

No Greater Joy

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"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." III John 4

Daddy's Girl

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Dad's Daughter

Dad, you must get this one right. If you mess up here, all that you have invested in your daughter could be wasted on a dud.

The guys come around asking for her hand, but they really want much more. They want the entire twenty or so years you have invested in your precious daughter. They want all the training, the money you sank into dental and medical, and all the clothes and education. They want to reap the harvest that you have so carefully tended and protected for the best part of your life. When that young man comes around asking for your daughter, or maybe just announces that he is taking her, he is making off with the major fruit of your life.

Raising daughters is not a good business deal. You make a twenty-year investment and then just up and give the whole thing away to an inexperienced boy who doesn't at all appreciate the value of what he is getting, and is probably not worthy of the gift, or "theft," as it may be. To top it all off, he changes her name – takes her out of the family, and erases all traces of her lineage. Her children will not carry on your family name!

But there is comfort in knowing that all your investment was not really for that bonehead son-in-law; it was for your daughter – for her sake. Because you made her your life's work, no matter what befalls her later in life, you can know that she will face it with courage and wisdom, bringing glory to God. She was God's gift to you and your wife, precious

and vulnerable, just raw material, and by means of his grace, you gave her back to him to be one of his stars in eternity. We dads are God's teachers, his priests, entrusted with his most beloved creation, his last crowning feat of creation – the human female.

It is an act of faith to give our daughters in marriage. It must be how God felt when he turned away and left Adam alone in the garden with Eve.



His work, as is ours, was complete. Their lives are now theirs to live – for better or for worse.

The Bible speaks of fathers "giving" their daughters in marriage, as if everyone respected his right to legislate in such matters. In an ideal society, fathers would always be wise, daughters would be mature, and suitors would be transparent and righteous. But fathers are usually clumsy and dull of discernment; daughters, selfish and impatient and suitors may be lustful and coy. Sadly, statistics show that new "Christian"

marriages are more likely to end in divorce than not. And of those who stay together, most are not happy and holy. Holy matrimony is nearly a lost grace, as rare and blessed as the appearance of an angel.

Fathers, those of you with daughters yet to be married, I am speaking to you now. After you are satisfied that you have put your best into your daughter and after you have prepared and preserved her for her day of marriage, you have one last task that *you must get right*. If you miss this last turn in all your preparations, you have missed your life's most vital purpose as a father. You must make absolutely sure that the one to whom you give your daughter is indeed worthy of her. This is not an easy task. Outward appearance is deceiving, and you are quite capable of being deceived. You will need help, more than I can give, in screening the young men who would court your daughter. It is this screening process that we are going to talk about. You are the chief screener. Do you know what questions to ask and how to ask them? Do you know how to get behind the young man's facade and know the real man?

My daughters are all married now – and married well! So now I am "free" to share some of my experience and secrets, and offer some suggestions that may help you when your time of "trial" comes. I have wanted to go public with this information ever since I went through this with our first daughter many years ago, but I didn't want to put it into print and give away my secrets to the young fellows who were "already on their way to our

front porch," eventually to come asking for my other two daughters. I didn't want them to be forearmed and well-equipped, so as to answer my questions deceitfully.

Looking back now, the whole process was actually a bit humorous. Before my daughters were all married, I used to have lots of young friends who didn't have anything better to do than come around asking me if there was anything they could do for me. They never saw my grin, and they didn't hear the whispers going on around the house, but I always made sure I had something for them to do. There were weeds that needed to be hoed, ditches to be cleaned out, firewood to be split and stacked, and lots of painting and plumbing chores "just waiting" for all these young men. It was amazing to see how these young guys seemed to love to wash dishes and cook, that is, as long as the girls were telling them what to do while flittering around the kitchen.

Life for me is much harder now that the girls are all married. Sons-in-law somehow don't seem to care now if there is work to be done and that I must do it all alone. And I haven't seen any of them jumping into the kitchen to do dishes since they carried one of my favorite "dishes" home. So, one of the first things you can expect is a young man who is suddenly interested in getting to know your family better. Watch his eyes. Like a hawk circling a rabbit, his eyes will reveal his intentions. It was a great source of entertainment for a decade. I miss it!

