www.MinistryandMedia.com.

VIDEO GAME



Child of Eden—This innovative game can be played with a regular controller, but it truly shines when you use the Xbox Kinect full-body controller. The incredibly vibrant and colorful graphics—paired with upbeat dance music—make this a title the whole family should be able to play.

Alice: Madness Returns—In this multiplatform game, a young girl escapes the horrors of London to Wonderland—which carries its own horrors. The sequel to the hit game of the ’90s will have plenty of demented figures, blood, and creepiness. Steer clear.