

"Age Of Opportunity: A Book Review"

I believe that one of the very important callings God has given me as pastor of the E. Free Church in Minden is that of equipping parents to disciple their children. Part of that equipping is putting good resources into your hands. One of the best I have ever come across is a book written by Paul David Tripp entitled Age Of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide To Parenting Teens (P & R, 2001, 2nd ed.). Here is a brief overview which I hope will pique your interest enough to purchase it.

The main premise of Tripp, a counselor with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation in Pennsylvania, is that the teen years provide a wonderful opportunity for us to shape our children, rather than a frightening period to be dreaded or merely survived. The opportunity comes, not only from the reality that they are our children and the family is and should be the chief place of training, it is also that teens' hearts and life situations are so intensely and keenly felt. Within some of the real and perceived crises of the years is an amazing classroom where some of the best learning and shaping into Christ followers will happen—if we engage with the occasion and apply the grace of Christ, rather than mere behavioral modification.

If parents are to take advantage of this window of opportunity, we must see this season of life positively, we must remain engaged with our children, we must first deal with our own heart's idols so we can then help them do the same, we must not overreact to their struggles, we must have a biblical and redemptive (not fearful) view of their interaction with culture, and we must make our aim the shaping and winning of their hearts—not merely the controlling of their actions.

This book takes the skeletal concept of discipling our children by gradually giving them more and more responsibility and puts flesh on the bones—showing how and what it looks like.

So often, books on the topic of parenting err by being biblical without practical down-to-earth discussions, they have a feel of practicality without the element of truth, or they simply make you feel like good biblical parenting is unrealistic at worst or out of our reach at best. Tripp does none of these. Yet he makes it clear that the job of parenting (a job, he writes, we should work our way out of) can be done according to God's will, only in His strength with Christ and the gospel always at the center.

I would highly recommend picking up this biblically substantive, practical book for your own personal benefit or even for a Bible study group format. It has study questions in the back of the book.

Joyfully Passing On The Baton With You,

Pastor Tom