

Are American Christians (and Jews) Cursing Israel?

The same Sarah Silverman, Jewish by descent, who taped the offensive pro-abortion "[Jesus F-ing Christ](#)" video earlier this year, is now drawing a swastika as she explores her shameful "Holocaust high." Is this just one more sign that Christians—and now some Jewish people—are turning their backs on Israel?

"I doodled a bubble-lettered swastika. I shall call it 'Holocaust High,'" wrote the controversial comedian, actress, producer and author on her social media channels so that her massive following would have an every opportunity to laugh at her latest offensive joke. That hateful line was followed by "Sorry" in parentheses.

The only problem was most people didn't laugh. In fact, the bad joke met with plenty of [backlash on Facebook](#).

Matthias Feldman wrote, "C'mon, Sarah...use that awesome funny brain of yours. Don't resort to controversy for the sake of controversy. Any idiot comedian can push society's buttons and claim it's in the name of satire."

Dorreta Mills chimed in, "I have taught my kids bullying is wrong—didn't you learn that. I hope you enjoy your material possessions you have but do your possessions really make you happy? You do not seem to be very happy do you? I am not judging you because only God can do that. But I will let you in on a little secret—God is not dead and he loves you Ms. Silverman. Now make something funny out of that."

Those were the more polite comments about Sarah's swastika. I was glad to see that folks didn't think it was funny, but the timing is ironic. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) earlier this month reported a 19 percent year-over-year *decline* in

anti-Semitic incidents between 2012 and 2013.

“The falling number of incidents targeting Jews is another indication of just how far we have come in finding full acceptance in society, and it is a reflection of how much progress our country has made in shunning bigotry and hatred,” says Abraham Foxman, ADL’s national director.

Progress. Then comes Silverman’s sick comedy.

But there’s a related problem. David Brog, executive director of Christians United for Israel, recently wrote a piece in the Middle East quarter called “The End of Evangelical Support for Israel?”

In it, he points out that a decade ago Christian Zionism was seen as an emerging force in American politics. But that has quickly changed.

“The days of taking evangelical support for Israel for granted are over,” Brog writes. “As they are increasingly confronted with an evangelical-friendly, anti-Israel narrative, more and more of these Christians are turning against the Jewish state.”

So what’s the big deal? What does it matter if Silverman, of Jewish heritage, squeaks out a swastika or if anti-Semitism is up or down or if evangelicals offer wholesale support of Israel? What does it matter, as Brog puts it, if anti-Israel Christians are on a roll?

It matters because Scripture commands us to stand with Israel. Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). The Jewish people have given Christianity the Scriptures, the prophets, the patriarchs, the apostles and Jesus Himself. God commands us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6). Our Christians roots are in Judaism!

So, what would happen if America—if Christians—turned against

Israel? In Genesis 12:3, God told Abraham, the first Hebrew, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.” History has shown that nations that have blessed the Jewish people have received God’s blessing and that nation’s that have cursed the Jewish people have met with trials and tribulation.

I am not an expert in this realm, but one thing I do know: I want to be on the right side of the Bible in the end times—and that means standing with Israel. Of course, standing with Israel does not mean sanctioning everything Israel does, but it does mean recognizing God’s hand in the restoration of His people to the land and showing solidarity with them whenever we can.

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What Happens When You Don’t Listen to Your Wife?

Okay, men. You get home from work, walk in the door, and your wife starts talking about her day. Frustrations with her boss at work, her lunch with a friend, and challenges with a child are the first things she shares.

Somewhere in the midst of her words, you slowly tune out, look down at your phone, and let your mind wander to other things. You might think she doesn’t notice, but she does. By not

keeping eye contact and engaging with her, she senses that you don't care and that you think something else is more important.

Being a good listener is something I've struggled with for a long time. I'm a bottom-line kind of guy, so the fewer the words to make a point, the better. But over our 25 years of marriage, [Susan](#) has taught me how to be a better listener, although she would tell you I've got a long way to go.

