

What He Must Be . . . If He Wants to Marry My Daughter

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MULTIGENERATIONAL VISION

“I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

EXODUS 20:5-6

WHO GIVES THIS WOMAN?

My hands were shaking as I stood at the altar staring into the eyes of all those people. I tried to relax, but the more I thought about it, the worse it got. My hands were sweating, my mouth was dry, and I had a thousand things running through my head. The music started, the crowd stood to their feet, and then, like something out of a movie script, the bride appeared. I thought I was going to pass out . . . and it wasn't even my wedding.

Here I was, a young seminarian about to perform his first “real” wedding ceremony. It was all I could do to get through my lines and remember the bride's and groom's names. Since then I've thought a lot about weddings. To tell the truth, I'm not much of a fan. The whole thing has become so commercialized that the sacred covenant at the center of it all has been all but lost. However, a closer look at the wedding ceremony offers important insight.

For one thing, most people—whether they are Christians or not—want to get married in a church. They also usually want to have the ceremony performed by a minister. Why? I believe this is

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due to the fact that we all know deep down that God is the author of marriage. We understand that marriage is sacred.

However, what intrigues me most is a simple ritual that goes almost unnoticed in contemporary ceremonies—the consent of the father for the bride to marry. As I stood there that day, I asked the age-old question, “Who gives this woman to be married?” Even in the movies sentimental screenwriters often work the traditional response, “Her mother and I do” into the script. But where does this come from? What does it mean? Do we really believe that a woman needs the consent of her father in order to marry? Do we really believe a young man needs permission from the father of the bride? Or is this question (and the corresponding “may I have your daughter’s hand in marriage?” before the official engagement) merely a quaint, anachronistic touch that we can do without if we wish?

I believe it’s more than that. I believe these two steps are extremely important. I also believe that their true meaning and significance must be recovered. Young men have traditionally asked a woman’s father for her hand in marriage because we have always known that fathers are responsible for protecting their daughters. Unfortunately, this question is often reserved until after the couple has been seeing each other for years and, in many instances, have already begun to enjoy the privileges of marriage. At that point the question is reduced to an insulting, symbolic gesture.

As for the question at the altar, I believe that too has great significance. Fathers do indeed “give [their] daughters in marriage” (Jeremiah 29:6). This is a symbol of protection and care for the daughter being entrusted to her husband. It is also a symbol of trust. The father is saying to his daughter, “I have evaluated and appraised this man, and I trust him with the most precious thing in the world, my little girl.”

If this is true (and I believe it is), then fathers must do more than just send their daughters off into the world and “hope they come back with a good one.” We must take our responsibility seriously. We must walk with our daughters through this process of finding a suitable husband. We must also actively protect our

daughters from men who do not measure up to God's standard. If we don't, the consequences may be dire.

Unfortunately, most of us have little or no experience or coaching in this area. We have been conditioned by our culture to take a backseat and just hope for the best. As a result, our daughters are left to fend for themselves, and the results are sometimes frightening. But what's a father to do? Are we supposed to arrange marriages? Should we lock our daughters in the basement until they're thirty? Besides, how appropriate would it be for me to stick my nose in her business?

These questions and a whole host of others have kept many fathers on the sidelines. But this simply is not good enough. There is too much at stake. For the sake of our children and our children's children, we must reclaim this ground. We must begin to think outside the cultural box in order to protect our sons and daughters from the devastation all around us.

A MULTIGENERATIONAL OBJECT LESSON

Several years ago, my family had the privilege of building our first home. People warned us that the experience would be traumatic, but we went forward nonetheless. Several events surrounding that experience are burned indelibly on the forefront of my mind. One of the most poignant memories is the day I decided to plant some shade trees.

I had talked about planting shade trees in our backyard for weeks. I researched the different types of trees known to thrive in our part of the country. I looked into the type and amount of shade each would provide. I even estimated the amount of time it would take for each type of tree to reach maturity. In short, I did my homework. Finally, the day came and I went out and bought our trees. I bought a magnolia because it is one of my all-time favorites. I also bought a sweetgum, a red maple, and an oak tree. I had the trees delivered and planted them in strategic sections of our yard, paying particular attention to the course of the setting summer sun.

At last, after the last support stake was driven into the ground, my work was done. I stepped back, took in the glorious sight,

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and hurried off to collect Bridget and the kids. I had them all close their eyes as they walked through the back door. Then, after everyone was in perfect viewing position, I yelled, “Ta da!”

