

5 Damaging Messages You May Be Sending Your Child Without Realizing It

Don't let this be your story.

Recently it was my privilege to teach older teenagers and young adults about the Eight Great Smarts. As with other groups, I could tell they were encouraged to discover that they are smarter than they thought they were and that the way they're smart is God's choice.

During some question and answer time, one young man stayed back. He began, "What could my friend do ...". The whole time I listened and then answered him, I wondered if the question was actually about him. Near the end, tears in his eyes confirmed it most likely was. I didn't let on that I drew that conclusion.

What did he want to know? "What could my friend do who is very music-smart and loves being music-smart, but has a dad who doesn't care about it at all?"

I encouraged him to affirm his friend's musical gifts and desires. Peer support matters. I talked about his friend's need to honor his dad even though he didn't value this way his son was smart. I encouraged him to stand up for himself when he could, while still respecting his father.

This young man knew about my musical abilities and that they remained a hobby and joy for me and not a career pursuit. So, I talked about that. We talked about careers and how important it would be for this friend to find fulfillment and success even if he didn't feel free to pursue music because of his dad's opinion.

My heart was heavy and concentrating wasn't easy. One of my goals in answering was that this young man would believe in his ability (or help his friend believe in his ability) even if the dad dismissed it. This was about identity and God's choice in designing him/the friend. It was no small question.

Also, because I sensed that at least part of the question was about how this friend could connect with his dad, we talked about finding something they have in common and bonding over that. I suggested that as they did things together and had fun together, his friend wouldn't feel as much pain from the sting of rejection. He had a strong reaction to this idea. I believe his pain was deep.

When our children don't think we value how they are smart,

- they may question whether we value them,
- they may work to develop a skill they think we value, but resent it the entire time,
- they may choose not to develop other gifts and talents because they feel hopeless,
- they may reject how God made them smart,
- they may question whether God did a good thing making them the way He did
- and ...

What would you add?

What would you say to children you know who are concerned that their parents don't value the way they're smart?

If I asked your children whether you value the way they're smart, what might they say? What if I gave them a scale of 1-10 with 10 meaning "highly value"? What score might you get? What could you do to raise the score?

What if we had your children rate themselves? Do they "highly value" the way God made them smart or not? How can you talk about this with them? When will you? {eo}

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