So, whether your wife is sharing her deepest secrets or simply venting to you about her day, not listening to your wife when she talks can have several consequences, some of which I've experienced at times. Here are four of them:

1. Wives become distant. Sharing her thoughts and feelings is a moment of vulnerability for a woman. So when her husband doesn't give his full attention, she is left feeling rejected and instinctively pulls back to avoid more rejection. Rather than letting your wife draw herself back like this, I encourage you to keep her close at all costs.

Be observant enough to notice when she starts to recoil so that you can pull her into your arms, look her in the eyes, and let her know that you are always there to listen to her. This is something I need to work on.

2. Wives become indifferent. Another way wives handle a lack of attention from their husbands is by becoming indifferent. When your wife consistently feels like she isn't being heard, she will stop expecting anything at all from you. This is a very dangerous direction to be headed in with your spouse because of the way indifference quickly turns into emotional detachment. Rather than give your spouse reason to be indifferent, give her reason to be caring in your relationship.

3. Wives lose their desire. Once your wife becomes indifferent, a loss of desire is soon to follow. Lowering her

expectations regarding her conversations with you leads to lowering her expectations regarding other aspects of your relationship. Unfortunately, this can cause a lack of physical desire in your relationship too. To regain that passion in your relationship, try using these “[10 Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands](#)” and “[10 More Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands](#).”

4. Wives move their focus to other relationships. The final way wives react when their husbands don't listen is by shifting their focus onto other relationships in their lives. When they aren't receiving affirmation from you, they will turn to others to fill that need.

This may mean they share more of what's going on in their life with girlfriends instead of you. This may mean your wife spends all her time in the evening talking to the kids instead of talking with you. Or this may mean she looks for reasons to stay late at work, spending time with co-workers who listen instead of trying to come home early to see you.

If you'd like to become a more effective listener, check out my blog post “[Family Leadership: The Gift of Listening](#).”

Have you experienced any of these consequences in your relationship? What are some ways you can make your spouse feel listened to? Please leave your ideas in a comment below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit markmerrill.com.

God Paints a Different Picture

It had been a week since my dear mother passed away at the age of 89. As a minister and follower of Jesus Christ, I knew Mother had gone home to be with the Lord. God's Word had promised heaven for all believers in Jesus (see Rom. 10:9,13). Hours before her death, I had even witnessed the miracle of my blind mother waking up from her coma, to see again—and to see a glimpse of heaven.

However, a week later, as I walked through the rooms of her house, I was sorrowful. *Would this sadness ever lift?* As Mother's unofficial caregivers, my husband, Terry, and I, had come to stay with her—personally and painfully witnessing Mother, the picture of “spit and spunk”—her term for “full of life”—decline to the picture of a jaundiced corpse. Whenever I thought of Mother, it was this picture of death that would come to mind. It was so sad a picture, so unlike Mother, that it overpowered me, making me sorrowful.

On this day of visiting Mother's house, I finally cried out to the Lord: “Lord, give me a new picture of Mother I can live with—one that assures me You have restored her to joy again!”

My brief prayer request was cut short by the ringing of the front doorbell. It was Pat, a neighbor who had known Mother for years.

Pat offered her condolences about Mother's illness and death. Then, without skipping a beat, she looked me squarely in the eye and announced: “I must tell you something about your mom—or Florence, as all the kids on the block called her. Did you know that the young kids, my son included, liked to knock on her door and say, ‘We're here by special invitation—can Florence come out and play?’ And she always did!”

A new picture was forming in my mind—Florence, just one of the kids, full of life stepping out to play. By special invitation, mind you!

Then a curious thing happened. My jaw suddenly began to drop and quiver, not from fighting off any more tears of mourning—but from fighting a good belly laugh that was greater than the tears. I could just see it now! “Can Florence come out and play?”

Like a dam bursting, I gushed out a laugh that took me to the ground. I grabbed Pat’s shoulders for support, but ended up taking her with me. Picture two mature ladies in white polyester leisure pants rolling around in raucous holy laughter on the wet green grass—in broad daylight. I’m sure this wasn’t a pretty sight. But something beautiful was happening. The Lord was showing a daughter in mourning a new picture. Her mother, Florence, stepping joyously into eternity—by special invitation.