I wish I could say that everyone marveled at the grandeur of our new landscape. However, much to my dismay the children were actually quite disappointed. They looked at the trees, then back at me, then back at the trees, then back at me. Finally, after a few moments of silence, one of them said, “That’s it?” “What do you mean?” I replied. “I thought you were planting *trees*,” the let-down child added. “That’s what I did,” I said with a hint of frustration in my voice. Then it dawned on me. They were expecting full-grown, thick-limbed, ready-to-climb trees! They couldn’t understand why I was so excited about these glorified bushes. Fortunately, I recognized that was an incredible teaching moment.

I told the children that planting trees takes patience. We would have to wait for the trees to reach maturity. However, in five or ten years there would be more shade than they could imagine. At this point they looked at each other and shook their heads. “Dad, five or ten years is like forever,” my daughter said as she folded her arms in disappointment. Here was another teachable moment. I looked at my children and told them something that I have since said to them no less than a hundred times. “Kids, you must seek to become the kind of people who plant shade trees for others to sit under.” I went on to explain how people in the past had sacrificed in order for us to enjoy virtually everything we had. We talked about our Founding Fathers, about brave African slaves, about adventurers, and even about grandparents.

I’m not sure how much of that day’s lesson sank in with the children. However, since then I have been trying to teach the same lesson in myriad ways. We constantly talk about living our lives in such a way that we plant spiritual shade trees for the benefit of others. We use phrases like multigenerational vision and legacy. As our children get older and anticipate their future, they are beginning to understand that life is about more than the here and now. They are beginning to catch the vision.

One area where this vision is taking hold is in our family’s

understanding of marriage, family, and manhood and womanhood. Think about it. If we think multigenerationally, that has to impact the way we view marriage and family. Where do these multiple generations come from if not through marriage and the family?

Thus I can no longer view my role in raising sons and daughters merely as an eighteen-year sentence to be endured. If I have a multigenerational vision for my family, then my role in fathering my children is a lifelong partnership in kingdom expansion. These truths force us to adjust our thinking in regard to what we are teaching our daughters to expect and our sons to become in regard to biblical manhood.

WHY, WHAT HE MUST BE

I am convinced that one of the most crucial questions I face is, whom should my daughter marry? Notice I did not say, *will* but *should*. Far too often we think about the marriages of our children like pagan mystics. We close our eyes real hard and just hope against hope that the stars will align and the right man will come along. I think this is a mistake. The issue of whom our daughters will marry is far too important to be approached in this unbiblical fashion.

I believe God has spoken rather decisively in his Word about what our daughters *should* look for. Moreover, I believe there are some non-negotiables that our daughters *must* be looking for. There are some things a man simply must be before he is qualified to assume the role of a Christian husband. For instance, he must be a Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14); he must be committed to biblical headship (Ephesians 5:23ff.); he must welcome children (Psalm 127:3–5); he must be a suitable priest (Joshua 24:15), prophet (Ephesians 6:4), protector (Nehemiah 4:13–14), and provider (1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:5). A man who does not possess—or at least show strong signs of—these and other basic characteristics does not meet the basic job description laid down for husbands in the Bible.

Moreover, as a father, it is my responsibility to teach my daughter what these requirements are, encourage her not to settle

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for less, and walk with her through the process of evaluating potential suitors. Of course, these ideas may come as a shock to many in contemporary Christian circles (not to mention society at large). However, I have found that there is a growing discontentment among young women today. They are tired of being thrown to the wolves. They are also tired of feeling like they have to settle for less than God's best. My question is, why should they?

I am not talking about setting an unreasonable standard. In fact, if you think the aforementioned list is unreasonable, I recommend you look at it again. We're not talking about requiring a man to be six feet tall or have a six-figure income, a college degree, or a two-car garage. We're talking basic, biblical requirements. And if we desire to see God's favor in generations to come, we had better be committed to upholding his standards when it comes to "giving [our] daughters in marriage" (Jeremiah 29:6).

I have often been asked when I started to think multigenerationally in regard to my family. The truth is, I have always thought in terms of multigenerational legacy. Unfortunately, I learned the hard way. I watched the negative multigenerational legacy of my family from my childhood. All around me families were falling apart. My parents, my grandparents, and eventually my cousins all bore evidence of the reality of multigenerational legacy. Of course, I didn't recognize this right away. In fact, it would be many years before I would grasp the magnitude of my multigenerational family legacy.

