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“GIRL WORLD” UNCOVERED: A REVIEW OF GINNY OLSON’S *TEENAGE GIRLS*

By Ashley Pikel

It has been said that when God closes a door, he always opens a window. When the adolescent girl in your life slams her door, be thankful that Ginny Olson’s *Teenage Girls* is your window into the tumultuous but ultimately triumphant years of female adolescent development. Olson’s *Teenage Girls* is an invaluable help to parents and mentors of young women as well as to the young women themselves as they understand what is going on in their minds, bodies, social lives, and souls during this unique time of change. While especially helpful to those in youth ministry, *Teenage Girls* should be read by anyone with an interest in mentoring young women.



Teenage Girls by
Ginny Olson. Published
by Zondervan/Youth
Specialties (2006).
240 pages

Each chapter gives specific attention to teenage girls in the areas of identity, body image, self-injury, dating, sex, family, friendship, and emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development. The pages are filled with first-hand research on adolescents, and Olson adds margin notes with quotes, anecdotes, research, and questions and answers from youth. Most interesting are the voices heard from male youth pastors and counselors, revealing what they wish they had known about young women before going into ministry.

Every chapter also includes a specific application entitled “The Youth Worker’s Role.” Olson’s strategies and advice here are particularly insightful and creative, and will equip youth workers in beginning or continuing honest and empathetic mentoring relationships with adolescent girls. If applied, these ministry strategies have the potential to transform youth groups or individual girls by offering them safer and healthier mindsets as they grow with Christ and each other.

Unlike many of the Christian books available in our church culture today, Olson refrains from promoting the intellectually unexamined and unchallenged argument that “God wired you this way; therefore you must *be* this way, and if you’re not, you’re not a biblical image of womanhood.” Olson’s research is well-supported either by a reliable study or her real-life experiences with numerous teenage girls. Her twenty years of youth ministry leadership has provided a strong foundation of practical knowledge, which guides her as co-director of the Center for Youth Ministry Studies at North Park University and Theological Seminary. Refreshingly, Olson explains gender difference without undermining teen girls’ equality in image and role.

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<http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/E-Journal/2007/07autumn/07autumnbookreview.html>

Olson has done our “girl world” a great favor by writing this book. *Teenage Girls* equips us to participate in the lives of adolescent girls and assists them on their journey to reach their full potential as strong and confident women in Christ.



Ashley Pikel is a junior at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, where she is pursuing her degree in Christian Educational Ministries and Biblical Literature. Ashley, with a group students and faculty, founded a Taylor University CBE chapter on their campus last year with great success, and continue to educate the campus with the much-needed message of biblical equality. Ashley enjoys her job on campus as Christian Educational Ministries Department Assistant, talking with friends while chomping on taffy and chocolate, and dancing with her dormitory wing as they try out for Airband (a campus-wide lip-synching contest).

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