



## **Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World**

*Johann Christoph Arnold*

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# **Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World**

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## **Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World** Johann Christoph Arnold

There's hope for childhood. Despite a perfect storm of hostile forces that are robbing children of a healthy childhood, courageous parents and teachers who know what's best for children are turning the tide. Johann Christoph Arnold, whose books on education, parenting, and relationships have helped more than a million readers through life's challenges, draws on the stories and voices of parents and educators on the ground, and a wealth of personal experience. He surveys the drastic changes in the lives of children, but also the groundswell of grassroots advocacy and action that he believes will lead to the triumph of common sense and time-tested wisdom. Arnold takes on technology, standardized testing, overstimulation, academic pressure, marketing to children, over-diagnosis and much more, calling on everyone who loves children to combat these threats to childhood and find creative ways to help children flourish. Every parent, teacher, and childcare provider has the power to make a difference, by giving children time to play, access to nature, and personal attention, and most of all, by defending their right to remain children."

## **Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World Details**

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Johann Christoph Arnold**

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## **From Reader Review Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World for online ebook**

### **Garrettfamily says**

As an African American family, it is a wonderful experience to read and learn from Their Name is Today. Pastor Arnold has been married for nearly 50 years, has 8 children, over 40 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild and authored numerous books. I believe his experience and wisdom makes him an authority in matters concerning family and children. This book is filled with great advice for everyone. Their Name is Today teaches parents that children need stability, structure, patience and love. Reading this book has helped me remember the most powerful antidote to the ills of today is to love. The bible tells us this in 1Corinthians 13:13; "...these three remain, faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

God demonstrated the ultimate act of love, in that he sacrificed Jesus Christ for the redemption of humanity - we must be willing to sacrifice for our children. Providing the latest gadgets is no substitution for time spent with them. This book can show us how to put our intentions into practice and become the guardians we were designed to be. Their Name is Today is beautifully written and offers a guide to becoming better parents. Pastor Arnold's philosophy on family and child rearing is one that should be shared with the world. I believe this book should be in every household, school and place of worship.

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### **Diana Montgomery says**

Their Name is Today  
By: Johann Christoph Arnold

I thought this book was really good. My kids are grown now but I do have grandchildren. Are we listening to our children? We need to be we need to have a open mind. Sometimes they have good ideals. Not that they rule over us as parents but that we actually listen to show them we value their opinion. Children are quick to anger but on the same note they forgive very easily. So many things different today in raising kids. Kids have to know so much now just to enter school. We was taught those things in school. Our kids are growing up way to fast they don't even have time to be a child. The world is full of technology and to much of this is bad for the kids. This is really a good book. Get it and check out what Johann has to say about it and many other things. I believe as he does we are pushing our kids to fast. With the world of electronics and video games. We need to rethink this. This is not good for the future children. I can already see less communication. I like what he had to say.

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### **Karen Wiser says**

Their Name Is Today by Johann Christoph Arnold is a great book calling all parents to wake up and take a stand for their children.....NOW...while it is still today!!

Reading this work highlights the daily challenges that parents are faced with in the increasingly electronic

and over stimulating culture in which we live. The author does not stop with merely informing us of the obstacles we face, but he also outlines significant and tangible solutions to equip the reader with a plan of action.

Their Name Is Today by Johann Christoph Arnold is a call to reclaim our role as parents and step up to meet the true needs of our children in an ever changing, increasingly fast paced world, and inherently materialistic culture. The book is not for the faint hearted as it illuminates a lot of the monstrous challenges that we face as parents in our attempt to raise well balanced, God fearing, respectful, productive adults in western civilization today.

The author, Johann Christoph Arnold is a senior pastor of the Bruderhof, described as a Christian community. His esteem for children and family is heartwarming and champions a desire within the reader's heart to make a genuine effort to clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses within each of our children and respond appropriately.

The author has much to say about the way in which we should guide our children including ample time for them to be a child through play and plenty of outdoor nature exploration, as this is truly how they learn problem solving skills that will take them into adulthood. Arnold also emphasizes the extreme importance of authentic human interactions and the danger of missing these opportunities due to time lost in electronic screens.

There is much to learn within the pages of this book. The urgency that is felt as one reads this text is contagious and presents the reader with the simple truth that our children really are only children for a short time, therefore, we cannot afford to miss the opportunity to give them the best of ourselves in a devoted manner, while it is still today. Arnold reminds us that culture is constantly undercutting our job at every turn, but we must stand firm in our convictions.