Now, to get down to serious business. The time will come when the young man stumbles around and asks if he can court your daughter with consideration toward marriage. Although he may think so, this is not a request for her hand in marriage, but a simple request to get to know her better so as to determine if they

are suitable as life partners. This is an opportunity for both of them to get to know each other in a social way and in a family setting. It is not a time for them to be alone or to develop emotional attachments. The young man can be included in family outings, work days, dinners, and family evenings playing games and telling tall tales. He can work with you and even go shopping with your wife and daughter.

I had several young men ask to court, or marry my daughters whom I was able to eliminate before the conversation terminated. It's called marriage Q & A. You ask the right questions, and he tries to give the right answers.

There are some concerns that are universal and must be addressed. They are serious enough that any father should reject a suitor who doesn't measure up. Getting to the truth early and openly is the key.

Before you even bother to check up on references, and immediately upon being approached by each prospective suitor is your best moment to cut to the quick with him. The young man will obviously be a little nervous and unsure of himself, so put him at ease by being at ease yourself. Find someplace where you can both sit down and talk in private. Start out by asking inconsequential questions that are not likely to be of any great importance, no matter how they are answered. They can be questions like:

"How old are you?"
"How many brothers and sisters do you have?"
"What kind of schooling have you had?"
"Where do you go to church?"

Then proceed to more significant inquiries, like:

"Where do you work?"
"What are your plans for the future?"

Challenge him on any issue, like: does he make enough money to support a wife and to pay for big medical bills? Your purpose is to provoke him just enough to see how the glint in his eye and his body language changes. Then, revert back to asking general questions that put him at ease.

As you have both been talking, you have been looking in his eyes and watching his body language. He is now relaxed. Then, staring him intently in the eyes and leaning forward, ask in a slightly more forceful and intense tone, "When is the last time you looked at pornography?" You have already become familiar with his mannerisms after about fifteen minutes of talking. If, after this penetrating question, he can look you straight in the eye and say with confidence, "I have never looked at pornography," then you can be fairly sure that he is telling the truth. However, if his face floods with guilt and he denies any involvement, you can be quite sure he is lying. If you think he is lying, tell him so, and then immediately ask him again. Only a very accomplished liar can stand up under a father's stare in response to a question like that.

Don't take shock for guilt. An innocent and naive young man who has been quite protected all his life may be shocked at the question. But if the kid looks like he just got caught with his hand in the cookie jar, you likely have a porno freak seeking your daughter's hand. He may end up molesting your grandkids. He has failed the suitor test, not just by viewing pornography, but by lying about it. Even though he is unfit to be any girl's husband at this point in his life, you might want to take the opportunity to counsel him for his own good. Warn him against the evils of pornography and tell him how it has disqualified him. Assure him that it is not too late to become a man of virtue, but it will take several years of "staying clean" before he could be trusted. Now, just in case you think I am being a little unreasonable, read the following two letters. We have received hundreds just like them.

Dear Debi,

I almost want to die. Three years ago my parents chose Ben to be my husband. We were both homeschooled and involved in the same type of character-training programs. His parents were very keen on us marrying. Since I was 26 years old (he was 22) and had no other offers, I was really ready to marry. Ben's family knew (but did not tell my parents) that he had had problems with pornography. They had hoped that once he married he would be satisfied and give it up. That has proven to be a joke.

Ben had rather "do himself" than me. A habit of 10 years was just too much to break. He has "repented" and "confessed" more times than I can remember. He knows it is sin, but I am shocked that he thinks it is just not "that bad". He said all the guys look at pornography. Is that true? I fear for my daughters after discovering that he is now looking at dirty pictures of little children. He said it was his first time and that he didn't like it. I want to believe him, but it just makes me sick. How could this have happened to me when all I wanted was the will of God? What can I do?