THE INEVITABILITY OF MULTIGENERATIONAL LEGACY

It was Thursday, April 27, 2006, and my life was about to change. I walked into the house after running a few errands, and I could tell something was wrong. The house was eerily quiet. The kind of quiet we're not used to with all the kids we have running around. I made my way through the living room into our bedroom where Bridget was ending a phone call rather abruptly. She tried to smile at me, but she couldn't. The corners of her mouth quivered as she fought to keep them from turning downward. "Sit down, baby," she said as she stroked my arm. She didn't have to say another

word, but she did. “Your dad is dead.” Those words reverberated in my ears. I can almost hear them today. I had waited for this day. Truth be told, I had at times hoped for this day. However, I wasn’t ready for it. I wasn’t ready to be fatherless . . . again.

Another Fatherless Child

As a boy I had grown accustomed to fatherlessness. My mother and father were high-school sweethearts who found themselves dealing with an unplanned pregnancy in the climate of the late 1960s. In those days there was no *Roe v. Wade* screaming at young men and women from every corridor of society that abortion is *the* answer. In those days Planned Parenthood—which now has more than 70 percent of its offices in minority neighborhoods in keeping with the eugenics of their founder, Margaret Sanger—wasn’t as ubiquitous as it is today. In those days the culture of death refrained from screaming at young black women and men, “Better to kill the baby than to allow him to be born black and poor.” In those days a young man knew he was expected to “do the right thing” and get married. So that’s exactly what my parents did.

Unfortunately, my parents’ marriage did not last long. I have seen pictures of the three of us together, but I have no memories of that brief stint. All I ever knew was fatherlessness. I was blessed to have occasional contact with my dad. I spent time with him on numerous occasions. However, I, like most of the kids I knew growing up, did not have the privilege of his presence in our home.

Moreover, my relatives with whom I had contact were in the same boat. Both my parents were married twice. My paternal grandparents lived next door to each other, had three children, and were not married. Bridget didn’t fare any better. Her parents divorced twice, and at the time of this writing her father is on his sixth marriage. Out of our four parents, one is currently married (for the sixth time), all four have been divorced, and three have had children out of wedlock.

Things don’t get any better with our siblings. We have seven siblings between us. Because of the ravages of sin, immorality, and

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divorce, nearly half of our siblings are half siblings. Nevertheless, the legacy has continued. Four of our seven siblings are currently married. Five of seven (all who have married) have been divorced. Four of the seven have had children out of wedlock.

The legacy also extends to my first cousins. Few of my first cousins—on both my mother's side of the family and on my father's side—had fathers in the home. The lone exceptions were the five children of one of my mother's six siblings whom I barely knew. Thus, only five of my twenty-three first cousins grew up with a father in the home. That's just shy of 22 percent. Ironically, their father died before they were all grown.

As to the marks of the family legacy, they are definitely present among my first cousins. Only eight of the twenty-three (35 percent) ever married. Five of the eight (63 percent) who married have been divorced. However, that number is a bit deceiving since one is deceased, one was widowed, and another is currently separated. Thus, only one of my twenty-three first cousins is currently married and living with her spouse. That represents less than one half of 1 percent!

Unfortunately, the trend is being passed on to yet another generation, as is evident in the parenting practices of the current generation. At least fourteen of my twenty-three first cousins (61 percent) have parented children out of wedlock. More specifically, twenty-eight of the thirty-eight children born to my first cousins (73 percent) were born out of wedlock.¹

Though this may sound shocking to some, I never gave it a second thought. In fact, as I think back over my childhood, I can hardly remember one close friend who had a father in his home. I remember Terence and Howard who lived across the street. Their father did not live with them. Martin, who lived on my block, lived with his mother as well. Try as I might, I cannot think of one kid with whom I played in the neighborhood who had a mother and a father in the home.

In some ways this eased my burden. Had I grown up in a neighborhood full of boys whose dad lived with them and had family members with intact families, I would probably have felt the weight of my father's absence (and my family legacy) more

acutely than I did. Nevertheless, I knew something was missing. I remember watching television shows like *I Love Lucy* and wishing I had parents who fought like Ricky and Lucy did. At least little Ricky had immediate access to both of them.