God understands our sorrow, and He can give us joy in the midst of it. He also wants to lift the burden of sadness. When we simply ask, He will turn our mourning into joy—and sometimes even laughter in a white leisure suit.

Prayer Power for the Week of 05/06/2014

This week thank God that He is aware of every aspect of your life—your joys, your sorrows, your disappointments, your losses and successes. Praise Him that He will never leave you nor forsake you, but stands with you in the midst of every minute detail and circumstance you face. Thank Him that He brings you joy for mourning and that His joy is your strength. Continue to pray for those victimized by recent tornadoes and other natural disasters. Ask the Lord to show you what you can do to provide tangible and spiritual help. Ask God to send laborers into His harvest field and ignite revival all over the world. Continue to pray for the protection of our nation

and its leaders, our military personnel around the world, and according to His Word, the peace of Jerusalem. Jer. 31:13; Neh. 8:10; Heb. 13:5b; Matt. 9:38

Life Lessons: The Starting Blocks of Manhood

It would have been an exciting time for me if I hadn't been so afraid.

My start into manhood came upon graduation from high school. It was the right of passage. It was expected for me to simply go get a job and make a life.

I left home with \$35 and a 1966 Chevy pickup (it was an awesome classic short bed—black and chromed out). I bounced around in a couple of jobs until I landed my dream job in a coal mine. Working in the mine proved the starting blocks of manhood. I worked alone, 12 hours a night, seven nights a week—84 monotonous hours of pumping water out of the strip mine so the operators would have access to continue our mass moving of earth to unveil the coal.

The responsibility, the loneliness, the isolation forged my manhood and my work ethic. I continue to draw upon those few years of experience that shaped my perspective.

Here are five lessons that proved to be the starting blocks of my manhood:

1. Isolation is not intimidating. Getting over being alone for so many hours was one of my greatest hurdles. It has proven invaluable for accomplishing other things in my life. My

willingness to stand on my own two feet and face a challenge built a self-assurance that I would need later in life. Isolation taught me that I didn't need someone looking over my shoulder for me to work hard and accomplish a task.

2. Ingenuity comes from necessity. There were things that I had to get done and had to do alone. No excuses. I learned that I could do a lot more by myself than I had imagined. Running equipment, laying hundreds of feet of hose and maintaining the pumps required that I use my head to work. It taught me to think and reason. It taught me ingenuity.

3. You can dream with your eyes open. I spent seven nights a week for 18 months without missing a single night of work. I was awake while everyone that I knew was asleep. Being alone at night in a secluded field and an open pit allowed me to dream big dreams for my life. It also allowed me to begin an open and vocal dialogue with God. I learned to pray while others sleep.

4. Hunger drives you to work. I didn't have options. I didn't have the luxury of wandering through years of college. I couldn't afford to be lazy. As Solomon said, "The appetite of laborers works for them; their hunger drives them on" (Prov. 16:26, NIV).

5. What you do in secret moves you in public. The hours of my labor showed up the next day when the operators would arrive and start their day. If I didn't do my job, there was no way to hide it. If the water wasn't pumped out, hundreds of men would not be able to do their job. Being self-governing and motivated has helped me be entrepreneurial in my drive and diligent in my work.

What about you? What was the job that established your work ethic? What would you consider the starting block of your manhood?

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For the original article, visit fivestarman.com.

Dads, Do You Honestly Have a Close Bond With Your Children?

In a [recent blog post](#), I highlighted some recent research about the most important factor when it comes to passing our faith and values on to our children. It isn't regular teaching sessions or setting the right example or involving kids in larger communities that promote those values, like a church.

All those things are important, but the biggest key is a warm, close connection between the child and father. I have kept thinking about this groundbreaking insight, and I believe there's more I can do to help you apply this in practical ways with your children.

For example, what is a warm relationship with your child? What does it look like? How can you tell if you have one?

I was talking with another dad on our staff about this, and our discussion led to questions like, "What's the atmosphere when you're together? Are you approachable as a dad? Is there a general feeling of easiness and acceptance, or tension and

distance?”

All relationships go through seasons where we feel more distant or more comfortable being together. But I think you probably know the overriding mood between you and your kids.

