

A One-Step Way to Strengthen Your Daughter's Identity

Let's take a walk down memory lane.

I am guessing that when you and your wife/partner went through the process of choosing a name for your daughter it was a *very big deal*. No doubt you labored to get just the right one.

You probably ruled out the majority of them because at one point or another one of you knew someone with that exact name who didn't wear the title very well.

Yet somehow, finally, after months of deliberation, when hope was almost gone that you'd ever agree, the perfect one emerged!

Then you both pondered it for a couple of days (or weeks) just to make sure it sat well. You may have even spoken it out loud a few times while considering every possible nickname that might be derived from it, culminating with making sure it tucked itself nicely next to your surname.

And the more you let your mind wrap around that final choice, her beautiful name began to take on a life of its own, like music to your ears. You eagerly anticipated how your little offspring would soon come alive to the sound of that name, a name that you had given her, a name that would be forever linked to her identity as a girl and a woman.

It was that name that became the hook upon which your heart would hang all the love you could ever imagine giving to your precious treasure.

And even now you probably don't have to reach very far back into your memory bank to recall the first time she cooed and smiled as you called her by name, an experience that left you

feeling things inside your heart as a man that you'd never felt before. It was then you knew you were a dad.

And all of that was tied to your little girl being called by her name. By you.

I'm here to tell you that she still needs to hear you lovingly say her name.

But not only that. If you really want to hit it out of the ballpark as a dad, you can teach her the origin and meaning of her name to help her more fully understand who she is. In doing so you give her a gift that will deeply impact her heart.

When I was thirteen years old, my dad started meeting bimonthly with me and my younger sister. The poor guy didn't have a clue how to be a dad to daughters yet when a mentor suggested that he meet individually with his girls to help lead and train us, he was committed to giving it a try. I was nervous at first because I knew it would be awkward, just him and me. But it got easier over time.

He covered topics like dating, overcoming fear (since I struggled *big time* in that area), sibling relationships, and even explored the meaning of my name. This all was new and intriguing, and I remember being most impacted by this idea of knowing that my name had an origin long before me that was tied to generations of women whose name I shared.

I still recall learning that my sister's name meant she was gracious, which gave her one thing to focus on. But upon opening the name book and reading about mine, my heart sank. I hated what I read. At first, anyway.

I was overwhelmed at the enormity of what it would require to live up to its meaning when I learned that Michelle was a Hebrew name that meant "*who is like God*" or "*godly woman*." Here I had an inbred assignment to embody the entire

character and nature of God Himself! Yikes!

But there's a flip side of that overreaction. At the same time that I felt burdened with the task at hand, it also meant that God and I had a deep personal connection because my name was tied to Him.

Here I was an insecure teenager with a bad complexion and wonky emotions, but now I felt tied to a Person much bigger than myself. This honestly helped give me a stronger sense of identity beyond what I could comprehend at the time.

Learning the meaning of my name gave me something solid to hold on to.

Did you know that you can reinforce the strength of your daughter's identity by highlighting the fact that her name actually has historical roots and meaning? And by doing so you are emphasizing and celebrating her *who* (who she is) and not just her *do* (what she does).

It's one of the most powerful ways to breathe life into her because it ties to her core, to that special part of her that is as unique as her DNA.

Why not take ten minutes right now to look online for the meaning of your daughter's name and then write her a note to tell her about it. You can even share one or two examples of how you see her living out that meaning.

I guarantee that she will thrive upon hearing your affirmation because her name gives her something powerful and good to connect to. Being a dad who affirms his daughter by underscoring the rich qualities attached to her name will put you in the top tier of fathers in the world.

Do it today: Find the meaning of her name and put it in writing. You'll be glad you did ... and so will she!

(To support your venture, here are three websites where you

can type in her name and quickly find everything you need: , ,)

Dr. Michelle Watson has a clinical counseling practice in Portland, Oregon, and has served in that role for the past 17 years. She is founder of The Abba Project, a 9-month group forum that is designed to equip dads with daughters ages 13 to 30 to dial in with more intention and consistency, and has recently released her first book entitled, *Dad, Here's What I Really Need from You: A Guide for Connecting with Your Daughter's Heart*. She invites you to visit for more information and to sign up for her weekly Dad-Daughter Friday blogs, where she provides practical tools so that every dad in America can become the action hero they want to be and their daughters need them to be. You can also follow or send feedback on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .