

Potential Christian Spouse: It Takes One to Know One

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As my daughter Hannah and I were driving home one day from a youth rally, we naturally began to talk about the lessons we had heard that day. In the middle of that conversation came the comment from Hannah that is every mother's nightmare: "Mom," she said, "I am just really sick of hearing teachers and preachers say, 'Just say no to premarital sex.'"

I'm sure I almost had a wreck. I could not imagine such a statement coming out of her mouth! I had always heard that moms of teens should be on the lookout for the morphing; you know, the time when the compliance is replaced by complaining, the respect gives way to rebellion, and the silliness turns to sulking. Other moms had told me to prepare myself for a time when she would become a "real" teenager and just go to her room and talk on the phone or listen to music or whatever it is that teenage girls do for a few years. But Hannah and I had a sweet and open relationship. I was taken aback that the transformation could be so sudden and marked by such a blatant, "out of the blue" remark.

"I beg your pardon, Hannah, but what on earth do you mean?" I stammered.

"Oh, Mom, you know. I just don't think sexual promiscuity happens like that. I mean I really can't imagine myself ever having to seriously say "no" to a guy who is pressuring me to go all the way."

"I'm still a little fuzzy..."

"Well, Mom, you see it's like this. In my circle of friends, it's most often me who suggests that we change the channel because the show gets raunchy or the commercial is obscene. I am the one who won't go to the pool party because I'm not going to wear a swimsuit in front of a guy. Remember, it's me again who's home on Friday night because the movie they're seeing is not clean. And I am the one who won't even sit at the same table in the restaurant where someone is drinking. C'mon now, Mom....Do you really think that there is a guy out there who would ask me out with the faintest notion in his little brain that dating **me** would include sex?!"

She had a valid point. As she went on to explain, the guys who really are interested in sexual relationships are generally smart enough to "take the cues." They are more likely to look for girls who aren't displaying obvious defense mechanisms against sexual impurity. While perhaps

failing to understand that the devil can also “wear down” well meaning couples, she used good logic. It is true that a young girl’s chances are far better to stay away from fornication when she is making a good attempt to flee (1 Corinthians 6:18). Perhaps she didn’t see though, at that moment, the most profound inference she was making about her future. She was actually saying that a girl can, by her demeanor and all the little, day-to-day decisions of sanctification, “weed out” many unsavory potential boyfriends.

Our son has verified on several occasions that the same shoe fits the male foot, as well. Our conversations go something like this: I say...

“Caleb, what about Susan So-and -So? She’s really cute. Have you thought of asking her out?” (I always try to be helpful like that.)

“Yeah, Mom. I thought she was cute, too... And she’s pretty smart. She’s in my club and I thought about asking her out, but then one day I passed her in the student center and she used this vulgar word that just totally made me NOT want to date her.”

Or...

“Yeah, Mom. She’s nice, but she wears things sometimes that just really aren’t very modest. I don’t think so.”

Or,,

“Well, I did think about her, but she was in that group that invited me to go see that movie that no Christian should really see.”

I’m their mom. I understand that finding the right mate involves more than the process of elimination. I certainly am not under the delusion that we did everything right as we tried to develop moral courage in our kids. I hope they will forgive us for all the times we failed to take advantage of opportunities to strengthen the muscles of conviction. At the same time, though, I hope our kids remember all those hundreds of prayers in which we said their names, imploring the Father to help them find faithful Christian mates, mates who would help them get to Heaven. I hope our nightly family Bible times had a powerful and cumulative effect of showing them the importance of a marriage united in God’s Truth. I think they will remember times when we desperately tried to help other couples who had made poor choices in selecting mates. When they were old enough to start dating, we gave them little dating “check cards” they could carry in their

wallets with important characteristics for which they should be watching; things like “Can she be happy when she is not the center of attention?” or “Does he speak respectfully to and about his parents?” We encouraged them to attend a faithful Christian university where young adults from similar homes would likely attend. Their dates are always welcome at our house and are included in our family Bible times. You and your son can observe a lot about a girl’s spiritual moorings in the atmosphere of a family devotional. You and your daughter can learn a lot about a guy when your family engages in a deep spiritual conversation. There is truly a plethora of everyday activities, conversations, and nuances in the Christian family that make it only natural that the children look for someone with whom they can share the passion that dwarfs all other interests.

We are counting on our theory that the job of getting faithful sons-in-law and godly daughters-in-law is 95% complete when we successfully place real conviction in the hearts of our sons and daughters. The devil is very assertive in America in 2008. If our children grow up with their affections on Heaven (Colossians 3:2), it will not be an accident. Furthermore, if they grow up to be morally pure adults, they will be very dissimilar to the average person of the world (1 Peter 2:9). For distinctive young Christian adults, moral and spiritual priorities will serve as fences, seriously narrowing the field of potential mates. While this thinning of prospective candidates for marriage is a good thing, it may make the process of finding him or her arduous, perhaps even daunting. It may mean going out of your way, flexing your schedule, or even traveling to places where faithful people come together: Christian colleges, lectureships, seminars, and fellowship activities. The decision of whom to marry is larger than life. Its ramifications affect destinies of generations and reach to eternity. While the stakes are very high, we as parents must remember that, while we may give advice, we are not in charge of the final decision. But we have a very powerful ally in our corner. God, who pities us like a father pities his children (Psalm 103:13), has promised that when we ask according to His will, He hears and answers (1 John 5:14). I believe it is His will that my children marry people who will help them go to Heaven. So I will keep on asking daily. I really want God to help choose the two people who will be helping to raise my smart and beautiful grandchildren. He has never failed to give me the spiritual desires of my heart as I delight in Him (Psalm 37:4).

As my husband and I wait on the Lord with eager hearts of hope, we are overcome with a sense of wonder at His amazing care. We know that He is preparing another stage of our lives in which He has potential blessings the richness of which we don’t yet have the capacity to fully

anticipate. We believe there are two things that, by the grace of God, parents can do to help ensure the marital security of their children. The first is to daily teach, by your words, your priorities, your own marriage relationship, and your cumulative reactions to the immorality of the world around you. The second is to fervently pray for your children: that their major choices in life will always be those that will ultimately lead the future generations of your family to Heaven. The first one is the hardest. It is also urgent because it is a fleeting responsibility. Parents have one span of about eighteen short years (the shortest span of your lifetime!) to fulfill this huge and sacred responsibility. The second is the one we never stop doing. What are you doing **today** for your own children's step into eternity and marriage relationship—at whatever stage in life they are celebrating?