Dear Debi,

I have a strange problem. I am 23 years old and have been married 3 months. Only once in all this time has my husband even kissed me. My parents know something is wrong because I can't keep from crying. My mother would be shocked to know that the reason I am crying is because I am still a virgin. I do not know what is wrong with John. He spends a lot of time with young teen guys in the church. He has them over to eat and watch movies. It seems harmless. His ministry (what he calls it) was one thing my parents liked about him. I have wonderful parents and was homeschooled. My parents (especially my mom) sorta arranged my marriage to John, who was part of a home-school group similar to ours.

You read the letters. It's horrible. It makes me sick. There are days when I dread seeing the mail. The parents and the church have failed these daughters of Eve. They had adopted a "system" that was supposed to work the will

of God. They assumed that if their daughters came to marriage through a courtship or betrothal process that they would be saved from worldliness and sin. Systems can offer good guidance, but they cannot eliminate the flesh. *All's hell that ends in hell.*

We get many letters from young wives whose husbands had never viewed pornography before marriage. Some of them were raised without television or videos. They thought *The Sound of Music* was what you hear in the department stores. They came to marriage as innocent as babes.

Their parents had protected them from every temptation and worldly allure. But when they got their own homes, at the first opportunity they followed the flesh with absolute abandonment. These young men would have answered all the questions to the satisfaction of any father. But they had never been tried. They had never learned to overcome temptation. Their religion was all hand-me-down. How can we fathers foresee this kind of pitfall ahead as we approach the "marriage" years of our daughters?

Let's go back to our conversation with the young suitor. I could also have asked him, "When is the last time you looked at pornography?" He says, "About two years ago." Without appearing shocked or put out, I ask, "How did it happen?" He tells me that he viewed it on the computer. "For how long?" He answers, "Several times a week." I continue asking. "What made you quit?" He proceeds to tell me how the Holy Spirit was grieved with his actions and how miserable he felt. So he confessed his sin and forsook it. "Are you still tempted to go back to it?" I enquire. "Yea," he answers, "But that is not what I want for my life. I want to walk in holiness and serve God."

Frankly, I had much rather hear something like this from a young man than to get a blank, dumb stare from

a mama's boy who has been sitting in his room doing his school lessons and has never been in situations where his character was tested.

What I really want to know is, does this young man know good and evil, and has he chosen the

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good? Wait until the boy has gone out into the world and comes back as an overcoming man, a survivor of every temptation, before you trust the genuineness of his Christianity as the real thing. The first step in Jesus' ministry was to face the full gamut of temptation with the master of temptation, and to prove his mettle.

I had one young man who was seeking one of my daughters tell me that it had "been two weeks" since he viewed pornography. I dismissed him with a derisive laugh. We may trust a man who has fallen into sin, but then repented and availed himself of the grace of God to establish an ongoing walk of holiness. But, a man who goes through cycles of sinning and repenting and then sinning again should no more be trusted than the Devil. A Christianity that does not stop someone from sinning is a false religion. We will befriend and be patient with such fellows in the church, but I don't want one of them as the husband of my daughter. Again I will say, I am not so concerned that a young man should have a squeaky-clean record as I am that he have a grace-clean heart and a sanctified will.

We're not there yet. This first, powerful question will eliminate 75% or more of the unfit suitors. If their answers and their heart have satisfied you so far, then you might want to ask, "Name the last ten movies you have watched, and tell me about them." Be advised, your daughters' and his children, your grandchildren, will grow up watching TV with him. Ask him what channel his car radio is tuned to, and the last three music CDs he purchased. Music both molds the soul and expresses it. A person is

defined by the music he prefers.

Ask him about his home life. "Are your parents happily married? Do you want your marriage to be like theirs?" Follow up with, "What is it that they do wrong/right, and what would you do differently?" It is a fact that the home life of a young man is predictive of how his home life will be with your daughter. If his father is an insensitive brute, remember that this young man has been molded in his father's image, for he received his worldview (family view) from his family.

