

WILD THINGS: THE ART OF NURTURING BOYS

BOOK REVIEW

YOUTH EDITION



WILD THINGS: The Art of Nurturing Boys*

By David Thomas
& Stephen James

Book Review
by Dan Istvanik

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Tween and teen boys are genuinely “wild things” sometimes aren’t they? Some days, they most certainly smell like something wild has just come in the door.

Our world often tries to soften masculinity or blur the lines of the developmental stages of boyhood into manhood. While the phrase “boys will be boys” is more commonly spoken in a negative context, there is an element of truth in it.

God has created boys to be boys. There are certain core mental, emotional, social, and spiritual things that are part of boys growing up. In

today's world, it is challenging to know what those things are supposed to be. At the same time, it is just as challenging for parents to try and walk that journey with their sons.

In the book, *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys*, by Stephen James and David Thomas, counselors take on boyhood with a Godly depth and wisdom that few books genuinely do. *Wild Things* takes you on that journey using three perspectives:

- *social and physical development*
- *mental & neurological development*
- *emotional and spiritual development*

This book is well-written and comprehensive. As parents read each section, they give the boys tools they need to help process each developmental stage, while they also prepare parents.

Part 1: The Way of a Boy

The book is broken down into three sections with the first section including the first five chapters. The chapters cover the five developmental stages for a boy.

- *The Explorer (ages 2-4)*
- *The Lover (ages 5-8)*
- *The Individual (ages 9-12)*
- *The Wanderer (ages 13-17)*
- *The Warrior (ages 18-22)*

The final two chapters in this section are the most helpful for parents of older boys. While developmental stages are flexible and fluid, these chapters allow parents to see the key milestones during the later years of boyhood into young manhood.

These milestones are essential because they lay out a path for the final years of preparation towards adulthood. The book provides helpful practices to guide parents on how to walk beside the "way of a boy."

Part 2: The Mind of a Boy

The second section of the book, *The Mind of a Boy*, includes four chapters and is an outstanding "middle ground" for the book bridging the social development stages across to the emotional/spiritual stages.

These chapters are extremely resourceful because they give parents a concise understanding of a young man's neurology, learning styles, changing processing, and even general, mental struggles.

All four chapters are a necessary read for parents of boys at any age, but especially those parents of teenagers because of the changes that occur during adolescence. Parents will not only be given information but will once again be provided with practical hints and help for success.

Part 3: The Heart of a Boy

The third section of the book, *The Heart of a Boy*, takes an honest look at boys emotionally, morally, and spiritually. While teen boys are "wild things," they all need their heart to be nurtured for them to become the men God has created them to be.

Moms will love chapter 11, as the authors lay out a beautiful picture of the importance of a mom's involvement in her son's life even during the later years of boyhood.

Dad will be inspired by Chapter 12. Dads will find these pages challenging and inspiring as they are given an honest picture of a Godly, healthy, Father-Son connection through the years.

The third section closes out the book by offering parents thoughts on the value of creating "rites of passage" through special moments, especially heading into manhood.

Conclusion

The book concludes with the section “Hot Topics” where they cover subjects like:

- *discipline*
- *screen time*
- *masturbation*
- *pornography*
- *abuse*

The authors address each item with Godly wisdom and grace. This addition is an excellent way to end an already exceptional book.

Overall, *Wild Things*, is a must-read for parents of boys of any age, but parents with teen boys around the house will find it extremely helpful. It has indeed become a guidebook to Christian moms and dads for many years.

-Dan Istvanik

**Disclaimer: Ministry to Parents' book reviews are often books published in the past six months up to a year. But occasionally we find a book that continues to help parents time and time again. Although the book's publication date is 2009, it still has excellent clarity and relevant text. We asked Dan to review this book, so parents can continue to nurture the heart of their boys.*