

3 Battlefields Every Teen Steps On

Don't be part of the blind, teenage masses who do not know what is going on. They think that to know the latest movie or iPhone app or hit song is to know what is going on. Those things are like cut flowers. Bright today, tossed out tomorrow. They are utterly insignificant compared to events that are shaping the course of eternity.

What is really going on is that people and nations are being enslaved by Satan or liberated by Christ. And Christ fights his liberating warfare through Christians, including teenage Christians.

But not through teenagers who are amusing themselves to death. The average teenager is so wrapped up in himself, and how he looks, and whether anyone likes him, that he makes a poor soldier. One of the great marks of the soldier in wartime is that personal comforts give way to the strategic mission. Soldiers may play cards the night before the battle, but when the trumpet sounds they lay down their lives.

The Battlefield of Money

Take the battlefield of money, for example. The trumpet has sounded. You are the soldier. The battle has begun. You may not feel rich, but you have lots of stuff. Your stuff threatens to strangle your soul by lying to you about how important and how satisfying it is (Mark 4:19). And the money you don't have threatens to pierce you by creating a passion to be rich.

The Great General has sent you a personal message on the battlefield. It reads,

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a

snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:9–10)

Does this call wake you up? Does it make you vigilant like a soldier on alert?

Then, along with the alert, he sends a great promise that he will not leave you stranded and alone in this battle: Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5–6)

You are set free from fear and greed by this confidence: The Commander-in-Chief will not abandon me to perish on the field of battle. So look your enemies in the eye. Stare down covetousness and craving, and slay them with the Sword of the Spirit and with the superior pleasures of Christ: “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8).

The Battlefield of Comfort

Or take the battlefield of comfort and ease. Almost all the forces in your life put you under pressure to maximize your comfort with the ease and softness of our age. But the Great General has sent you a message, as the enemy surrounds you. Remember the great warrior Moses! Fight like he did!

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24–26)

O, there is reward for victories in this warfare! Yes, there is – beyond imagination! But the enemy wants you to think all the rewards are in this life. He has dropped propaganda leaflets behind the lines that read, “Heaven is a fairy tale. You are a fool to live for the reward of heaven and not the reward of comfort and ease in this life!”

But the Commander-in-Chief counters his propaganda at every turn with spectacular promises. No matter how hard the fighting is – no matter even if you die in his service – he will raise you up and give you the best pleasures forever.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” (Matthew 5:11–12)

This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

In fact, the Great General has sent us word on the battlefield that he will not just reward us, but he will be our reward. “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

With this sword in our hand, we drive back the lying hordes of safety and ease and comfort and offer ourselves for Christ’s service in the most risky assignments.

The Battlefield of Ego

Or take the battlefield of ego and peer-approval. O, how powerful this enemy is! He has swallowed up more teenagers perhaps than any other adversary, even lust. He comes with horrible stories of how painful your shame will be if you do not conform to this world. He will lie to you, and say that the only alternative to the mood and fashion and music and movies and sexual pleasures of this world is utter humiliation

and embarrassment.

The Great General sees it all. His walkie-talkie lights up with messages for his embattled teens. Do not be deceived. They say you will experience shame. No. No. It is they who play the futile game of trying to turn their shame into their glory. But you see reality for what it is. They do not. They “walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Philippians 3:18–19).

They think all the fun lies with them. It is a fool’s fun – like a roller coaster that, at the most breathtaking moment, flies off the rails.

With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Peter 4:4–5)

You are the ones who know reality. You know what lasts – what really satisfies. For them, all is grass and the flower of grass.

“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” (1 Peter 1:24–25)

Let the messages of the Commander sink in. Your identity is deeper and stronger and more durable and more glorious than any plastic veneer that your peers try to pressure you into. “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You are a treasured possession (1 Peter 2:9). You are a son or daughter of the Creator of the universe (Romans 8:16).

With these truth-daggers in your hand, slay the ghoulish lies of peer pressure that try to deceive you into thinking

conformity is freedom.

Let None Despise Your Teenage Youth

We could go on with all the different kinds of battlefields you must fight on. But you get the idea. The enemy lies, and the Commander-in-Chief counters with truth. And the truth sets you free (John 8:32).

When the Great General says, "Let no one despise you for your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12), he means: Don't fit into the stereotype of the aimless, careless, superficial youth. Break the mold. You belong to Christ. Show the world that there is another kind of teenager on the earth.

This teenager is not a leaf blown along with the wind of cultural trends. He is not a jellyfish floating with the current of the times. He is a tree that stands firm in the strongest storms. He is a dolphin who slices the waves against the tide. He is going somewhere.

Dream of being a kind of teenager that the world cannot explain. Maybe someday, if there are enough of you, they will invent a new name. And "teenager" will be a footnote in the history books.

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