

Dads, Guard Your Princesses

Being the father of about 412 teenagers (OK, only 5, but it sometimes seems like 412!), I occasionally get blindsided by stuff, and often after the fact. You dads know what I'm talking about:

"I can't go check the mail, Dad. I forgot to tell you that I backed over the mailbox this morning," or "I spent the entire day with [insert the name of the person you can barely stand here] watching [insert the title of your choice of inappropriate movies here]."

You would think that after enough years and enough kids, I would have heard it all. But this one just really set me off. As a disclaimer, I wasn't upset at one of the kids. I was inflamed by the entire circumstance, and I guess you get to read my tirade. And if you aren't just as twisted over this as I am after you read it, then you may want to read it again.

Apparently it was a wedding day, and a friend of a friend of one of our girls was taking her vows. It struck me as a little odd that the wedding was at 5 p.m. on a Wednesday, but maybe it was the only time the church was free—who knows? Our daughter got dressed up and headed out the door, and not in what I would classify as typical wedding attire. But times have changed, right?

I guess I had no idea just how much times have changed until I found out more details about the wedding—again, after the fact. First, the girl was pregnant, making this a "shotgun wedding." And she was 16, as in "I can officially get my license now" 16. Or even "Four years ago, I was 12."

For a while, I have been slowly coming to a rolling boil over the garbage that has become popular television for the aforementioned age demographic. Shows like *Pretty Little Liars* and *Liars Club* program our youth to think it's OK to lie.

Period. There's no overarching theme other than "Speaking mistruth is OK." My parents wouldn't let me watch the *Brady Bunch* if Bobby stole a cookie from Jan, for crying out loud.

The shows that really illustrate how failed we are as a society are *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*. These shows glamorize being pregnant or being a mother while in high school, and they are just the worst kind of garbage. Both pregnancy and motherhood are reserved for women at least five or 10 years older, and only as an integrated part of marriage to a husband. The shows depict young ladies living at home, gleefully preparing baby bedrooms under the roof of their respective parents. And it's just plain wrong.

You know what else is missing, in large part, from the expecting teenagers homes? One word: Dad.

Here's the deal, men. We are morally, financially, spiritually and legally responsible for our girls. When they turn 18, the government says they can vote, die for our country and even pay their own consequences for bad decisions as an adult. But guess what? Even when they turn 18, we are *still* morally, spiritually and (usually) financially responsible for them.

I don't know about you, but I am all for averting disaster. We must do our job as dads to ensure the greatest odds of success for our girls. By "doing our job," I am not talking about providing for them. That's just part of the deal when you have a kid. Providing would be the minimum acceptable standard of being their father.

Here are a few guidelines to follow if you are bringing up girls (and yeah, it's a lot different than raising boys):

1. Tell her how beautiful she is. There is a strong probability that she feels ugly today. I'm just sayin' ...
2. Tell her that you love her—a lot!

3. Hug her—a lot!

4. Take her out on a date every few weeks, or every week if you can. Show her what a “normal” evening date should look like.

5. Model love, respect and service toward your wife. Remember, more is caught than taught. She is going to look for someone just like you, like it or not.

Here’s a thought to remember, guys. If we aren’t loving on our daughters, somebody else will be. Some guys prey on girls, and every girl needs to feel loved, appreciated and beautiful. That’s *your* job!

Guard your princess!

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