There is a spirit of love and compassion sprinkled with reverence from beginning to end in this book. Arnold's sincerity is clear and his mission is undeniable. The message is a cry to put away our electronics; reprioritize our schedules to personally lead our children; be role models without hypocrisy; and to live with the constant reminder that "parenting is a privilege and not a problem!" Do not delay in getting this book. You will be a wiser parent for having read it!

Thank you to Plough Publishing House for this review copy of Their Name Is Today by Johann Christoph Arnold. The opinions within this review are my own. I was honored to have read this book, and feel that I have been given a gentle reminder of the importance of the job called, "parenting".

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### **Dominic says**

Johann Christoph Arnold's book, which was given to parents at my son's day care facility, is shamelessly unscientific in its approach, but with something that is mostly about *the heart* and about trusting our own instincts about how to best parent and teach anyway, I found this an interesting and overall powerful argument. Arnold's love for children, both the very young and the teenagers I work with every day, bursts off these pages. No reader will agree with everything here—for every parent who loves his or her children deeply, I believe, will parent a little different, each in their own way—but everything here will give the reader pause.

We need to champion children a lot more in our culture than we currently do. This is one of the reasons I work with young writers and poets. It is their voices that we need to desperately listen to. There is so much we could learn if we slow down our busy lives and listen. And there is a ton to think about in this text. I feel glad to have read it, as both a parent and as a teacher.

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### **Shriya says**

I absolutely adore this book I felt an instant connection when reading every chapter. Extremely clear, consistent with beautiful quotes per opening chapter.

Highly recommend to early years practitioners, parents, adults, those studying or curious about childhood and definitely parents to be in the future.

I am a student and a trainee early years practitioner. This is sent from heaven.

Just like to add this book does not "instruct" you in anyway to treat a child differently it's full of warmth loving experiences.

My favourite book of 2014!

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### **Bobbetylou says**

Why am I reading a book on children? Because as a father of four sons and grandfather of 12 they are a big part of my life. And because I care about not only my own circle of children, but like the author, about all children.

Author Johann Christoph Arnold, senior pastor of the Bruderhof, and his wife Verena have eight children, forty-four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Outstanding credentials or what?!

It is probably the voice of the pastor and counselor that comes through strongest in the book. It is obviously written with much experience and love of children.

The opening sentence of chapter one sets the tone, "The cry of a newborn baby catches at the heart. It says, 'Love me. Help me. Protect me.' But . . . we need children more than they need us." The message of the ten chapters is urgent, as the title suggests, from a poem by Gabriela Mistral:

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults,  
but our worst crime is abandoning the children,  
neglecting the fountain of life.

Many things can wait. Children cannot.  
Right now their bones are being formed,  
their blood is being made,  
and their senses of being developed.  
To them we cannot answer, 'Tomorrow.'  
Their name is today."

The book is full of wisdom, at once ancient, modern, forward- and backward-looking, timeless and eternal.

For me the best chapters, and the most urgent, are chapter 3, "Great Expectations" about the pressures to succeed, and chapter 4, "Screening out" about the impact of technology on children.

A highlight of the book is the well-chosen quotations at the beginning of each chapter. And the final two pages of Resources point the reader to organizations that are working on behalf of children.

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### **Thomas Hogan says**

Their Name Is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World should be read by everyone, from young parents to the aunts, uncles, grandparents, teachers and administrators and other community members to our elected officials and appointed policy makers that help raise, nurture and educate children. All are strongly encouraged to consider and discuss the many very important themes Johann Christoph Arnold's latest book highlights with compassion, understanding and love.

For countless children over many decades the American schoolhouse has been an oasis in a sea of despair. It has been and should continue to be a ladder from poverty to success. Arnold reminds us, "Children are our national treasure." This book should be a wakeup call for us all.

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### **Aban (Aby) says**

There is so much that is really important in this book but, before I begin, I would like to address an issue with which I DON'T agree. The author feels that computers should not be part of a child's life. He believes they make us lazy, giving the example of his son producing a report on the computer within hours that would have taken him months to write, stating that his son's report lacked the element of verification or truth. If that were the case, his son's report should have been rejected! Whether using books or a computer for information, it's the individual's responsibility to verify the accuracy of the information. The author asks how curious children will be if they learn to Google first and ask questions later. My response would be that one has to be curious FIRST in order to Google about any topic! He states that "the accessibility of screen devices has caused a significant decline in children's resilience, self-determination, desire for hard work, and a sense of pride in achievement." (P48) While there may well be a decline in the factors mentioned in SOME children, this cannot be attributed to computers, etc. These are merely tools, just as pens, paper, and books are tools. It is up to the individual to make meaning from them. Last, and worst of all, the author feels that electronic devices have lead to children being unable to communicate with a real person; they have not had the opportunity to learn human interaction (P49). This might happen in the extremely rare case, and should be brought to the attention of Children's Services for neglect! This is certainly not true of children in general.

