



## Guarding Girls

I'm not an expert but I am experienced. For 27 years I have been blessed to be the father of daughters, eventually raising five of them. Not only am I extremely blessed but I have also been extensively challenged. To be a father is a weighty responsibility.

As a father, God holds me accountable for whether or not I will 'take my children to heaven' with me (See for example Joshua 24:15). But as a father of *daughters* He also holds me accountable for their purity of character and of body. Related to this is my accountability before God that if they marry, that they marry a godly man. Any father who contemplates such a weighty responsibility will have days of fear and trembling.

### Teach your daughters well

If fathers don't take such responsibility seriously then the result is often that young daughters grow up to be disappointed *women*. Many lose their virginity through fornication rather than giving this as a gift to their husband on their wedding night. Others end up following their hearts and marrying a 'really nice guy' who at the same time is also a really *lost* man. Therefore from day one the home is split down the middle with Satan on one side and Jesus on the other. And the forthcoming children are not sure which side to choose. Of course the worst case scenario is when a father's daughter *herself* is outside of Christ. She will most likely marry an unbeliever and so her deeply disappointed father becomes an even more disappointed grandfather. How can we avoid this heartache? By guarding our daughters.

Fathers of course must guard their daughters from being sexually defrauded (more on this later) but fundamentally we must do all we can to guard our daughters from being *spiritually* defrauded.

One major factor in the church being covenantally faithful is to raise our children to know the Lord and then to be sure that they only marry *in the Lord*. And this is especially important for dads of daughters. We need to guard our girls from entering into a relationship with someone who is not a true lover of God in Christ.

There are lots of things that could be said about this but one infamous example may help us to see the gravity of not taking this seriously.

One of the clearest, and saddest examples of fathers who failed their children in this matter of matrimony is found in Ezra 9. In this chapter Ezra discovers that the Jews, God's covenanted people, have intermarried with the surrounding Gentiles, those who were *not* covenanted with God. During their time of captivity in Babylon, the majority of Judah's families flowed along with the cultural stream with the result that their sons married unbelievers. A very sad consequence was that their offspring, as we learn in Nehemiah, could not even speak the '*language of Zion*' (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

Ezra was so distressed by this that he pulled his hair out, fasted, and with tears prayed to the Lord. God worked in the hearts of the people as evidenced by their repentance, even to the radical step of divorcing their unbelieving wives. Upon doing this they also '*offered a ram as a guilt offering*' (See Ezra 9-10). You will remember that such an offering was required when *God* had been defrauded. And be sure that when God's people allow their children to marry outside of God's covenanted people (believers) that God *is* being defrauded and His Church *is* being desecrated. Paul tells us how serious this is when he writes, '*If any one defiles the temple of God* (that is, the

local church), *God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy which temple you (plural) are* (1 Cor 3:17). God has not changed over the years. He is as committed today to a continuity of covenantally faithful generations as He was 2 500 years ago.

## **The Physical and the Spiritual**

One very practical way for fathers to guard their daughters from becoming unequally yoked with a man *spiritually*, is to guard them from becoming inappropriately yoked *physically*. 'Guarding our girls' from becoming physically involved with 'boys' is indeed a means to guarding their hearts from making a relational leap into what may end up being a spiritually defrauding and disastrous situation – one that may become inescapably sealed with marital vows.

Over the past couple of decades I have on occasion stirred up a 'hornets nest' by suggesting a 'no touching' approach for guys who desire a relationship with a girl. Though it is not the best translation, 1 Corinthians 7:1 in the KJV has served my philosophy well, '*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*' Exegetically this verse is teaching that it is morally right for a man *not* to have sex with a woman unless, as the context makes clear, they are *married* to each other. But as I have sought to argue over the years, if you don't literally touch a woman then it is impossible to fornicate with her.

Whenever I mention this I receive feedback such as, "Is it wrong for a guy to hug a girl?" or "Is it wrong for a guy and girl to hold hands?" Well, of course the answer is a resounding 'No.' For many people there is little risk that holding hands will lead to sexual sin. And yet to ask the question is often to miss the point of the counsel.

The issue is not how '*far*' one can go; rather the issue is the guarding of the couple from both the temptations to go *too* far as well as guarding them from the potential of defrauding the other. A recent book highlights this well in its title, '*Holding Hands, Holding Hearts.*'

I have not read the book but I appreciate the title. Consider the following when it comes to a physical relationship with one of the opposite sex.

- a physical relationship with the opposite sex begins at *some* point so we need to be careful *when* that begins;
- a physical relationship usually does not merely commence but it *advances* and therefore care must be taken where it leads; especially if it may lead beyond biblical boundaries; and,
- the beginning of a physical relationship implies that there is *more* to come. This latter point is related to the previous one and yet it is different.

## **The Physical as a Pledge?**

When a *physical* element enters the relationship then there is an implication that a deeper commitment is being made – this is especially so from the woman's perspective. For her, such physical contact *can* be interpreted as a 'pledge' that 'this relationship is going somewhere'; there is an implication that this relationship is going to develop and that there is a future for it. Sadly for many, the future comes and goes *without* a fulfilment of the implied promise and what is often left, at a minimum, is heartache and relational scar tissue.

In a worst case scenario, the result is sexual sin with the devastation that this brings. In a word, when a relationship moves to the physical there is always the danger that someone is going to be *defrauded*. And with such defrauding comes damage in some shape or form. I believe that as a father it is my biblical responsibility to *guard* my daughters from this.

## **Protecting Her Heart**

It should also be noted (my daughters have helped me to understand this) that a girl doesn't just randomly give her heart away in one meeting. Therefore a dad should be aware of who his

daughter is frequently talking to/spending time with, etc. – even at church. He should be aware of when feelings start to develop, not just when they are full blown, because then it is more difficult for her to follow her dad's guidance. 'Feelings' can mysteriously make a daughter *deaf* to her dad.

I am not at all claiming that the Bible prescribes a 'no touching policy'; and by the way, I do not have such a 'policy' for my daughters. Neither am I suggesting that we forbid our daughters from interacting with boys! I am simply inviting you to consider the *principles* raised and then work out what you think is the best approach for your own children.

What we must *not* do is to be passive about such issues. We do not have the liberty to debate the biblical truth that ***fathers are obligated under God to give biblical leadership to their daughters.*** And part of what the Bible requires is that we dads guard our girls until He gives them a godly husband. And then our son in law will assume the privileged responsibility to guard our (married) girl as she continues to grow as a godly woman.

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