

"Will prove to be one of the most life-changing and
culture-changing books of this generation."

—RANDY ALCORN

A TEENAGE
REBELLION
AGAINST
LOW EXPECTATIONS

DO HARD THINGS

ALEX & BRETT
HARRIS

FOREWORD BY CHUCK NORRIS

Praise for
Do Hard Things

“Do Hard Things is an extraordinary book. In fact, I believe it will prove to be one of the most life-changing, family-changing, church-changing, and culture-changing books of this generation. I’d love for every teenager to read this book, but I’m just as eager for every parent, church leader, and educator to read it. If you do the hard thing of saying no to distractions and yes to this remarkable book, I guarantee you’ll be richly rewarded.”

—RANDY ALCORN, best-selling author of *Heaven* and *The Treasure Principle*

“Do Hard Things is easy to read, but it will challenge you to the core. It is inspiring, insightful, and practical. Parents, this book will get your teens into the right kind of trouble—the kind that comes when they dream, take risks for God, and dare to flout the status quo. Put it in their hands. Read it yourself. It’s never too late to do hard things.”

—JOSHUA HARRIS, pastor, author, and older brother

“This book is a refreshing wake-up call to our generation. We can do hard things and give ourselves to something huge for the kingdom of God!”

—LEELAND MOORING, Grammy-nominated recording artist

“This book will create a distinct distaste in your soul for living an easy and comfortable life. I pray that God will use this book to inspire many young people (and old alike!) to do hard things by God’s grace for the glory of His name.”

—C. J. MAHANEY, Sovereign Grace Ministries, author of *Living the Cross-Centered Life* and *Humility: True Greatness*

“Alex and Brett Harris are two extraordinary young men with a revolutionary message. In a culture where laziness and ease is often the order of the day for teenagers, *Do Hard Things* presents a radical and provocative alternative. I heartily recommend this book.”

—R. ALBERT MOHLER JR., president of Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

“Alex and Brett capture the passion and potential of our generation perfectly in this book. In *Do Hard Things*, they encourage us to go above and beyond the status quo in everything from schoolwork to serving the poor. This is a truly unique and sorely needed book.”

—ZACH HUNTER, abolitionist and author of *Be the Change*,
age 16

“*Do Hard Things* is exactly the message our generation needs to hear. This book challenges us to stop and recall the things God has put in our hearts to do and take time to do them *now*. Let’s address the low expectations and call our generation to rise up and see what the Lord can do when we do hard things.”

—BARLOWGIRL, recording artist

“This is an important book. And not just for those wanting to launch successfully into adulthood, but also for discontent twenty- and thirty-somethings who long to be catapulted into significance. The propositions in this book are neither wishful thinking about what could be nor a wistful reflection on how things used to be. The Harris brothers demonstrate with their

lives and through the examples of countercultural ‘dream-big’ teens around the world that young adults can achieve great things and live rich, intentional, excellent, and meaningful lives.”

—TED SLATER, editor of *Boundless*, Focus on the Family

“Alex and Brett Harris are leading the way for the fight to save their generation, and in *Do Hard Things* they are beckoning others to join them. I pray that teenagers will listen to their cry and join them on the front lines.”

—RON LUCE, founder of Teen Mania Ministries and author of *Battle Cry for a Generation*

“If you are a young person who wants to affect this world for Jesus Christ, read this book! I have watched Alex and Brett take on new and daunting endeavors with resolve and determination and, as a result, mature and develop into leaders for this generation and an example for *all* generations of reaching to fulfill your full potential in and for Christ.”

—JUSTICE TOM PARKER, Alabama Supreme Court

“Alex and Brett are the real deal, and *Do Hard Things* is a real wake-up call, not just for young people, but for all God’s people. I can’t recommend it highly enough.”