I think this is a real challenge for dads, based on my own experiences as a father and conversations I've had with other guys. We too easily get caught up in the daily schedule and the challenges of life, we get distracted by our gadgets, or there's some other factor that makes us impatient or snippy with our kids. Or we get into negative patterns that we don't think we can change and so we settle in and just get through the days. If our children aren't getting our very best, well, at least we're providing the basic things they need.

That's understandable, but it isn't our best as fathers, and it isn't ideal for children as they go through life. They need us to be fully engaged, creating the kind of bond that gives them confidence and security. They don't need to be worrying with questions like, “What's up with Dad?” Or, “Why can't I ever do enough to please him?”

So, how do we create the kind of warmth that brings the other great benefits? Every relationship is different, and I'd be foolish if I said there was a four-step formula. But I also want to share what seems to work for me, and I hope these will be helpful for you:

1. Make your kids a high priority, and let it show. I know you love your kids, but I also know they can tell when you'd rather be doing something besides hanging out with them.

Just imagine what they're thinking and feeling when you're willing to put aside what you're doing because you really do enjoy being with them. That's when they start trusting you more, opening up about what's going on in their lives and seeking you out to do things. Sure, it takes a lot of effort and energy, but it's worth it.

2. Enter their world. Your children probably have hobbies and interests that are not what you naturally enjoy. The kids can do things for hours that would bore you in five minutes.

This is a real challenge for me, but the times when I really invest myself in finding out more about what my son enjoys and why he enjoys it, pretty soon it becomes interesting and fun for me too. And I often see a side of him that I hadn't noticed before. I can tell that my effort to enter his world is affirming for him, and it adds a sense of greater understanding and comfort to our friendship. I'm less likely to talk down to him as a silly, immature kid, and I'm more likely to show respect for who he is.

3. Push things deeper and risk discomfort. There are some situations that are easier to avoid or let someone else handle. But if you're going to have that close connection with your children, you can't sit on the sidelines or assume they will get the wisdom they need on their own. You have to be willing to push beyond the everyday, ordinary interactions and address the tough issues.

Maybe it's having an involved discussion about your beliefs or about dangerous behaviors that other kids are getting into. Maybe it's taking a stand and holding your child accountable with hard consequences.

On the other side, maybe it means expressing love and appreciation for your children from your heart, even though, based on your personality or your upbringing, it might feel unnatural or "unmanly" to say, "I love you," or give your kids hugs and kisses. Don't assume they know how much you love them! Go deeper and speak those words they need to hear. Or start with fist bumps and squeezes on the shoulder as you work up to bear hugs.

4. Maintain a steady demeanor—not too high or low. My dad really had this one down. He didn't get overly excited when I

did something well, and he didn't go crazy when I messed up. I definitely knew when he was happy or disappointed with me, but nothing really changed the overall mood of our relationship.

This is also important because your kids will go through a lot of changes and adjustments. Your 5-year-old might think you're the coolest guy on the planet, and then your teenager might want nothing to do with you. Stay consistent and keep doing what you know is best through all the ups and downs. The relationship may change through the years, and it will probably feel different, but your child doesn't need you any less.

Dads, what's have I missed here? What is your secret for building that close bond with your kids? Please let us hear your feedback.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Take genuine interest in something your child enjoys, especially if it isn't something that naturally appeals to you. Spend a good half-hour checking it out and asking your child about it, what appeals to her, etc.
- Ask someone who knows your family well—your child's mom or another close friend—"Would you say my kids and I are close? What makes you say that?"
- Make plans for a one-on-one outing with each of your kids in the next few weeks—something they enjoy, where you can just have fun and laugh together.
- Initiate a discussion with your child—in terms appropriate for his/her age—about a topic that's important to you or a lesson you learned the hard way.
- Get feedback on 13 specific areas of your fathering—and action plans for the ones you may need to address—using our [Championship Fathering Profile \(CFP\)](#).

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of

fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the [Championship Fathering Commitment](#). NCF believes that every child needs a dad they can count on, and uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. Subscribe to his weekly email tip by clicking here: "Yes! [I want tips on how to be a great dad](#) who lives out loving, coaching and modeling for my children.