Let me turn to what is relevant and important in this book, and that is true of 99% of what the author has to say. He talks about the secret of true parenthood being 'unconditional love' (p127) What 'children really want and need is time, attention, a listening ear, and an encouraging word.' 'Ultimately it is the love we give our children, and not the material things, that will remain with them for life'. (P71)

The author highlighted some of the core values that will help a child through life:  
- learning that 'no' means 'no'

- learning to listen and when to be quiet
- learning to wait patiently
- learning to be responsible in work, play, relationships with others, care of equipment and clothing

He emphasized:

- the need for 'white space': time spent alone in unstructured activities which act as a lull from children's lives which are so often overwhelmed by entertainment, material goods, high pressure academics. (P52).
- time spent outdoors in nature
- the importance of family meals at the end of the day, giving the family a chance to get together and regroup
- learning that 'less is more' when it comes to toys and material possessions
- the importance of gratitude
- the need for children to make mistakes and to misbehave on occasion
- the need for freedom (not licence to do whatever's they want) and with freedom to learn responsibility

Most importantly of all, the author advised parents to look at their OWN behaviour:

- P63 he writes: 'most children in developed regions like Western Europe and the United States have far more than they need. We are raising a generation of what can only be called spoiled brats.' 'Spoiled children are often the product of spoiled parents who insist on getting their way and whose lives are structured around the illusion that instant gratification brings happiness.' Hmm! Something to think about!
- He accuses adults of spending time on their smart phones, when they are with their children. He advocates (p60) 'Let's put our smart phones away . . .

Let's shut off the power, take our child by the hand, and show them that the real world is a fascinating place.' YES!

- He addresses the issue of violence in our society and quotes Barbara Kingsolver's letter on the subject (p80). The letter is well worth reading!

I'd like to end by quoting the author's beautiful words on page 145: 'Whether or not we believe in a loving God, we can all show love and respect towards the children in our care. This will in turn awaken their own inborn sense of reverence - both for themselves as unique individuals, and for others."

This is a significant book: it raises awareness of pitfalls in our society today and acts offers directions for caring parents who want the best for their children. However, I must warn you, it is not a self-help book which offers step-by-step instructions on achieving one's goals.

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### **Laura Knoerr says**

This is a remarkable book! Pastor Arnold's words emanate wisdom and commonsense. His book reminds us of how we, each one of us, have been and continue to be responsible for the future that lies in the hands of children of today. It is an urgent call to stop and re-evaluate - right now - what we as a society are doing to our children. We all need to make changes, personally and as a society, TODAY, as the title implies. And, Pastor Arnold provides thought-provoking answers.

One of the best things about this book is that, although it is written by a Christian pastor, it transcends religious barriers. Its message is for everyone, as we all have a stake in this. I couldn't put it down until I had finished, and I want to buy copies to give to everyone I know.

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## **Becca Merchant says**

Our children are our today as well as our future forever! I loved this book. I am a single mother of three, and I have been teaching them and raising them the best that I can with morals and values passed to me from my own parents. I have been struggling during this time to keep up with modern technologies knowing full well that they are not going anywhere, yet keeping in mind that family times that include activities outdoors, sports, hiking, exploring geo caching, just getting dirty and playing are at the root of why my children have been so successful in their schooling and in the creation of their own personalities and characters they continue to build. This book called me out on a few things that I will work on as ways to parent my children because it fits in with what I want to pass on. I have also been lucky enough to request a shipment to share with co-workers and staff in my place of employment where we work with individuals in need. Most of our population is families and their children. I am hoping that by instilling this word in those I work with, they will be able to take some of what they read and learn and pass to those families and children with whom they have direct contact. Thank you for the opportunity and I hope others will give this book a chance to help us get to the root of our problems with parenting and why our children today deserve nothing but the best!

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## **Julius McCarter says**

Johann Christoph Arnold poses some pointed questions about the hows and whys of raising children in our culture in his *Their Name is Today: Reclaiming Childhood in a Hostile World* (Plough 2014).