As I grew up, the yearning subsided. This was due in part to other father figures such as coaches and teachers who began to stand in the gap. However, it was largely due to my father's constant struggle to overcome a drug habit. His life was filled with the highs and lows of drug use, rehab, sobriety, and relapse. I rode the roller coaster with him for a while, but when I started a family of my own, that became an untenable proposition. I would hear from my father when he was on the mountaintop; then he would disappear for months, and we knew he had "fallen off the wagon" again.

I wish I could say I stayed strong through it all. However, I did not. There were days when I prayed he would die. I remember praying, "Lord, it would be easier knowing he was dead than wondering how he's destroying his life today." Then there were other days when I tried to seek him out and help him. It all seemed quite hopeless until four months prior to his death.

In January 2006 I got a call from my father and had a conversation with a different man. He wasn't just clean and sober—he was changed! We began to talk more regularly, and for the first time we *really talked*. We discussed spiritual matters, politics, current events, history, family, and a host of other things. It got to the point where my wife, Bridget, would walk into my office and know right away if it was my father on the phone. There was just something special in the connection we had established.

Unfortunately, those were our final days together. One day my father was in the middle of a conversation when the man with whom he was speaking was called away. When he came back he found my father slumped over dead. That was it. It was as though the Lord had brought my father back to his right mind just long enough to set a few things straight. However, the life that he had led ultimately took its toll.

One of the first people I called was my brother, Gebel. Gebel was a senior in high school at the time. We barely knew each

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other. However, in many ways I knew Gebel well. I knew the struggles that he had to endure in my father's absence during his formative years. I also knew the struggles that lay ahead as he embarked on the rest of his life without even the possibility of his father's presence. I knew Gebel because I knew the cost of fatherlessness. I knew Gebel because I had tasted the reality of multigenerational legacy.

The Cost of Fatherlessness

Anyone who doubts the reality of multigenerational legacy need only look at statistics related to fatherlessness. Nearly 75 percent of fatherless American children will experience poverty before the age of eleven, compared to 20 percent of those raised by two parents.² In fact, fatherlessness is the number one cause of poverty in America. Although it happens on occasion, very few children are living in poverty with a father in the home. However, poverty is not the only legacy of fatherlessness.

Children living in homes where fathers are absent are far more likely to be expelled from school.³ They are also more likely to drop out of school, develop emotional or behavioral problems, commit suicide, and fall victim to child abuse or neglect.⁴ Fatherless males are far more likely to become violent criminals (fatherless males represent 70 percent of the prison population serving long-term sentences).⁵

We have all heard these startling statistics associated with fatherlessness. Nevertheless, the trend toward fatherlessness continues. It is as though we do not care about the high price we all pay for fatherlessness. These facts should compel us to take a hard look at what we are doing to raise and train godly men and what we are willing to do to see to it that our daughters find godly men and refuse to settle for anything less.

As a pastor, I have had the unfortunate experience of trying to communicate this harsh reality to men considering divorce. It breaks my heart to realize that so many men out there are infected with the poison of self-centeredness. However, try as I might it is often impossible to get through to a man who is committed to the view that "God wouldn't want me in an unhappy marriage"

or “It’s better for the kids to have divorced parents than for them to have parents who are in conflict.”

Anyone who has been around for a while knows that these statements represent the norm. What’s worse, many of these men have heard these comments fall from the lips of pastors or “Christian counselors.” I am not suggesting that all divorced men are calloused. Nor do I believe that divorce is always a man’s “fault.” A discussion about the theology of divorce and remarriage is beyond the scope of this book. However, I do believe that the way we think about the consequences of weak, ungodly, or absent fatherhood is unbiblical and unhealthy.

The result of this is a generation of young men and women who view marriage as a temporary arrangement as opposed to a lifelong covenant. As a father, I must protect my daughter from men who think this way. I must also see to it that I do not allow such thinking in my sons. A young man who is worthy of a wife will have a clear understanding of the covenantal nature of marriage. He will also have a healthy apprehension when he thinks about the magnitude of his responsibility should he assume the role of a husband and father. He must know the weight he is taking on his shoulders and be willing to accept it. He must be a man who is willing to endure hardship for the sake of his family should he be called upon to do so.

What is it going to take for us to hear the alarm? Or as researchers Carol and Don Browning ask, what is it going to take for us to *sound* the alarm? They write, “We have asked dozens of people from . . . churches, ‘Have you ever heard in your church a discussion about the crisis of fatherhood?’ and have yet to hear one member say yes.”⁶ This is astonishing! Admittedly, this is anecdotal evidence. However, one cannot help but be alarmed by the experience of these researchers.

