

# Give Harry Potter a Chance

I was intrigued. I could relate to Harry Potter. I've seen him in therapy a hundred times.

When I was asked to be on yet another TV program to discuss Harry Potter, I responded: "What more needs to be said? In my opinion, the topic has been run into the ground."

The producer pressed: "Public interest is still high and probably will remain so. We want your view not only as a mom but as a therapist."

I reluctantly agreed to do the show. My hesitancy had to do with the line that has been drawn in the sand by the Christian community.

On the one hand you have those who feel anything to do with Harry Potter is evil. On the other, you have the lovers of literature who see the book series as classic and compare it to the writings of C.S. Lewis and . Tolkien.

I've sat at swimming events and ballet programs, in church and in shoe stores listening to parents attribute their children's newfound reading interest to Harry Potter. I've heard others claim that the books elevate evil and unwittingly seduce kids into the occult. Both sides are passionate and believe their position is correct.

As I prepared for my TV appearance, I wondered why I was being asked to join this great debate. My children have no interest in the books or the movie, so I had no passion for the topic

as a mom. And I generally dislike this type of discussion because it tends to alienate the Christian community from the very people we need to reach.

But as a therapist, I was intrigued. After I read the first paragraphs of the book, I could relate to Harry Potter. I've seen him in therapy a hundred times.

Harry is a child of trauma (murdered parents) who is forced to live with people who care little about him and show no genuine affection. He is often mistreated and emotionally neglected. Essentially alone, he faces the world as one of the disenfranchised.

What he finds among the world of wizards and witches is acceptance. It is the supernatural world of evil that mentors him, befriends him and allows him to operate in his gifts.

I thought of all the children of divorce who feel like Harry—traumatized by the loss of the family unit and often forced to live with new people who have no interest in their emotional lives. They are the modern-day Cinderellas whose princes never come.

I thought of those who have been sexually molested and learn to survive by fantasizing and mentally disconnecting from their physical bodies. Or those who know rejection because of their gay lifestyle, past abortion, addictions or homelessness.

They receive neither love nor acceptance from the church. But in the company of sinners, they are welcomed.

And when they enter a world of darkness, the longing for power and love draws them. Like Harry, they are the disenfranchised who yearn (as we all do) for something bigger than our mortal selves.

Then I remembered a “Harry Potter” in Brooklyn, New York—an unlovable man who swaggered into a church one Easter. The man was homeless and often slept outside the doors of the church.

He made his way to the altar, heading for pastor Jim Cymbala. Cymbala’s first thought was: Oh, no, not on Easter! This guy is probably a panhandler.

The stench of urine overwhelmed him. But as the Holy Spirit convicted Cymbala of his judgment, he obediently turned his head toward the man.

A miracle happened. The stench became a sweet smell, and the pastor saw the stranger with Christ’s eyes. As he prayed for and embraced him, the homeless found a home. Thankfully, it wasn’t a place of wizardry or lies. It was the love of Christ.

People long to be a part of something that connects them to unconditional love. They have gifts that either have never been awakened or are used for evil rather than good. They long for a supernatural power to help them overcome rejection and trauma.

When the church awakens to the need around us, we won’t be hearing so much about what’s wrong with Harry Potter. People will be talking about what is right with the body of Christ.

---

Linda S. Mintle, Ph.D., is a Virginia-based licensed clinical social worker and author of *Divorce Proofing Your Marriage* (Siloam Press), available at [. She welcomes your questions about the tough issues of life at \[.\]\(#\)](#)