Find out how he relates to his brothers and sisters. If he is fatherly and protective of his younger siblings, then he will be so with his own children. If he thinks they are brats and avoids them, then he is selfish and will not like his own children. How does he view his mother? That's how he will view his wife.

Pause for a moment and just look at him. He is relaxed again. You have gotten past the hard part, so he thinks. Let the pause be long enough for sobering effect. Establish eye contact now and ask, "Have you ever had sex with a girl?" If he answers that one OK, follow up with, "Have you ever had sexual contact with another male?" One fourth of the boys today have. You know him now. If there is any doubt, pursue it immediately. Look for signs of shame and lying. If you get past that, ask him if he has ever had sexual contact with an animal. A growing number of teenagers have. You'd better find out now before it's too late. You know the world you're living in is like Sodom and Gomorrah, but what you may not know is that the organized church today is right next door, like Lot's Zoar, right next to Sodom and Gomorrah. And, never forget the hold Sodom and Gomorrah had on Mrs. Lot. Don't let that happen to your daughter's children!

Yes, I know this is sick stuff. "For it is a shame to even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret" (Eph 5:12). So we submit to the shame for the sake of our daughters and our future heritage. I

could print letters that would shock you beyond belief. But they are just too dirty to be "laundered" in public. The church is chasing the world right to the dark gates of hell, but instead of converting it, the churches blend right in – right at the pit's mouth!



Somehow, by God's grace and mercy, we must match up righteous young men with righteous young ladies. We've got to muster up the urgency that Abraham and his servant Eliezer felt and acted on for their Isaac and his Rebecca. The future of the church as God designed it depends on it. God wants and deserves a faithful witness on this earth. When you finally get serious about putting the character of potential husbands for your daughters through the discriminating sieve of the Holy Spirit, you will end up setting aside most of the young men in your religious circle and community. Let the world wed the world and conceive their little devils of lust and licentiousness. **But let overcoming saints enter into holy matrimony with overcoming saints and bear the fruit of holiness and beauty.** "Be not unequally yoked together..." (2 Cor 6:14)

Dads, there is no question whatsoever that the task is daunting. How are two righteous kids, who are suited to a life together, going to find each other in the fog of sin and folly in which we all live? Pray. I say again a thousand times: pray. Plead with God and ask him for wisdom. Ask him for a miracle. When you do pray, you can fully expect the first three answers to be the Devil's counterfeit. God will permit you to be tested. You **will** need his divine wisdom. Ask of God, "who giveth to all men liberally and upbraided not."

So far we have just dealt with moral issues. We are wanting to make sure that he is one of the ten righteous that the angels could lead out of Sodom, not one like those who lusted after the angels and died in blindness.

In our day and age, purity is so rare, that to find an *overcoming young man* may be the only criterion you would want to consider. Who cares if he is dumb, ugly, socially embarrassing, can't read, and seems unable to make a living? Better to let them live down in your basement and feed them, while they sing, pray, and raise righteous kids.

OK, so we have gotten past the moral issues, and we are now getting excited. We have some real possibilities here. This guy loves

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the Lord, is walking in complete holiness, eschewing evil, witnessing to his lost acquaintances, studying his Bible, and wants to marry my daughter so he can raise little Christians. However, if you are blessed enough to be in a circle where there are two or more young men who qualify morally, you don't have

to settle for supporting a righteous but inept son-in-law. You can continue the elimination process by asking him, "What do you do for a living?" I remember one big ole, handsome boy, twenty three years old, sitting in our

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living room, asking for permission to court one of my daughters. I asked him where he worked. Remember, now, he is 23. He said, "Well, right now I am out of a job." I asked, "When did your last job terminate?" "Well, I was working for my uncle, but he doesn't need any help right now." So I asked, "How are you paying the note on your house and keeping up your car?" "Welllll...I'm living with my folks right now, and my car is broken down, so I am driving Dad's old truck." "I see. So when you get married, where are you going to live?" Welllll...(he rubs the back of his neck) I've been thinking about going back to school and learning some kind of trade."