In *Their Name is Today*, Arnold, a pastor of the Bunderhof, writes with a pointed prophetic voice and a pastoral heart to challenge the way we educate and raise our children. He reviews sweeping changes in the way our society treats children. But he also highlights the stories of dedicated parents and educators who are finding creative ways to give children the time and space they need to grow.

The book takes its title from a Nobel Laureate's, Gabriela Mistral, poem that appears in the first pages: "Many things can wait. Children cannot ... Their name is today". And the book highlights so many of our children's challenges today: Technology, standardized testing, overstimulation, academic pressure, marketing to children, over-diagnosis and much more.

And it's a clarion call for all who love and care for and respect children -- parents, teachers, and pastors, especially. We all have the power to transform one another's life -- including our children! -- if we practice that loving care and respect. Give today's children time to play, Arnold proclaims. Give them access to nature. Give them a patient discipline that rejects fear and corporeal punishment. And he blends that pastoral advice from the wisdom of some of the wisest among us -- great thinkers as well as ordinary people.

I know of no greater book for parents, teachers and churches that deals with the very intentional and faithful task and gift of raising children. I was hanging on every word, because Arnold, in around 160 pages, really has captured the essence of what it means to reclaim childhood in a hostile world.

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I received a free copy of this book from Plough Publishing House in exchange for my honest review here.

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## **Nancy says**

### Our Future is in the Children

Children are our most precious possessions, but in today's busy world sometimes we forget. This is a wonderful book for parents, grandparents, teachers, and anyone who loves children – the key word here is loves. Arnold makes the point over and over in his chapters. Children need love and respect. They want to be seen as people. They want to love you back.

The book is filled with excellent advice about limiting screen time, trying to escape the commercialism of our culture, and dealing with difficult children. In all the chapters, the theme is the same. If you love your children, you'll teach them discipline and give them a moral compass. Loving your child doesn't mean giving in or giving everything he or she wants. Being a parent isn't easy. We're not our children's playmates, although playing with our children is a wonderful thing to do. We are the adults. The children need our strength. It must be very frightening for a young child to think he's the one in charge. If parents don't give them limits with love, they will be at sea.

I highly recommend this book. If you're doing the things Arnold suggests: limiting your child's television and tablet time, giving but in limited quantities, and taking time to be with your child. You're doing it right, and you'll feel reassured. You may even find some additional ways to help your child. If you aren't doing any of the things Arnold suggests, there is always a place to start. Take some time to just be with your child.

I reviewed this book for Handlebar Publishing.

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## **Greenleaf says**

This book is awful for many reasons, a few of which I will list here.

1. It makes very black and white, broad generalisations about many complex topics including technology usage, video games and ADHD. Eg. It argues that ADHD is made up entirely and can be cured by nature (true only when the child has been misdiagnosed; not true when the child actually has ADHD), that video games cause crimes like shootings (when in fact research indicates that children who play violent video games actually let out their frustration through them rather than on society; in any case the book does not differentiate between violent and non-violent video games).
2. It cites no scientific evidence for the strong statements it makes, and, like the example cited above, several of the claims the author makes have actually been found to be untrue, according to proper, unbiased research.
3. It is based on anecdotes from various people whose authority the author uses as if they are experts in their fields. Some of these people are friends of the author or bloggers etc. This is fine of course except that the author uses anecdotal evidence as if it is hard fact, with no room for the other side of the argument.
4. It is unrealistic, arguing that families should go TV-free and screen-free, as if the technological world we are not part of isn't here to stay. (How will children learn to monitor their own technology usage if they can't use screens as children? And what will they do when they need to work as adults but can't use computers?!) It argues this on the basis of children being more connected to 'real people' if they stop using screens, and

states untruths such as many children have autism because they haven't learned to interact with 'real people' thanks to technology.. Again, there is no evidence cited, and there is in fact no evidence that there is any real correlation between children with verbal difficulties and the rise of use of technology.. (Perhaps, instead, in homes where parents neglect their children the children end up using more computers etc.. And perhaps this isn't a bad thing as it actually increases how much they can communicate with other people, albeit using technology.)

I could go on but you get the picture..

I'm glad I got the book free, but unfortunately I can't get back the few hours that I spent reading it. Needless to say I don't recommend it, and I think that certain aspects of it could actually be quite damaging for some children.

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### **Amanda Mills says**

I was sent this book for free from the publisher as a part of library thing's early reviewer program.

