



Putting out Fires with Prayer

Before he could run and get the hose, the wind caught the dry leaves and the fire raced through the underbrush into the dense woods near the house. Ethan helped his mom burn leaves and trash several times before and didn't think it would be any big deal to burn this small pile trash on his own.

The fire trucks arrived within minutes, but the flames had already consumed about an acre of underbrush and were threatening the lush pine trees on our rural Arkansas property.

Fortunately, within a couple of hours the firemen had put out the flames and everything was under control. After rolling up their hoses the fire trucks left. Their work was done, but the hard labor for Ethan was just beginning. Over the next several hours, Harvey had him carrying buckets of water to soak down all the smoldering logs and hot spots eliminating every possibility of reigniting flames. Trudging back and forth through the wet, black soot until every last ember was doused, an exhausted thirteen-year-old learned a valuable lesson about the danger of fire and how quickly it can get away from your control.

Though the fire started innocently enough, Ethan did not have the experience to recognize the dangerously dry and windy conditions for burning, or how close he was to disaster. Without his grandfather's quick action to enlist the professional efforts of the fire department, Ethan could have been badly hurt, his house could have burned down and our beautiful wooded acreage would have been lost.

Though Ethan's was a literal fire, our teenagers innocently start fires every day of a different sort. These are fires ignited by choices and fanned out of control by the winds of influence?from friends, music, computers, school, etc., resulting in scorched attitudes and behaviors.

Parenting teens is a full time job, but what if you aren't a full time parent? What if your fifteen-year-old daughter lives with her mom in another town and you know she has a bit too much freedom? This is the reality for many parents in stepfamilies. I might not be able to control what goes on in my ex-husband's



home or what my teenager is looking at on a computer when they are out of my sight, but God can.

We love our kids, and would do anything to protect them. My husband knew Ethan's fire was more than he could handle on his own so he called on the one he knew was able to help in time of need. When we cannot be the influence we'd like to be, or if our teen just turns off our advice, we can call upon the Lord. He comes fully equipped and ready to do battle on our behalf, and He has given us everything we need to win the victory. Consider these powerful words from Ephesians 6: 16.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The passage goes on to encourage us to pray. Instead of being tempted to react to our teenage fires by attacking people, their friends or our ex, or focus attention on other sources of influence like cell phones, computers or music, (though we might need to address these), we should also recognize the true source of influence, Satan, and fight him appropriately?in prayer. The fervent prayer of a believing Christian unleashes an almighty loving God who can easily douse any raging fire.