

Fathers & Daughters

By Al Felder

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1Cor. 11:3).

God has appointed the man to be the head of the family unit. In order for this role to be filled, good men are needed. In particular, strong fathers are needed to raise strong daughters. The importance of this relationship may often go unnoticed today, but the simple fact of the matter is that daughters need the strength, courage, intelligence, fearlessness, empathy, assertiveness, and self-confidence of their fathers. If we as fathers want to make sure that our little girls grow up to be godly women, we must realize that it starts with us.

Our girls face so many difficult challenges today. Today’s popular culture is unhealthy for girls and young women. They are constantly bombarded with images of how they should look, what they should wear, and how they should act in order to be socially acceptable to the world. From the time that she wakes up in the morning to the time she goes to bed at night, images of what she should be according to the world are placed before her. Anything from television shows to advertisements for various products to magazines stocked in the checkout lines of stores all portray an image that she is expected to meet.

The world will impose things upon your daughter that she is not physically or emotionally able to handle. She is given an image of what it is to be sexy and she is expected to comply. Along with that look, certain behaviors are expected. This constant attack can lead to eating disorders, depression, and most importantly, a life without God. There is only one thing that stands between your daughter and this attack on her soul, you. Fathers can inevitably change the course of their daughter’s lives. For just a little while we will look at how fathers can help their daughters.

As fathers, we must first teach our daughters who God is. A very sobering fact for us as fathers is the realization that our daughter’s first image of God will be derived from us. *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him” (Matt. 7:11)?* Just as Christ helped his hearers understand God by using the image of the human father, your daughter’s first thoughts of God will be drawn from what she sees in you.

As your daughter grows and develops, she will draw upon her knowledge to understand who God is. As she is told that she has a heavenly Father, she will use the only understanding of a father she has in order to help her process this information. What an awesome responsibility! The way that we as fathers conduct ourselves will shape our daughter’s first

thoughts of God. How are we doing dads? Are we conducting ourselves in a way that portrays godliness? Our daughters understanding of God depends on it.

Helping our daughters have a healthy view of God means being Christ like. *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”* (1 Peter 2:21). Fathers, we need to be committed to studying the word of God and molding our lives into the image of Christ. There is no greater challenge that we can undertake in our life. It is more important than our careers, social life, or hobbies. Just as Christ has set an example for us, we need to set an example for our daughters. Are you man enough to undertake this challenge?

Despite our best efforts, there will come a time in which we will let our daughter’s down. We may lose our tempers, miss an important event, and fail to give her the attention that she really needs, or even bring harm to our family through sin. These issues can be mended. Love truly does heal all wounds. Christ demonstrated this beautiful message on the cross. When daddy isn’t everything that he should be our daughter’s need to know that there is someone stronger, wiser, and who will never let her down; her heavenly Father!

As she grows older, not only must we continue to set the best example that we can, we must teach her God’s word as well so she can get a full image of God. *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk to them when thou sittest in thin house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”* (Deut. 6:7). God gave this command to Israel just prior to their conquest of the Promised Land. They were to instruct their children so that they would retain God in their knowledge. How were they to accomplish this instruction? They were to make God an everyday part of their life. As they went through their daily routine, they were to seize every opportunity to impart their knowledge of God to their children. We as fathers must do the same today.

We need to teach our daughters that God loves her and of His plan of redemption. She needs to be able to admit when she has sinned, repent, and be able to move forward knowing that when she asks God’s forgiveness, He gives it. Our instruction will play a vital role in her spiritual development.

Second, as a father you need to be the man you want your daughter to marry. Every man that enters your daughter’s life will be filtered through her relationship with you. The qualities that you display will be the qualities that she will look for in a man. You are, after all, her first love.

Show her what a husband and father should be. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Eph. 5:25). The role of the man as the head of the house, husband, and father is one of sacrifice. It is compared to the relationship

that exists between Christ and the Church. Christ, in the ultimate display of love, gave his life so that the church could be what God intended for her to be. He died that she would be a glorious church.

As husbands and fathers we have that same responsibility. We are to give of ourselves for the welfare of our family. Marriage is a commitment that requires respect and giving of your time without resentment. So does being a good father. So many times we place this burden upon our wives. We expect her to be the one who gives and gives till there is nothing left. Wives and mothers are expected to make the sacrifices for the family, but this responsibility is ours as fathers. The family will be as strong or as weak spiritually as we are.

As fathers we must be there for our families. We need to spend time with our daughters. Have a meal together, involve her in something that you are interested in or get involved in something that she is interested in. You can even do chores together. The important thing is that you spend time together.

One of the things that really made this point hit home with me was a study that was done on girls today and eating disorders. As we talked about at the beginning of our lesson, society places all kinds of pressure upon our girls to look a certain way. Everywhere they turn they are faced with an image of what society says they should look like. As a result, many girls today develop eating disorders in order to achieve this image.

