

RAISING BOYS  
HAS ALWAYS BEEN  
A CHALLENGE,  
BUT TODAY'S  
CULTURE MAKES  
IT EVEN MORE  
DIFFICULT.  
DR. JAMES  
DOBSON'S  
NEWEST BOOK,  
**BRINGING UP  
BOYS**, PROVIDES  
ADVICE TO HELP  
WITH THIS TASK.

W

hen I was 17 years old, Texas granted me a license to drive. It was a bad decision. My dad had recently bought a brand-new Ford, and he let me take it out for a spin during lunchtime one day. That was another big mistake. Hundreds of my fellow students were milling around my school as I drove by, which gave me a great opportunity to show off. I also wanted to test a theory that had intrigued me. In our little town, there were huge dips on both sides of certain intersections to handle the flash floods that occasionally swept down our streets. I reasoned that if I hit the bumps at high speed, my car would

sail over them. I was a big fan of Joey Chitwood, who was the Evel Knievel of that day, and I had seen him catapult his car over obstacles at the state fair. If Joey could do it . . . why not me?

Obviously, there was much that I didn't understand about the physics of 3,000 pounds of steel hurtling down the road. I approached the intersection helter-skelter and careened into the first dip. *Kaboom!* went the bottom of the car! Then I blasted into the second canyon. *Kabang!* My head hit the headliner, and the car convulsed up and down like a gigantic yo-yo. My entire life passed in front of my eyes. But my Texas friends were awestruck. They said, "Wow! Look at tha-yet. He got ar under his tars." ➤

# Like Father, Like Son

by Dr. James Dobson

STONE/JOHN LAMB





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A few weeks later, my good ol' dad came to me and said, "Uh, Bo (that's what he called me), I just took the car to the mechanic, and he said all four shocks have blown out. It's the craziest thing. Shocks usually wear out little by little, but the car is new and they're already shredded. Do you have any idea how this could have happened?"

The only thing that saved me was a momentary lapse of memory. At that second, I honestly didn't recall that I had hit the bumps, so I said no! He accepted my denial, and I escaped with my life. A few weeks later, I was driving near our home when the steering column broke, sending the Ford into the curb. Fortunately, no one was killed. It was years later before I realized that I had blown the shocks and probably cracked the steering post during "the great physics experiment." Who knows what other damage I did to Dad's new car on that day?

By the time I admitted to myself that I was the guilty party, the statute of limitations had expired on my crime. My dad had forgotten about the episode, and he never mentioned it again. Nor did I. My father went to his grave unaware of the stupid thing I had done. So Dad, if you're watching from up there, just know that I'm sorry and I won't ever do it again. I'll save my allowance for six years to pay for the damage. It was the only time I ever got "ar under my tars."

### Mirror images

Boys have a way of frustrating and irritating the very souls of dads. They leave our best tools out in the rain, or they scramble them on the workbench. They lose our binoculars, and they drop our cameras. Many of them are sassy, irresponsible and hard to handle. Or they do things that make no sense to the rational mind. Of course, we fathers shouldn't complain. We were boys once who drove our own dads crazy, too, so we should cut our sons some slack. Despite all the challenges associated with raising a rambunctious kid, one

of the greatest privileges is to have one of them hug your neck and "I love you, Dad."

Let's turn our attention now to the two primary ways a dad's influence is transmitted at home, beginning with modeling. If character training is a primary goal of parenting, and I believe it is, then the best way to instill it is through the demeanor and behavior of a father. Identification with him is a far more efficient teacher than lecturing, scolding, punishing, bribing and cajoling. Boys watch their dads intently, noting every detail of behavior and values. It is probably true in your home, too. Your sons will imitate much of what you do. If you blow up regularly and insult your wife, your boys will treat their mother and other females disrespectfully. If you drink to excess, your kids will be at risk for chemical substance abuse. If you curse or smoke or fight with your co-workers, your boys will probably follow suit. If you are selfish or mean or angry, you'll see those characteristics displayed in the next generation.

Fortunately, the converse is true. If you are honest, trustworthy, caring, loving, self-disciplined and God-fearing, your boys will be influenced by those traits as they age. If you are deeply committed to Jesus Christ and live by biblical principles, your children will probably follow in your footsteps. So much depends on what they observe in you, for better or worse.

### The family man

Have you thought through what you are attempting to model for your boys? If you're not sure who you are as a man or what you are trying to say with the message of your life, your boys (and girls) will have no consistent example. Such a plan should begin, I believe, with a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, who will guide your steps in the days ahead. Unless you know Him, your efforts to model righteousness will be inadequate and hollow.

Building upon that foundation, the goal of husbands and fathers is to be to become good family men.

Traditionally, that phrase has embodied four responsibilities shouldered at home. They are to serve (1) as the family provider, (2) as the leader of the clan, (3) as the protector and (4) as the spiritual leader and facilitator. These historic responsibilities have become controversial in recent years, but each is rooted in biblical teachings. Yep, it is old-fashioned stuff all right, but families have been less stable since men began backing away from this historic assignment. And, certainly, boys have been the big losers along the way.

In the absence of these well-designed roles, many fathers have a poor concept of what they're supposed to do or how to get it done. Some have surrendered their authority at home and are either uninvolved or trying to nurture their children in ways that are more characteristic of mothers. They have been told they need to be more sensitive and to learn to express a full range of emotions—from rage to fear. In effect, men are pressed to be more like women, and women are supposed to be more like men. This role reversal is terribly confusing to boys.

