

WILD THINGS: THE ART OF NURTURING BOYS

BOOK REVIEW

KIDS EDITION



Wild Things

The Art of Nurturing Boys

By David Thomas
& Stephen James

Book Review by
Dan Istvanik

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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. In a world that often tries to soften masculinity or blur the lines of the developmental stages of boyhood, this book will continually be a guidebook for parents of young boys.

Raising boys is not an easy task, for they are wild things. They go from the toddler stage, exploring their world through touch and taste, into the young adult years as warriors taking on their world. They become

boys to men before our very eyes.

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 first three chapters help parents of young boys define what is “normal” in their growing, young son. While developmental stages are flexible and fluid, these chapters allow parents to see the key milestones during the childhood and adolescent years.

These milestones are essential because they lay out a path for the coming adolescent and young adult years. 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 boy’s neurology, learning styles, changing processing, and general struggles.

All four chapters are a necessary read for parents of boys at any age, but especially those parents of elementary and tween boys. 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 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 security and emotional development, through the vital relationship with a mom. Dads get their chance for some helpful inspiration in 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, and abuse. The authors speak to each item with Godly wisdom and grace.

Overall, Wild Things, is a must-read for parents of boys of any age, but parents with young guys 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. their world through touch and taste, into the young adult years as warriors taking on their world. They become boys to men before our very eyes.