#### **THE GOOD**

The good bits of his book are themes repeated throughout concerning:

\*the importance of unstructured play

\* the importance of hands on experience/trial and error, learning from mistakes

\*the need for good adult role models

\*childhood as a time that should be without the stress of overscheduling, achievement/safety obsessed parenting (say no to the tiger mom), or the stresses of an adult world

\*that medicating children should be used as last resort, as changes can be made to environment

\*testing/standards focused education making little room for addressing individual needs or time for free exploration.

I agree wholeheartedly.

BUT this good stuff was outweighed by:

#### **THE BAD**

\*Solutions the author suggests are in no way unique to those suggested in numerous magazines and books on the same subject.

\*Much like "Last child in the Woods" this author reminisces about and romanticizes a childhood that simply

isn't the reality of the average 21st century child or family.

\*Every chapter was filled to the brim with anecdote that the author then used to make generalizations.

\*He seemed to really be addressing a very specific audience, one that shared his world view and socioeconomic class.

\*Citations were often links to other people's opinion pieces, similarly themed books, or news articles about studies in some cases, non-definitive (correlation is not causation) or only slightly related to the topic.

That leads us to:

## THE REALLY UGLY

In an anecdote a mother talks about how her teen told her that "he is comfortable talking to people on the computer because he does not get bullied." She goes on to call what her son says was bullying as "awkward childhood moments" being "opportunity for growth." That maybe, just maybe, if he hadn't been online, he'd have better social skills.

Interesting anecdote. To my knowledge there is no study saying online communication causes problems with face to face social skills. The author certainly doesn't cite one.

I was bullied from elementary through high school. It didn't teach me social skills. Those "awkward childhood moments" of being spat on, pelted with rocks, and sexually harassed did teach me something. I learned fear, shame, and self-hate. Oh how it would have been nice to have the internet back then and to have been able to connect with people who understood.

## THEN

Arnold tries to say internet research where children have access to the libraries of the world is poor, and somehow not spending time in a limited resourced library creates lazy students.

While teaching how to find good resources is necessary, saying that internet research is limiting is preposterous.

For a fellow interested in solid research, he really drops the ball with this:

"Many children find themselves unable to communicate with a real person who requires a thoughtful verbal response. More and more children arrive at preschool with speech difficulties; some do not speak at all. Since this is a diagnosable trait in autism spectrum, how many children may be categorized as autistic when they have simply not had the opportunity to learn human interaction?"

So lets get this straight...

Technology=less social skills=autism?????

Even if he were right regarding technology and social skills (and he isn't) poor social skills does not equal

autism.

Autism is a neuro-developmental condition that research shows is present at birth and leads to significant differences in brain development especially in the first year. There is far more to it than merely communication or social skills issues and autism would not be diagnosed merely on speech delay.

Further autistics, because of difficulty (in varying degrees) with spoken face to face communication, benefit from having technology as alternate means of communication both online and in day to day life.

The author hasn't done his research. He encourages a common dangerous misconception that affects how persons on the spectrum are perceived and treated.

This book gets one star...its already in the recycle bin and filed in my mind under "ableist crap"

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### **Kim Prop says**

Heart of a Philanthropist would like to thank Johann Cristoph Arnold for providing us with a copy of his book in exchange for an honest review. This review was first seen on Heart of a Philanthropist's blog.

My son said to me the other day, "Mom, you are either on the computer or in bed." It struck a chord as I was already feeling a bit the same way myself. How much time do I as a parent spend on electronics and not with my child? How much time do my children spend on electronics and not with human interaction? How much time are we away at meetings? Or doing chores? Are these things as important as we believe they are?

Johann Christoph Arnold reminds us that the children of today are the adults of tomorrow. Do we want our grandchildren raised the way our children are being raised? How much 'education' is enough, and are we hurting our children by requiring them to learn so much more than previous generations? We are raising a society of people who do not communicate, and that is not good. However, Arnold does not condemn parents/caretakers in Their Name is Today, rather he encourages us to really adore our children and get to know them at their earliest ages.

We need to not worry so much about testing and if our children are at the level they are suppose to be. These things can actually hinder our children. Instead we need to be more like children- getting on the floor solving problems through play. However, children do need parents to teach them respect, morals, and how to live as adults. Don't be too busy to teach them the importance of them! By showing our children the value of family and the roles we should play, we will teach them how to be strong confident loving adults.

Read more at <http://www.heartofaphilanthropist.com...>

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