

# Content Guide

## *Standing Strong*

**Themes:** family relationships, choosing friends wisely, struggling against temptation, sacramentals, the Brown Scapular, vocational discernment, and learning to trust.

**Educational Value:** Student Study Guide, Parent Study Guide (with answers), and Discussion Guide available on the author's website. The author contacted the Franciscan Brothers of Peace in Saint Paul, MN, for advice when writing about Franciscan Brothers and the discernment retreat.

**Positive Messages:** Putting others' needs before one's own will never create an obstacle to God's will for one's life but just might help with discernment. Through perseverance, prayer, and the advice of others, it is possible to overcome temptation even after making huge mistakes or turning from a sinful lifestyle.

**Spiritual Messages:** With one character's encouragement to wear the Brown Scapular and another's resistance to it, the authentic teaching and purpose of the Brown Scapular unfolds. Characters learn to trust God with their present (facing temptation) and their future (vocation).

**Positive Role Models:** Both main characters, twin teen boys, provide excellent role models, one for rising above temptations and making real efforts to avoid sin, and the other for discerning a vocation.

**Violence/Gore:** A teen boy, angered to discover three teens hazed his younger brother (temporarily using crutches), goes after them and beats up one of them. Later he evaluates his actions, realizing he ignored the warnings of his conscience. Toward the story's end, the same teen, when falsely accused, does nothing to defend himself when another teen boy attacks him.

**Sexuality:** There is no graphic sexual content. A teen boy with a history of impure behavior struggles to maintain a chaste relationship with a new girlfriend who makes advances and doesn't realize he's not the same as he used to be.

**Language:** The main characters, twin teen boys, do not use bad language, though their old friends do. One twin struggles to overcome bad habits, including language. Bad language is indicated with phrases like, "spewing curses" and "cuss words slammed through his mind." No actual bad language is used.

**Drinking, Drugs & Smoking:** One storyline concerns remaining faithful to God when faced with temptations from the past. When old friends visit a main character, they bring beer and cigarettes. While these presented temptations in the past, the teen now struggles to figure out how to remedy the situation before his father discovers it.

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

The West family is not a perfect family. Years before the story takes place, Mrs. West passed away and Mr. West stopped trusting God. The effects of that are seen throughout the series, but because of the example of friends and the power of prayer, the West brothers grow in faith, one by one, over the series—and their father too, eventually returning to the practice of the Faith. The beauty of the Catholic faith comes to life in each of these stories.

**Rating:**

Moderate – Story includes subject matter for teens 14 plus.

**Rating Scale:**

Light- For all readers.

Moderate - Story includes subject matter for teens 14 plus

Advanced - Although not graphic in description, the subject matter is recommended for teens older than 15.