I looked at my wife and then looked at that 23-year-old dependent child and said, "Come back when you grow up, son."

Dear Mike and Debi,

I am a 28-year-old mother of five, and I look to be 40 years old. I worry all the time about what we are going to do. I think I am going to have to put my children in public school and go to work. My husband is a good man, but he just can't seem to make a living. I hate to say it, but I think he is just plain lazy. My father was hard-working and always provided everything we needed. When I was twenty-one years old, my future husband (though I didn't know it at the time) approached my father and asked if he could commence courtship. He was a well-respected young man in our church who sometimes led in the worship services and taught Bible classes. He has always been pure and righteous. To make a long story short, we married. Everything started out great, but he came from a well-to-do family where he never really had any responsibility. He just hates any kind of work. He is full of dreams and big ideas, but he never seems to find the courage to do anything but talk. We live in an apartment above his parents' garage. His mother is always meddling in our family. I think that if I went to work, I could make enough money so we could rent our own place. I know that you teach that mothers should be

keepers at home, but what about in circumstances like mine?

We won't print our answer to this young wife. It is not our subject at the moment, but it is all too common. Many homeschooled boys are lazy and never develop a will to suffer the pain of work. If a young man is not already supporting himself when he asks for your daughter's hand, why would you expect him to do any better with a wife and a sick kid to keep up?

Let's go back to our conversation with the prospective suitor. If this first visit goes well and the young man seems to qualify, tell him that you will talk to your daughter and get back with him. My daughters were real picky. They would boldly give a flat "No," and I immediately passed it on to the young man. However, do the young man a service and say, "She says she is not interested." My daughters were already acquainted with most of the fellows who came courting, but there were several who just walked in out of the blue. They wanted to be married to one of the "Pearl girls". We fed them one meal and wished them luck somewhere else. We didn't even let them stay and do the dishes.

However, if you feel good about a potential suitor, go to your daughter and ask her if she is open to getting better acquainted with this fellow. If she says yes, get ready to do a lot of chaperoning. It is usually pretty boring. The younger kids love it though. It gives them a lot to talk about, and they make a game of not letting the couple get away with anything. They are omnipresent. It is like having 24-hour, closed circuit surveillance of the courting couple.

Your second line of defense against a daughter ending up being unequally yoked together is her own God-endued wisdom. When my children were young, we constantly

evaluated people and their actions. We tried to make little psychologists out of them. We wanted them to be sharp in detecting dishonesty and impurity in others. There were many discussion with our daughters about men and their wily ways. We made sure that they had lots of social contact with many young men. There is no better way to make your daughter wise to men than to spend lots of time around them. We played volleyball several times a week, and we went to Bible studies and missionary conferences. They were acquainted with many couples and got to observe young husbands and wives

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interacting with each other. Through all of this, they assimilated the "training information" provided them and were able, independent of us, to form preferences and opinions as to what they liked and didn't like in a man. They demonstrated that they

had gained wisdom, which in turn gave me liberty to have confidence in their judgment.

I would never have encouraged any young man to court my daughters if they had reservations about him. They are the one who is going to have to obey and honor this guy for the rest of their lives. We get many letters from wives who came to marriage through a betrothal system that left them out of the process. Father and Mother picked her husband, and daughter was expected to be respectful of their choice. After marriage, she had nothing in common with him, and is now miserable and living with a man she doesn't even like.

I never felt so inadequate as a father than when it came to the moment of agreeing to husbands for my daughters. **None of them** picked the men that I would have chosen. Their choices had, of course, passed my preliminary questioning, but none of them were what I would have expected my daughters to have liked.

