

Don't Let Teens Get a Bad Rap

A few years ago I helped a family member purchase a money order to mail to her daughter who lives out of state. It seems her boyfriend kicked her out, and she'd been staying in a hotel. Unfortunately, she ran out of money, and her boss from the local diner had already fronted all he could. This person needed money quickly, and she didn't know where else to turn.

Around the same time a friend of mine related the story of being startled awake by her son. It was 3:30 a.m. when the phone rang. Her son had been partying and needed a ride home. Though my friend had to work the next morning, she jumped out of bed and hurried to her son's aid.

Does this sound unusual? Maybe not. People find themselves in binds like this all the time.

Well, what if I told you that these people in trouble were 50 and 55 years old? That's right. They experienced adolescence in the 1960s, yet here they were, not straying far from their old ways.

Many times teens get a bad rap for being irresponsible. They drive too fast. Party too hard. And don't make wise choices about their future.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, wise decision-making has more to do with a right heart attitude than with age. I've seen teens make very wise choices—ones their older acquaintances should try to copy!

Proverbs 1:15 and 18 says, "Don't go along with [sinners], my child! Stay far away from their paths ... they set an ambush for themselves; they booby-trap their own lives! Such is the fate of all who are greedy for gain. It ends up robbing them of life" (NLT).

For the past few weeks, I've been wearing a white wristband similar to Lance Armstrong's Livestrong. It says these words: "Choose Life." On the surface the meaning is pro-life, of course. But to me this bracelet also reminds me to choose life in all the decisions I make.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 says, "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him" (NIV).

Choosing life means choosing God's way. It's choosing to seek Him instead of the world's answers. It's choosing hope, peace, abundance and faith. It means serving God and loving people, instead of attempting to find happiness through live-in boyfriends and all-night parties. It means not booby-trapping your own life by making bad choices over and over again.

Each of us messes up. I have too many times to count! But being "grown up" means realizing those mistakes and deciding to take a better way. As Psalms 119:30 says, "I have chosen the way of truth" (NIV). Truth as Jesus gives it—not as Hollywood tries to display.

So the next time someone tries to give teens a bad rap, be sure to tell them differently. Let them know you're choosing life. You're choosing not to booby-trap your future. You're choosing blessings instead of curses.

After all, your choices are good choices when you choose God's choices for your days!

Tricia Goyer has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as *Guideposts*, *Thriving Family*, *Proverbs 31*, and *HomeLife Magazine*.