For the original article visit fathers.com.

How to Hold On to Your Willpower

Raise your hand if you've ever started a "life-changing," "I'm really gonna do this" diet, only to maintain it for a day or two. Now raise the other hand if you've ever joined a gym in January but by February, you were back to your old habits.

I could go on, but I don't want your arms to get tired! Kidding aside, the truth is that we *all* struggle with self-discipline and have felt our willpower wane numerous times in our lives; no matter how motivated we feel initially, we often stumble and regress, discouraging ourselves from ever trying again. We look at the five-days-a-week gymgoers and the green-smoothie-sipping health nuts with admiration and wonder if we could ever be as diligent and disciplined as they are. Well, I have good news: We can be!

In 2009, a graduate student by the name of Fred Stutzman was sitting at his favorite coffee shop working on his thesis when he noticed the establishment had acquired wireless Internet. Now, despite his best intentions to focus and stay on track,

he found himself battling the constant temptation to go online—and *not* for the purpose of conducting scholarly research.

Fortunately, Stutzman happened to be a programmer studying information science and decided to make lemonade out of this productivity-stifling lemon. He went home and developed a software program called Freedom. The application, which has since been praised by publications such as *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*, is simple and straightforward: You turn it on, tell it how long you want to work, and then it prevents you from going online until the work period ends. If you want to return online before time is up, your computer will reboot—and who has time for that?

So how can Mr. Stutzman's clever invention help you and me stick to our health goals? Because it proves just how effective self-prescribed constraints can be.

In the field of psychology, the term *decision fatigue* refers to the deteriorating quality of our decisions after we've spent a fair amount of time making them. Take, for instance, the candy bars, sodas and tabloids awaiting you at the checkout line in the grocery store; you've likely finished making wise choices in the frozen food aisle and produce section, but now there's a Snickers bar at arm's reach that is far too irresistible to pass up.

This is a classic example of decision fatigue, and it affects us in multiple areas of our lives, including our exercise routines and nutrition plans.

Stutzman's Freedom app eliminates users' options, thereby making it much easier to stay on task. The constraint placed on users' behavior paradoxically frees them to be more productive than those whose social media is just a click away.

A CrossFit athlete I train has had tremendous success following a diet program that, for 30 days, restricts

participants' food options drastically. She told me that she "does the best when [her] options are limited" and is going to continue to abide by much of the program's "rules."

Another woman I know needed to lose over 300 pounds and hadn't exercised a day in her life. She started on Day 1 by walking from her house to her mailbox and back. The next day, she went to the second mailbox and back. She never added more than one mailbox but took every day one mailbox at a time. Small steps like this have helped her shed over 200 pounds thus far.

We often make excuses for our unhealthy behaviors; we say we don't know enough about nutrition or working out, or that we've tried and failed too many times. But what would happen if we limited our options? What would happen if we put a fitness constraint on ourselves that only enabled us to work out for five minutes a day for the first 10 days?

What would happen if we put a healthy eating constraint on ourselves that only allowed us to eat the same kind of vegetable every day for a week?

It's difficult to feel overwhelmed when your options are limited, and it's satisfying to learn that, yes, you can maintain a healthy habit and progress toward your goal, one step at a time. It's the small successes that will ultimately lead to our greatest victories.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's [Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness](#) and her latest book, [Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness](#). Her popular website can be found at [dianafit.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at [CrossFit 925](#). Diana can be reached on [Twitter](#).

For the original article, visit [dianafit.com](#).

Support For Israel: African-Americans, Jews Share Common History

The Jewish people and the African-American community have a shared history of affliction, persecution and enslavement. Just as the Jews were slaves in Egypt and suffered much persecution throughout their 2,000 years living in a Diaspora, so were the African-Americans enslaved and endured much discrimination in America.

For this reason, many Jews sympathized with the African-American struggle for freedom, and this sympathy would lead to many prominent African-American leaders sympathizing with Zionism. Indeed, both African-American and Jewish leaders saw parallels between African-American history in America and Jewish history.

