

Dads date your daughters to build lasting relationships!

After we saw the newest version of this movie on our most recent 'date', I could not wait to write a brief word of encouragement to dads – especially you young ones. Date your daughters! Ignoring the fact that the most recent half of this picture was taken by the poster in a dark section of the theater, this pic represents a twenty-five year span of dating my daughter.

Beauty and the Beast (Disney cartoon version) was released about twenty-five years ago. Gracie, my daughter, was three or four years old at the time. (She is a little older than that in the above pic as we recently moved and could not find one at that specific age.)

One of the first dates I remember was taking her to see this movie. Today, it remains one of our favorites. So a couple of months ago when I saw the advance notice it would be released in March, I immediately texted her to get on her calendar for a repeat date – twenty-five years later.

We had a lot of dates in between. But dads, it does get harder as our daughters grow into their teen and college years. Two things are required to keep it going. You have to want to make it happen. Then you have to make time in your schedule to do so.

I remember times Gracie was reluctant to go out with me or attend father-daughter functions. I recall one particular time in high school when she reluctantly went with me to such an event, mostly because her friends were going with their dads. When the DJ played what I call an old 'beach music' song, I taught her to Shag – the most famous dance of the Carolinas – which I did very well back in the day and well enough still to impress her. We did the same dance at her wedding. Very special!

As a young dad, I was instructed by older ones that dating our daughters from an early age was the best way to build a longstanding

relationship with them. Great advice! I am so proud of my daughter who is a godly, young woman and successful entrepreneur, married to a rising country star. Boy, did he marry well! (Notwithstanding the fact that he got me as a FIL.)

Dads, it is even harder today to raise a godly, young woman than it was when I began being her dad. Secular media is relentless in trying to “help” us raise our kids, especially girls. What they should believe. What they are supposed to look like and how to dress. The lies come at them from many sides and sources. Self-esteem issues flow out of those trash-filled streams and can begin very young. Dads play an important role in being Truth-bearers – **even when it is not popular to hear.**

I have to interject I have a great wife, and my kids have the best mom who was there to nurture them at every turn and serve as a wonderful role model, especially for my daughter.

But dads serve a different role. As her dad, you are the first *man in her life*. That privilege is a gift from the Lord and accompanied by great responsibilities. You are the first man to love her and model, the best you can with all your flaws, what a man of God looks like and how she should be treated and respected. We have to love our daughters, hug them when they think it is cool to be hugged by their daddies, and when it becomes uncool as they get older – when butterfly kisses turn into looks that suggest you are the dumbest man on the planet. That is when you earn your ‘dad stripes’.

If you do not do that, you will learn the hard way there are many boys/young men eager to treat her in ways that are anything but respectful. She needs to learn from you (and her mom) what is unacceptable and be willing to let them know what she stands for and what she won’t.

I confess, there were (many) occasions I had to swallow my pride and the need to be right in order to apologize or ask forgiveness when I was wrong or she called me out and did not want anything to do with me. No one said being a dad is easy. It ranks just behind being a

mom in difficulty!

Dads, our mandate is to raise our little girls to become godly, young women – the wives and mothers of the next generation who are strong and confident. Strong in the Lord and His power. Confident in Whose they are, NOT who they are. Princesses of the King, the Most High God.

Let me close with one of my favorite verses (excerpted) David wrote about our daughters.

“Let our...daughters (be) as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace.”
(excerpt Psalm 144: 12 NASB)

Corner pillars are strong and vital. *“Fashioned as for a palace”* really fit Gracie because she began in the fashion world as a toddler, always dressing up and putting on shows. Interesting that she majored in that in college years later. But for us as dads, it means something different.

Fashioned as for a palace is part of our roles as dads. We play a vital role in ‘fashioning’ or shaping our daughters to be godly, young women, able and willing to serve in the palace – around the throne of Christ our King. I did some dumb things as a dad. But I must have done a few things right because my daughter is a child of the King and still willing to go out with me on dates.

Walter