THE OTHER SIDE OF MULTIGENERATIONAL LEGACY

Jonathan Edwards is perhaps the most influential American theologian of all times. Born in 1703, his books are still a mainstay in Christian colleges and seminaries. More importantly, his collected works are featured prominently in many pastors’ libraries.

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However, far too few people know the other side of Edwards's story. Edwards was not only a remarkable preacher, professor, pastor, and prolific author. He was also a loving family man. He was devoted to his wife, Sarah, for thirty-one years until his death in 1758. He led in regular family worship and oversaw the education of his eleven children. Moreover, his was a multigenerational legacy seldom seen before or since.

In 1900, A. E. Winship studied what happened to 1,400 descendants of Jonathan and Sarah by the year 1900. He found they included 13 college presidents, 65 professors, 100 lawyers and a dean of a law school, 30 judges, 66 physicians and a dean of a medical school, and 80 holders of public office, including three US Senators, mayors of three large cities, governors of three states, a Vice-President of the United States, and a controller of the United States Treasury. They had written over 135 books and edited eighteen journals and periodicals. Many had entered the ministry. Over 100 were missionaries and others were on mission boards.⁷

Interestingly, many overlook the fact that Edwards was the leader of the Great Awakening. In other words, he lived during a time of great decline! As Charles Finney often said, "Revival presupposes declension." The Puritans had come to this land and established an amazing foundation. However, the passion of their descendants began to wane. The fire had begun to die. Jonathan Edwards was not the product of a great revival; he was one of its catalysts.

As real as the aforementioned facts and statistics about my family legacy may be, they are far from the final word. Multigenerational legacy is real but not quite insurmountable. We can change course. We *must* change course! We must recognize the price we have paid and say, enough! We, like Jonathan Edwards, must fan the flames of revival even when the embers appear to be dead. God can use us in the midst of a cold, dead heritage to bring about the winds of revival.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down

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to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Exodus 20:4–6)

God is not only a just God—he is also merciful. Just as he judges iniquity, he also rewards righteousness.

My hope for this book is that those who read it will experience God’s grace in new and marvelous ways. I believe we can bring about a change in the way we view manhood, womanhood, and marriage. I believe we can plant seeds in the lives of our children that will grow and bear much fruit in generations to come. I also believe that if we don’t, we will continue down the current destructive path, and the results will be catastrophic.

If change is to happen, we must come to grips with the sinful patterns and tendencies in us and in those around us. We must not do this merely to point fingers and assign blame. We must do this in an effort to recognize and confess sin (1 John 1:9). We must be zealous and repent (Revelation 3:19). We must chart a new course whereby we “go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11).

Marriage Matters in Multigenerational Legacy

It goes without saying that marriage is the key to multigenerational legacy. God, in his sovereignty, created man to live, thrive, and multiply in the context of the covenant of marriage. As such, the marriage relationship has multifaceted significance. In Jeremiah 29, the prophet writes a letter to the Babylonian exiles in which he gives them instructions for their lengthy stay.

Most of us know the promise given in verse 11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (NIV). However, many do not know the promise in verse 10: “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10). Now, the seventy years referred to in the text only gets us to the edict of King Cyrus. The exiles to whom Jeremiah’s letter was written would never see

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the fulfillment of this promise. The people of Israel would be in Babylon for over one hundred and fifty years (597–444 B.C., when they began to return under Nehemiah). This is longer than the prophet's hearers would live.

Thus, the familiar promise of Jeremiah 29:11 is a multigenerational promise. While this may be disappointing to some, it shouldn't be. The fact that God can promise something to the descendants of his people some one hundred and fifty years later is evidence of his sovereignty. God can only make these promises if he knows and controls what is to come. Our God is an awesome God.

This promise points to the multigenerational character of God's dealings with his people. We see this, for instance, in Peter's pronouncement at Pentecost. During his sermon he calls his hearers to repentance and points them to the promise of forgiveness in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he adds, "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:38–39). Whether in the New Testament or the Old, God has a multigenerational plan, and he alone has the power to bring it to pass.

In light of God's multigenerational plan to restore the exiles after the completion of his judgment of the nation, Jeremiah instructs the exiles as to how they should live as they await the Lord's promise. He tells them to build houses, to plant gardens, and even to pray for the welfare of the place where they were in exile. However, one of Jeremiah's instructions goes straight to the heart of the multigenerational message he is proclaiming.

