



Book Review

The Privilege of Youth

By Dave Pelzer

This book is described as “A Teenager’s story of longing for acceptance and friendship”. “The Privilege of Youth” covers the author’s teen years in foster care following severe abuse as a child. Dave Pelzer is also the author of “A Child Called It”, “The Lost Boy”, and “A Man Named Dave” which are books covering his experience as an abused child and the challenges and triumphs of his life.

I believe that anyone who has contact with a child that has been abused or neglected can benefit from reading this book. It can also give insight to any parent of teenagers. “The Privilege of Youth” allows the reader to see the damage to self esteem and confidence that neglect and abuse can have on a person. Dave struggles just to survive emotionally and socially, but has a survival instinct that is well beyond his years. He lacks the social skills to develop friendships, and struggles to find ways to fit into the teenage world.

This book focuses on his moving to a foster home in a typical suburban “all-American” neighborhood and finding himself connecting with a couple of boys. He cannot believe that he actually has friends and they appreciate him and want to be with him. Another positive influence came from a group of neighborhood leaders that took him under their wing. They set a goal to see that Dave succeeded in life and gave him the family that he never had. In this experience, he finds the true meaning of love and acceptance. Dave also has two neighborhood men that treat him as their son and give him the guidance and discipline that every teen needs. This love and direction, along with finally finding somewhere that he feels he actually belongs, transforms Dave’s life into a positive fruitful journey.

Dave has the strength to overcome unimaginable challenges. This inspirational book gives us the knowledge that if a child and teen like Dave Pelzer can overcome the horrible conditions that he had to endure that we certainly can overcome any challenges that come our way.

I think that any adoptive or foster family who has a child that has lived through neglect and abuse can benefit from reading this book. It gives you the opportunity to see through the child’s eyes. It also gives a caregiver the insight to see how doing little things for someone can be major to the child that has lacked emotional and physical nurturing. I believe “The Privilege of Youth” also allows you to see how things that are common sense to most people can be foreign to someone who was not reared in a “traditional” home.

In closing, I believe this book can instill compassion, understanding, and insight in anyone reading it. It will help you become more understanding of the world which so many of our youth have lived through. Dave’s journey is summed up by a quote from the book: “...one doesn’t have to go off to some foreign country armed with guns and grenades to fight and overcome one’s war”. Dave Pelzer fought and won his own war to survive as a child and become a fruitful adult.

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