Thus, both the African-American and Jewish community have common values, illustrating why the African-American community should support Israel.

Due to the fact that many African-Americans could emotionally relate to the Exodus story, as popularized in the African-American spiritual "Go Down Moses," and that Zion was always a common theme in African-American churches, a report published by the Simon Wiesenthal Center asserts that many African-Americans supported Israel in the days leading up to Israel becoming a state.

W.E.B. Du Bois, a founder of the NAACP, for example, drew much inspiration from Zionism. He declared, "The African movement must mean to us what the Zionist movement must mean to the

Jews." In 1921, he blamed the murder of Jews by "ruthless and bloodthirsty evil-doers" on the British, not the establishment of Jewish communities in the Holy Land. And in the 1940's, Du Bois was a very strong advocate for the U.N. Partition Plan, arguing that African-Americans should "support the fight for a free Israel" since it was linked to the obligation of the Jewish people to help out with the struggle for a "free Africa."

Du Bois had very little sympathy for the Arab cause because countries like Saudi Arabia engaged in slavery still in the 1940s. Slavery would not be formally abolished in Saudi Arabia until 1962. Indeed, the Arabs' support for the African slave trade predated European involvement and some Arab countries, like Mauritania, continue to practice slavery to date. Ralph Bunche, another prominent African-American, had told Menechem Begin in a meeting, "I can understand you. I am also a member of a persecuted minority." In 1948, the NAACP passed a resolution stating, "The valiant struggle of the people of Israel for independence serves an inspiration to all persecuted people throughout the world. We hail the establishment of the new State of Israel and welcome it in the family of nations."

Yet, African-American support for Israel did not stop following the establishment of the state of Israel. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself declared, "When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews. You are talking anti-Semitism." In another instance, he stated, "There is something in the very nature of the universe which is on the side of Israel in its struggle with every Egypt." In 1967, King signed onto a petition calling upon former President Johnson to support Israel. And just before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered, he claimed, "I see Israel, and never mind saying it, as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land can almost be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and

democracy. Peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality.”

More recently, in 1990, Jesse Jackson stated that he recognized Zionism was a national liberation movement. African-American activists fighting against apartheid, such as Randall Robinson, were furthermore inspired by the reparations that Germany paid to Israel following the Holocaust, claiming that he wished the same for the African and African-American descendants of people who were victimized by the slave trade.

Indeed, the struggle for African-American freedom was intimately related to the desire of the oppressed Jewish people to establish a national home in Eretz Yisrael.

For the original article, visit unitedwithisrael.org.

Are We Teaching Our Kids Reality?

Not long ago, a Christian speaker admitted to his audience that his son was in prison for burglary.

“But,” he said, “we’ve done a great job as parents.”

The crowd looked puzzled.

“Because actually,” he added, “he was born an ax murderer.”

Naturally, the audience laughed. It’s a great line. There’s absolutely no truth in it, but it’s a great line. And in its own weird way, it hits the heart of what we’re supposed to be doing as parents—showing and telling our kids how to become good, reliable, upstanding adults, and as we do so, gently

guiding them away from the serial killer career track.

Parents are teachers. And from the day our kids are born, we're on the job. Sometimes we don't even know that we're teaching. Our kids learn how to smile and laugh and talk simply by watching and listening to us, and they figure out quickly that screaming is a *great* way to get some attention.

And as they grow up, they continue to learn from us by observation, often regretfully so. Kids who unexpectedly start cussing in front of grandma may have picked up those choice words from daddy during a particularly stressful drive to school. Statistically, teens who become smokers or drinkers took their first cues from mom and dad. The old cliché of "Do as I say, not as I do"? Children hardly ever listen to that piece of advice.

But often we do give our kids *very* intentional lessons. We encourage them to walk and show them how to use the potty by themselves (in the appropriate receptacle, we hope). We teach them to always tell the truth and to look both ways before crossing the street. We train them how to hold their silverware correctly and how to use a stick shift.

