

Do Hard Things

A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations

By Alex & Brett Harris

CHAPTER ONE

Most People Don't...

A Different Kind of Teen Book

Most people don't expect you to understand what we're going to tell you in this book. And even if you understand, they don't expect you to care. And even if you care, they don't expect you to do anything about it. And even if you do something about it, they don't expect it to last.

Well, we do.

This is a different kind of teen book. Check online or walk through your local bookstore. You'll find plenty of books written by fortysomethings who, *like*, *totally understand what it's like being a teenager*. You'll find a lot of cheap, throwaway books for teens, because young people today aren't supposed to care much about books, or see any reason to keep them around. And you'll find a wide selection of books where you never have to read anything twice--because it's been dumbed down. *Like, just for you*.

What you're holding in your hands right now is a challenging, hardcover book *for* teens *by* two teens who believe our generation is ready for a change. Ready for something that doesn't promise a whole new life if you'll just buy the right pair of jeans or use the right kind of deodorant. We believe our generation is ready to rethink what teens are capable of doing and becoming. And we've noticed that once wrong ideas are debunked and cleared away, our generation is quick to choose a better way, even if it's also more difficult.

We're nineteen-year-old twin brothers, born and raised in Oregon, taught at home by our parents, and striving to follow Christ as best we can. We've made more than our share of mistakes. And although we don't think "average teenagers" exist, there is nothing all that extraordinary about us personally.

Still, we've had some extraordinary experiences. At age sixteen we interned at the Supreme Court of Alabama. At seventeen, we served as grassroots directors for four statewide political campaigns. At eighteen, we authored the most popular Christian teen blog on the web. We've been able to speak to thousands of teens and their parents at conferences in the United States and internationally, and to reach millions online. But if our teen years have been different than most, it's not because we are somehow better than other teens, but because we've been motivated by a simple but very big idea. It's an idea you're going to encounter for yourself in the pages ahead.

We've seen this idea transform "average" teenagers into world-changers able to accomplish incredible things. And they started by simply being willing to break the mold of what society thinks teens are capable of.

So even though the story starts with us, this book is really not about us, and we would never want it to be. It's about something God is doing in the hearts and minds of our generation. It's about an idea. It's about rebelling against low expectations. It's about a movement that is changing the attitudes and actions of teens around the world. And we want you to be part of it.

This book invites you to explore some radical questions:

- Is it possible that even though teens today have more freedom than any other generation in history, we're actually missing out on some of the best years of our lives?
- Is it possible that what our culture says about the purpose and potential of the teen years is a lie, and that we are its victims?
- Is it possible that our teen years give us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for huge accomplishments--as individuals and as a generation?
- And finally, what would our lives look like if we set out on a different path entirely--a path that required more effort but promised a lot more reward?

We describe that alternative path with three simple words: "do hard things."

If you're like most people, your first reaction to the phrase "do hard things" runs along the lines of, "Hard? Uh, oh. Guys, I just remembered that I'm supposed to be somewhere else. Like, right now."

We understand this reaction. It reminds us of a story we like to tell about a group of monks.

On the outskirts of a small town in Germany is the imaginary abbey of Dundelhoff. This small stone monastery is home to a particularly strict sect of Dundress Monks who have each vowed to live a life of continual self-denial and discomfort.

Instead of wearing comfy t-shirts and well-worn jeans like most people, these monks wear either itchy shirts made from goat hair or chain mail worn directly over bare skin. Instead of a soft mattress, pillows, and warm blankets, they sleep on the cold stone floors of the abbey. You might have read somewhere that monks are fabulous cooks? Well, not these monks. They eat colorless, tasteless sludge--once a day. They drink only lukewarm water.

We could go on, but you get the picture. No matter what decision they face, Dundress Monks will always choose the more difficult option, the one that provides the least physical comfort, holds the least appeal, offers the least fun. Why? Because they believe that the more miserable they are, the holier they are; and the holier they are, the happier God is.

So these miserable monks must be poster boys for "do hard things." Right?

Wrong!

We're not plotting to make your life miserable. We're not recommending that you do any and every difficult thing. For example, we're not telling you to rob a bank, jump off a cliff, climb Half Dome with your bare hands, or stand on your head for 24 hours straight. We're not telling you to do pointless hard things just because they are hard.

And if you're a Christian, we're certainly not telling you that if you work harder or make yourself uncomfortable on purpose, God will love you more. He will never--could never--love you any more than He does right now.

So that's what we're not doing. What we *are* doing is challenging you to grab hold of a more exciting option for your teen years than the one portrayed as normal in society today. This option has somehow gotten lost in our culture, and most people don't even know it. In the pages ahead, you're going to meet young people just like you who have rediscovered this better way--a way to reach higher, dream bigger, grow stronger, love and honor God, live with more joy--and quit wasting their lives.

In *Do Hard Things*, we not only say there is a better way to do the teen years, we show you how we and thousands of other teens are doing it right now, and how you can as well.

[Excerpt taken from Do Hard Things Manuscript - not final]