There. I have said it publicly. Sorry, sons-in-law, but you didn't marry me. You married my daughters whom I had trained so I could trust **their** choice, not mine! As I look at them now, I can see that each couple is perfectly suited. They are all delightfully happy and holy. Now I find it absolutely amazing that parents would think that they are wise enough to choose for their children – but then I sure thought I was. Before my sons found their own mates, I was actively seeking out and arranging for them to meet girls that I thought were absolutely perfect. They were great choices for my personality and preferences, but not for the boys. Now that they are both happily married, I can so easily see that their spouses are just *perfect* for them, but I couldn't see it before they were married. I knew they were fine girls, but they were not what I would have chosen when I was twenty-five years old. If my sons had married the girls I picked out, they likely would have been miserable. I guess some people have a taste for spinach, and others like green beans.

Another avenue to wisdom is your other children. When guys came around "checking" out our girls, my sons were the first to be aware of it. They made it a point to spend time with the fellows and "check **them** out." Every time a fellow got

within reaching distance of one of my daughters, I asked my sons what they thought. If they didn't approve, I didn't approve, and my daughters so trusted their brothers' judgment that neither did they approve. My sons stood tall as guardians over their sisters, and we also received valuable input from the younger children.

Now, if you perceive that your wife or your other children are speaking from a selfish and controlling perspective, you will want to cautiously hold their opinions in abeyance. But anytime you perceive that the advice is coming from an honest and pure heart, consider their assessment fully.

One last wall of protection is the telephone. If someone came to your office seeking employment, you would naturally want to look down their back trail, their work history. If they have sued their last three employers, well. . .hmm. Call around and find out everything you can about this fellow. Drop in on him at work – unannounced. Visit his home. Talk with his parents. Speak to his pastor. Look at his room. Sit down at his computer and look up the history. And, if you know anybody in the FBI or Homeland Security. . .Hey, this guy is applying for a top position in your family! *Go at it like a cop.* Appear relaxed and casual of course, almost indifferent if you can. But, check

around and keep your eyes open for anything that smacks of negativity, especially if it contradicts information learned in your interviews with the young man.

Finally, you must not allow them to become deeply emotionally involved before the young man has been cleared. You know you can't slow down emotional attachments, but you can speed up your "investigation" efforts.

Finally, again do not allow any *courtship* to begin until both parties are ready to be married. My wife and I knew each other well before we got engaged, but our engagement was only six days long. Two or three months is generally long enough for love and passion to percolate. *When it comes time to eat supper, you shouldn't have to warm up your plate; just sit down and eat it while it is hot.* Lengthy warming tends to make a soggy meal. Human passion operates on a natural bell curve. Let it flow naturally. Frustrated love can only sour.

"There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid" (Proverbs 30:18).

Long live holy matrimony, love and passion!

A Free Woman

I've been studying the word phobao, as in Ephesians 5:33, and telling others that it is not a wimpy word. Then I found phobos, as in Ephesians 5:21. If we do not phobos God as wives, and phobao our husbands, we do not love God. As I have shared this with many women, several had already heard of your Created to be His Help Meet book and suggested that I would like it. I've seen a big change in our home since I have studied this. Oh, what got me started was watching your video for wives "Marriage God's Way." It pinned me to the mat. I had been married 23 years, but I was never so convicted of my sin as much as I was after viewing your video. I bought three of those videos, and many women have viewed them. Some were floored when they saw their sin, other were not moved at all. I plan to spread the truth of God's Word to wives with everyone I meet, so that I can help rescue women who do not phobos

God's word. Also, I read a newsletter from you years ago about husbands addicted to porn "Pornography-Road to Hell." Michael wrote that if a wife could still be a godly wife to a husband addicted to porn, she would be his hero. With tears, I write that many times I wanted to quit our marriage, but his words have kept me going. I would probably be divorced if I hadn't read that newsletter. Thank you for boldly confronting this problem and encouraging women to live for God! After viewing the video for wives, I felt my sin so greatly that I never wanted to say another disrespectful word to my husband. I didn't want to judge him ever again, and I felt I had no right to. I was so grieved by my sin that his pornographic sin was erased from my mind. The next six weeks, I felt like a free woman. I look forward to reading your book!

P.