Jeremiah instructs the exiles to "Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease" (Jeremiah 29:6). These words are almost absurd in light of the circumstances—unless one understands two things. First, the answer to their dilemma is sure. This we know to be the case because of God's promise. Second, this instruction makes complete sense once we know that the fulfillment of the promise is generations away.

I believe we are like these exiles in many ways. We too live in a foreign land. This is by no means our home. Much of our culture is hostile to the things of God. We take monuments—I'm talking about the Ten Commandments, etc. (i.e., Judge Roy Moore)—out of public squares; we don't allow the use of the word *Christmas* or—thanks to Senate Bill 1437 in California—the use of the words *mother* and *father* as exclusive referents to parents. In many ways we are exiles in this post-Christian culture (to borrow a phrase from Francis Schaffer).

We are also like the exiles in that the purging of God's people is likely to take generations. We too have run off after foreign gods. We have intermarried with the pagans, worshipped the Baals and Asheroth, and offered our children as burnt offerings. My hope is that God, in his mercy, will call us to repentance and as we return to him will restore us before it is too late. As such, I believe our children, and our children's children, are crucial. We must train a generation to follow hard after God in spite of what their forefathers have done. We must take great care as we "give [our] daughters in marriage." The marriages of our sons and daughters will serve as the foundation upon which the next generation is built.

Fathers Have a Role to Play in Marriage

This book is built on a single, simple premise: I believe fathers have a God-given responsibility to see to it that their daughters marry well and that their sons become worthy husbands. As such, I believe it is necessary for fathers to model biblical manhood, teach biblical manhood, and hunt for biblical manhood on behalf of their daughters. Similarly, I believe fathers with sons have a responsibility to prepare their sons for marriage.

Several years ago, when Jasmine was much younger, a family friend went through a difficult divorce. The breakup did not come as a surprise. It was obvious that theirs was not a God-honoring, biblically functioning marriage, and the handwriting had been on the wall for quite some time.

As things began to work themselves out and the dust began to settle, we talked with our children about the pain and high cost of

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divorce. As we took advantage of this teachable moment, Jasmine said something that I'll never forget. She looked at me, shook her head, and said, "Daddy, I'm glad I've got you to pick my husband." She was dead serious. She had just witnessed the consequences that often accompany a decision to marry an unworthy man, and although she wasn't old enough to understand it all, she did understand that her father was there to protect her.

I have no intention of picking Jasmine's husband for her. We do not advocate arranged marriages. Nor was that my daughter's understanding of the process. She was merely acknowledging what she had been taught all her life—the fact that her father intends to play an active role in the process of finding and evaluating potential suitors.

Daughters Have a Role to Play in Marriage

This book is not an attempt to absolve young women of their responsibility. Ultimately they are the ones who will walk the aisle and take the vows. They are the ones who will either accept or reject the proposal. That is why this book is in large part for them. Have your daughters read this book. Doing so will be helpful in several ways.

First, this book will help young women gain a better understanding of what they should be looking for. As the old saying goes, if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. Sadly, this is precisely the way many young women approach marriage. Casual dating turns into a long-term relationship. A long-term relationship turns into a foregone conclusion. And eventually that foregone conclusion turns into a marriage. This does not have to be the case. There is more! We must help our daughters turn their affections away from cultural conditioning and toward biblical truth.

Second, this book will help young women see the importance of partnering with their parents in the courtship process. I believe most young women want their parents involved in this. Of course, the culture has painted them into a corner, and they don't quite know how to get out. Nevertheless, many young women want some degree of help when it comes to choosing a mate. After all,

this is the most life-altering decision they will make apart from coming to repentance and faith in Christ.

Finally, this book will help young women realize their dependence upon God. Reading the biblical characteristics of a godly man can be a bit intimidating. Since the bar has been set so low for so long in our culture, many of the qualities and characteristics seem strange, and perhaps a bit distant. But they are supposed to be. This book is not about what every Tom, Dick, and Harry already is; this is about what a God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Bible-believing husband must be. If it were easy or normal, there would be no need for this book.

Only God can bring about the kind of change necessary in a young man to prepare him to be the kind of husband the Scriptures portray. Thus, reading this book should drive young women to their knees as they plead with God to make a man like this and bring him across their path. In the meantime, we must not settle for less than what he *must* be.