

3 Lessons for Our Daughters From Miley Cyrus

My Facebook feed was on fire with posts about the Miley Cyrus ... er ... performance at the Video Music Awards. People reacted strongly—most negatively, but a few defending the 20-year-old.

And that, I guess, is the thing that makes me feel a little nauseous. She is 20 years old. Just a baby.

How does a darling little girl go from Disney stardom to that moment where she finds herself nearly naked on a stage in front of millions doing obscene things with a foam finger? I'm not in show business, but does that seem like a good career move?

As I watched it on YouTube (where it will undoubtedly be viewed a gazillion times or until someone does something more outrageous next year month—shock value has a very short shelf life), I thought about all the moms with daughters who are figuring out what to do with the star they once idolized.

For what it's worth, I think Miley's story contains some golden teaching moments:

1. No matter who you are, you need people. I don't know if Miley has bad advisers in her life or if she's positioned herself outside their counsel, but this is what happens when you stop listening to the right people. With the life-defining decisions like "Should I keep it classy at the VMAs or become a really well-paid porn star?" you gotta have input from people outside your situation. It's imperative.

Take Miley out of the equation for a minute, though, because I've seen girls make this same mistake a million times over issues that were much lower profile but no less important to the outcome of their lives. If you can't get three good people to sign off on a big decision, beware. If you have to reject the counsel of or distance yourself from the people you've

loved and trusted your whole life, beware.

Let's teach our daughters: Surround yourself with wise people and trust them to help you make the big decisions. Especially trust their judgment if you're about to do something that has any chance of going viral.

2. Popularity is a harsh mistress. We've seen this child-star trajectory many times. They desperately try to outrun their Disney image until they run out of road and crash badly. It's not surprising.

The growing-up process is hard enough without having an audience watching and commenting on it. Becoming our real, true selves can be treacherous even when we're not being paid to pretend to be someone else. And you better believe with all that adoration comes a whole freight train of criticism—and not the constructive kind.

Child stars live in glass houses beneath a constant barrage of stones being thrown by the masses. They are loved and loathed. Worshipped and wrecked.

In Miley's performance, I saw a girl who has received the attention of the masses but still feels she has to fight to be seen. She lives in a world where someone newer, fresher and prettier is always nipping at your heels, and sex always sells.

Let's teach our girls: Don't sell your soul for the applause of the crowd—it's a two-edged sword. Be authentic. Be true. Be love. Everything else will fall into place from there.

3. Could we talk about Robin Thicke for a minute? Married man. Twice her age.

Let's teach our daughters: Real men protect women. They don't use them for cheap thrills or big ratings. They don't.

And to the men in the audience and behind the cameras: You don't gawk at a woman who's making a bad decision with her

body. You look away or offer your coat. Because you can't criticize exploitation while also consuming it.

Oh, and let's teach our sons: Be a real man.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of the newly-released *Beautiful Battliefields* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Ore.