Not only are there many physical consequences to this, but there are psychological ones as well. Many girls with eating disorders end up having to seek help from a trained psychologist. The study that was done dealt with the treatment methods used by psychologists to help girls overcome this problem in their life. The number one treatment, according to the study, used by psychologists to help girls with eating disorders is to spend time with their fathers.¹

The study goes on to state that this does not mean that Fathers are the cause of their daughter's eating disorders. There are many factors that can play a part in a girl developing this problem in her life. The pressure that she faces from her peers and society itself are two of the main causes. What the study does tell us is that the relationship a girl has with her father is crucial. You hold the key to your daughter's self-esteem. If your daughter fills beautiful in your eyes she will have the self-confidence that she needs in order to with stand the pressures of society.

¹ **Meg Meeker, M.D. 2007.** *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters.* New York : Ballantine Books, 2007. pp. 63-76.

As fathers we must also be honest. *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another*” (Eph. 4:25). You need to be a man of integrity, someone who inspires trust and respect. When you give your word, it needs to be sure. As a man of integrity you need to have the reputation of being honest and dependable not only among your peers but your family as well. You need to be committed to your family and make sacrifices for them.

Honesty means not keeping secrets. Secrecy is a result of sin. When we allow sin into our life we will keep others out. Sin will cause you to isolate yourself from your wife and daughter. Whether it’s an online relationship or an addiction to pornography, you will neglect your family. You will rob them of your time, attention, affection, and trust. Nothing good comes from secrets. No meaningful relationship can be built on lies. As a father, live your life with nothing to hide so that your daughter will expect the same from her husband.

Be content. *“Better is little with fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith”* (Proverbs 15:16). If your daughter sees you constantly striving for more – beyond working hard and doing a good job – she will expect that the pursuit of more is necessary to have a better life. If you teach her by example that happiness requires a bigger house, higher salary, more cars, a boat, and expensive vacations, she will marry a man who constantly leaves home to do the same.

This way of life will lead to heartache. People who are dissatisfied with material possessions are often dissatisfied with who they are and who other people are as well. After your driven son-in-law gets all the stuff he wants, he might decide he wants more from a wife. He may look for the things he wants in another woman.

Show your daughter that a relationship with God followed by a relationship with loved ones is the most important part of our lives. Those relationships are the only avenue to deep joy and contentment. Give her the strength to live knowing that if she lost every material possession, she would still have a life worth living.

In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina there were many heartbreaking stories of the struggles that many people went through. One in particular stands out in my mind. The news told the story of a man who had a commercial fishing business. Of course this industry was greatly affected by this natural disaster. The bills continued to come, but the income did not. Faced with losing everything that he had, the man walked onto his boat one day, wrote a letter to his family stating that he just couldn’t take it anymore, and took his life. He believed that he had nothing left to live for.

As fathers, we need to teach our daughter’s that in Christ, there is always a reason to live. Our life is to be devoted to serving Him every day of our life. Our hopes should not rest in

the things of this life; they should rest in the life to come. No matter what may befall us we have a purpose to fulfill.

Third, we must teach our daughters humility. *“But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.”* (Lk. 14:10) Humility teaches us rules of self-restraint. It teaches responsibility, and to consider the needs of others. By far the most destructive lesson popular culture imbeds in our little girls minds is that they deserve more.

Every father affectionately looks at his little girl as a princess. It is fine to do so and even treat her as one within reason. But, if you indulge your daughter and give her everything she asks for, she will lack humility. You will in essence be raising her as a princess. Princesses do not make good wives or mothers because they are use to everything being about them.

As fathers we must set boundaries for our daughters. *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15). We need to let our daughters know what is and is not acceptable. We need to instill within her a sense of right and wrong based upon the word of God.

Doing this will not only give her a strong moral foundation, it will give her the tools she needs to mature. As she grows older she will be able to set boundaries for herself. Also, she will come to the understanding that she is to fit into the family and that the family doesn't orbit around her. Through this she will learn to be considerate of the needs of others.

In conclusion, as fathers we must realize who we are to our daughters. We need to open our eyes to her world, it's different from ours. Above all, we need to fight for our relationship with our daughters. There will be times that she will challenge you and act as if she doesn't care, but she does. She wants to know how hard you are willing to fight for her.

As she grows older and reaches new stages of development, you must keep her connected. Keep building the relationship so that you and she can grow together. Keep fighting. Keep being a constant presence within her life. Spend time with her.

“One day, when she is grown, something will change between you and your daughter. If you have done your job well, she will choose another good man to love her, fight for her, and be intimately connected to her. But he will never replace you in her heart, because you were there first. That's the ultimate reward for being a good father.”² Men, are you ready to be the father that your daughter needs you to be?

²—. 2007. *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2007. p. 237