—SHANNON ETHRIDGE, best-selling author of *Every Young Woman’s Battle* and *Completely His*

“Add years to your life! This book is a how-to guide for recovering the years thirteen to nineteen. It’s a good read—the trap of low expectations, the danger of leisure, surprising

stories—this is stirring stuff! *Do Hard Things* is a winning combination of optimism and challenge.”

—MARK DEVER, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church
and founder of 9Marks.org

“*Do Hard Things* is the textbook for anyone who works with teens; it’s a philosophical and foundational must-read.”

—TIMOTHY ELDRED, executive director of Christian
Endeavor International

“As a university professor, I am well aware of the Gen Y propensity to demand more recognition for less effort and to associate self-esteem with mere being rather than for actual accomplishment. *Do Hard Things* is a call to teenagers everywhere to channel their energy into world-changing activity with eternal significance. I highly recommend it.”

—DR. ALEX CHEDIAK, associate professor of engineering at
California Baptist University and author of *With One Voice*

“Our generation is filled with apathetic, complacent, and immature wimps. By contrast, Brett and Alex are leaders in our generation, and their message is that you can be too.”

—HANS ZEIGER, author of *Reagan’s Children* and *Get Off My Honor*

**To read endorsements from real teens, parents,
and youth workers, visit TheRebellion.com**

DO HARD THINGS

A TEENAGE
REBELLION
AGAINST
LOW EXPECTATIONS

DOWNHARD THINGS

ALEX & BRETT
HARRIS



MULTNOMAH
BOOKS

DO HARD THINGS

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*To our parents, Gregg and Sono Harris.
This book is the message of your lives.
Our triumph is your triumph. We love you.*

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FOREWORD

BY CHUCK NORRIS

As a young man, I discovered the power of doing hard things. Abject poverty, a father's alcoholism and desertion of our family, and my own shyness were a few of the obstacles I faced and overcame growing up. My mother always told me, "God has a plan for your life." And she's right. Each of us is called to reach for greatness. There really is a hero in all of us. We've all been designed by God to be a blessing to many—a hero to some.

But there's only one way to get there—it's described by the title of this book: *Do Hard Things*.

Today we live in a culture that promotes comfort, not challenges. Everything is about finding ways to escape hardship, avoid pain, and dodge duty. In the past, young people were expected to make significant contributions to society. Today, our culture expects very little from teens—not much more than staying in school and doing a few chores. A sad consequence of such low expectations is that life-changing lessons go unlearned.

To whom can we turn to motivate a new generation of giants? I've found the answer. Alex and Brett Harris and their book, *Do Hard Things*.

I know the twins personally and can vouch for their integrity and wisdom. I've seen their passion to raise up a new generation of tough-spirited young people. They are amazing young men, uniquely qualified to inspire others to reach for great things.

One of my life's principles is to develop myself to the maximum of my potential in all ways and to help others do the same. Brett and Alex come straight from the same mold, but with an even greater potential to reach young people around the world.

Their book is far more than a typical how-to book. From an insightful historical overview of the teen years to personal plans for helping teens hurdle tough obstacles, the authors sound a battle cry to raise the cultural bar on teenage potential and to challenge young people to reach for their God-given best.

Do Hard Things will help recruit, develop, and deploy a new generation of young culture warriors. With God's help, the book you're holding will usher in an era in which it can once again be said of our youth, "I write to you, *young men*, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14).

Start reading now. Then do hard things!

—Chuck Norris

www.chucknorris.com

PART 1

**RETHINKING THE
TEEN YEARS**

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 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 the message is dumbed-down. Like, just for you.

What you're holding in your hands right now is a challenging book *for* teens *by* 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 Alabama Supreme Court. At seventeen, we served as grass-roots 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're 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 really isn't 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. Yep, 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 cold chain mail worn directly over bare skin. Instead of soft mattresses, 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 only drink lukewarm water.

We could go on, but you get the picture. No matter what decision they face, Dundress monks 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 twenty-four hours straight. We are not telling you to do pointless (or stupid) hard things just because they’re 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.

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