

Fighting the Tyranny of 'Cool'

For many, being cool is everything. But what is cool? Is it really which phone you have? Or what movies you've seen? Or how strong or fast or handsome you are? Or the way your hair falls and your figure is shaped? You are not stupid. You know that living for such things is superficial and meaningless.

What is cool for a 14-year-old young man? I think what follows is a 100 times more cool than phones and clothes and movies and games. The year is 1945. World War II was still raging. Thousands of teenagers wanted to fight. The Battle of Iwo Jima was one of the deadliest—6,800 American soldiers are buried on that tiny island, many of them teenagers.

Jack Lucas had fast-talked his way into the Marines at 14 [in 1942], fooling the recruits with his muscled physique. ... He stowed away on a transport out of Honolulu, surviving on food passed along to him by sympathetic leathernecks on board.

[At 17] he landed on D-Day [at Iwo Jima] without a rifle. He grabbed one lying on the beach and fought his way inland. Now, on D+1, Jack and three comrades were crawling through a trench when eight Japanese sprang in front of them. Jack shot one of them through the head.

Then his rifle jammed. As he struggled with it, a grenade landed at his feet. He yelled a warning to the others and rammed the grenade into the soft ash. Immediately, another rolled in. Jack Lucas, 17, fell on both grenades. "Luke, you're gonna die," he remembered thinking. ...

Aboard the hospital ship Samaritan, the doctors could scarcely believe it. "Maybe he was too (expletive) young and too (expletive) tough to die," one said. He endured 21 reconstructive operations and became the nation's youngest

*Medal of Honor winner—and the only high school freshman to receive it. (James Bradley, *Flags of Our Fathers*, 174–175)*

You Are Teenage Soldiers in a War

Knowing you are in a war changes what is cool. If your family is under attack, fretting about your clothes and your hair stops. There are more important things at stake. And we *are* at war. The enemy is stronger than the Axis of Germany, Japan, and Italy. Indeed, stronger than all human powers put together. The battle is daily. It is fought in every locality. And its victories and defeats lead to heaven or to hell.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

“Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

“Wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18).

“The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh” (2 Cor. 10:4).

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:3).

“Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

What Is Really Going 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.

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