But I believe we have a more fundamental and basic lesson to teach our kids. We must teach them what reality is. We must show them how to look at the world with a clear eye and sober heart. We have to show them that while beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, truth isn't. Truth remains the same wherever one finds it. And a key to growing up on this planet reasonably healthy and happy is to recognize the truth when we see it.

It's a trickier proposition than you might think, particularly in our confusing 21st century. Lots of people out there today tell us that truth is really a matter of opinion—"You have your truth, I have mine." Spin obscures everything, from advertising pitches and marketing gimmicks to political

punditry and sophistry. Plenty of people out there try to convince us that up is down (or at least a little crooked or slanted). Our own emotions and biases can obscure the real truth, and so we have to teach our sons and daughters how to look past what they feel in the moment and see the bigger picture.

Of course, for us dads to teach the truth to our kids, we have to know it ourselves. And that's where we often struggle. After all, we have our own emotions and biases to contend with. We have our own susceptibilities to spin. And sometimes our take on the world might be just plain off.

Women: Balance Estrogen for Heart Health

The role of estrogen in heart health has become somewhat controversial in recent years.

Previously, estrogen was thought to be protective of the heart in women, because women generally develop heart disease about 10 years later than men. This coincides with menopause, when a woman's estrogen levels decline dramatically. By age 65, a woman's risk of heart disease is equal to that of men.

When female estrogen goes down, harmful LDL cholesterol increases in the bloodstream and "good" HDL cholesterol decreases. This leads to a buildup of fat in the arteries that increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Based on that evidence, [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) was considered to be standard treatment during menopause as recently as 10 years ago. Besides relieving the outward

symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes and insomnia, it was thought to keep cholesterol under control and have a positive effect on blood vessels and the heart.

However, that thinking began to change in the late 1990s, when additional study results of HRT started coming in. For instance, the [Heart and Estrogen-Progestin Replacement Study](#) followed more than 2,700 women with existing heart disease; during the first year of HRT, women in the study had a 50 percent increase in heart attack and stroke, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The Women's Health Initiative, a study of 160,000 women, showed similar results. The part of the study that involved HRT with estrogen and progesterone was even halted in 2002 because the hormones were causing an increase in heart attacks, strokes and blood clots in the legs and lungs.

In 2004, the estrogen-only HRT study was stopped because it did not reduce the risk of heart attack but increased the incidence of stroke and blood clots, according to a report from the Cleveland Clinic.

There's no getting around the fact that estrogen levels decline with age. Each woman should work closely with her personal physician to determine whether to undertake hormone therapy to bring those levels back up. Other factors, like a history of blood clots or cancer, must be considered before increasing these hormones.

For women with premature menopause, hormone therapy is usually necessary. Women who go into menopause before the age of 40 have a different set of health risks than women who reach menopause at the average age of 50. One of those risks is a higher incidence of heart disease.

Hormone therapy does seem to reduce that risk when started soon after menopause in younger women. Older women with severe menopausal symptoms should work with a physician to take the

lowest effective dose only as long as needed.

For both men and women, hormone balance is key. Be aware of environmental estrogens that might lead to overload in your body. Besides hormones and pesticides in food, other sources are things that get into the water supply. Switch to biodegradable laundry detergents. Always recycle old cellphones, computers and printers rather than put them in the trash.

That will help control the release of heavy metals that turn into environmental estrogens.

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For the original article, visit chaunceycrandall.com.

5 Great Dates for Under \$25

The family budget is always tight. There are braces to pay for, a car in the shop, and the ever-increasing cost of groceries to consider.

By the time money is stashed away for college, retirement and savings for a rainy day, there is little left in the wallet when the time comes to take your wife on a nice date. The last

thing you want to do is run up the credit card bill for an average dinner and overhyped movie.

This is when it's time to think with our hearts. What wives truly need from us on a date has nothing to do with money. They crave our undivided attention and sincere communication.

To our detriment, we sometimes confuse dollar signs with loving intentions. In an informal Facebook poll on the subject, one woman put it this way: "Attention! Sometimes attention is way too expensive for many guys."

With that sentiment in mind, we offer these ideas to create big romance on a small budget and provide the opportunity for both of you to receive the attention you deserve. Here are five great dates under \$25 to help you get started: