

Why We're Desperate for Good Dads

I recently talked to a woman who has been estranged from her father for many years. Her totally healthy father. She wasn't abused or yelled at. She just wasn't much seen at all.

The story of her dad's parenting could almost be told in one sentence, "He did nothing particularly bad and nothing significantly good." He tried to add a daughter into his life without stepping into hers. He missed a chance to build and encourage her.

Actually, he missed a million chances. Daily chances. And he missed nearly every opportunity to protect her from boys who also wanted to make her an accessory to their lives but not a prize.

Similar stories are everywhere. I know that dads are a popular scapegoat, and I'm not looking to castigate them here. But I will say: I believe the dad/daughter relationship is one of the most important and foundational elements to our wellbeing as women.

Our dads have the ability to teach without words. Regardless of their educational background, vocational success or communication techniques, they constantly teach us (maybe more than anyone) about our own worth as women. They teach us about beauty and how men view it. They teach us about body image and sexuality and marriage and safety and commitment. It's ironic that men—who I think feel WAY in over their heads communicating to women—are holding so many of the cards when it comes to their daughters.

Today, I'm grateful for two things.

I'm so thankful for this guy and the way he's fathered his

girls.



The way he's seen their unique beauty and helped them see it too. The way he's shown them Jesus and strong leadership and love. The way he has taken care of their cars and killed the spiders and protected them from danger—sometimes the kind of danger that only a dad can see.

And even though he can't do all those things with them now, he's still their dad. His investment stands in their lives, and their love for him is obvious and outrageous. None of our three girls feels qualified or capable of being a caregiver (we're all a little weak-stomached that way), but all of them have gladly stepped into that role with their dad. They tackle the hard stuff without a single word of complaint. He's earned their trust, respect, love—and now he receives their compassion and care, and it's a beautiful, humbling thing to watch.



So, that's the first thing. The second thing I'm thankful for today is my friend, Michelle Watson, and her new book, *Dad, Here's What I Really Need From You*. Michelle is a therapist whose specialty is the dad/daughter relationship. She leads groups of men through field training in how to improve their connection with their daughters and establish beautiful relationships. This book is written for men, in a way that men will enjoy. Michelle does not take cheap shots or ridicule or condescend. She respects men and the role they fill, and her writing proves it.

If you are a dad or know a dad struggling to connect with his

daughter, grab this book. You won't be sorry. Not ever.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of *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, Oregon.