It is not inappropriate for a man to feel things deeply or to reveal his inner passions and thoughts. Nor must he present a frozen exterior to the world around him. But at the same time, there is a definite place in manhood for strength and confidence in the midst of a storm; and that role falls more naturally to men.

As a huge oak tree provides shelter and protection for all the living things that nest in its branches, a strong man provides security and comfort for every member of his family. He knows who he is as a child of God and what is best for his wife and children. His sons need such a man to look up to and to emulate. They disrespect wimpy dads who are intimidated by their wives or whose emotions hang on their sleeves. Does that sound corny and contrary to everything you have heard? So be it. Men were designed to take care of the people they love, even if it involves personal sacrifice. When they fulfill that responsibility, their wives, sons



RUBBERBALL

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and daughters usually live in greater peace and harmony.

### **Teaching old-fashioned respect**

I stated before that there were *two* primary ways fathers influence their boys. If modeling is the first, the second deals with the specific instruction that dads should transmit to their sons. That subject could fill many books, but I'll focus on the subtopic of what a father should teach his boys specifically about girls and women. They are not likely to learn it anywhere else.

I'm going to throw some suggestions at you now, assuming you are a father of one or more boys. Here we go: If you speak disparagingly of the opposite sex, or if you refer to

females as sex objects, those attitudes will translate directly into dating and marital relationships later on. Remember that your goal is to prepare a boy to lead a family when he's grown and to show him how to earn the respect of those he serves. Tell him it is great to laugh and have fun with his friends, but advise him not to be "goofy." Guys who are goofy are not respected, and people, especially girls and women, do not follow boys and men whom they disrespect.

Also, tell your son that he is *never* to hit a girl under any circumstances. Remind him that she is not as strong as he is and that she is deserving of his respect. Not only should he not hurt her, but also he should protect her if she is threatened. When he is strolling along with a girl on the street, he should walk on the outside, nearer the cars—symbolic of his responsibility to take care of her. When he is on a date, he should pay for her food and entertainment. Also (and this is simply my opinion), girls should not call boys on the telephone—at least not until a committed relationship has developed. Guys must be the initiators, planning the dates and asking for the girl's company.

Teach your son to open doors for girls and to help them with their coats or their chairs in a restaurant. When a guy goes to pick up his date, tell him to get out of the car and knock on the door. Never honk. Teach him to stand, in formal situations, when a woman leaves the room or a table or when she returns. This is a way of showing respect for her. If he treats her like a lady, she will treat him like a man. It's a great plan.

### **Broaching the "S" word**

Make a concerted effort to teach sexual abstinence to your sons *and* daughters, just as you teach them to abstain from drug and alcohol use and other harmful behavior. Of course you can do it! Young people are fully capable of understanding that irresponsible sex is not in their best interest and that it leads to disease, unwanted pregnancy, rejection, etc. ➤

In many cases today, no one is sharing this truth with teenagers. Parents are embarrassed to talk about sex, and, it disturbs me to say, churches are often unwilling to address the issue. That creates a vacuum into which liberal sex counselors have intruded to say, "We know you're going to have sex anyway, so why not do it right?" What a damning message that is. It is why herpes and other sexually transmitted diseases are spreading exponentially through the population and why unwanted pregnancies stalk school campuses. Despite these terrible social consequences, very little support is provided even for young people who are desperately looking for a valid reason to say no. They're told that "safe sex" is fine if they just use the right equipment.

As a father, you must counterbalance those messages at home. Tell your sons that there is no safety—no

place to hide—when one lives in contradiction to the laws of God! Remind them repeatedly and emphatically of the biblical teaching about sexual immorality—and why someone who violates those laws not only hurts himself, but also wounds the girl and cheats the man she will eventually marry. Tell them not to take anything that doesn't belong to them—especially the moral purity of a woman.

Also, tell your boys that sex is progressive in nature. Kissing and fondling will lead inevitably to greater familiarity. That is just the way we are made. If guys are determined to remain moral, they must take steps to slow down the physical progression early in the relationship. Tell them not to start the engine if they don't intend to let it run. Finally, make it clear that sexual morality is not just right and proper; it is one of the keys to a healthy marriage and family life.

lically based. They also contribute to harmonious relationships between sexes, which will pay dividends to those who will marry.

Author and family therapist Michael Gurian said it best: "Every time you raise a loving, wise and responsible man, you have created a better world for women. Women [today] are having to bond to half-men, with boys who were not fully raised to manhood, don't know how to bond, don't know what their responsibilities are to humanity, and don't have a strong sense of service." Today's fathers have an opportunity to change that.

I know the suggestions and ideas I have offered put great pressure on men to be superdads, but that's just the way it is. I felt it too when our kids were small. Frankly, raising kids was a scary responsibility for Shirley and me. We knew we were inadequate to handle the job and that no one is capable of guaranteeing the outcome of that task. That's why we began praying diligently for the spiritual welfare of our children from their birth. Thousands of times through the years, we found ourselves on our knees asking for wisdom and guidance.

Then we did the very best we could at home. Somehow, that seems to have been enough. Both of our children love the Lord today and are wonderful human beings. Shirley deserves most of the credit for the outcome, but I gave it my best effort too. Fortunately, parents do not have to be perfect in order to transmit their values to the next generation.

Our heavenly Father will also answer *your* prayers for *your* kids if you turn to Him. He will guide them through the storms of adolescence. But He will not do for you what you can and must do for yourself. ■

*Need help raising your boys? Request Dr. Dobson's most recent book, Bringing Up Boys. Turn to the center of the magazine.*

**bringing up  
BOYS**

DR. JAMES DOBSON

THE THINGS EMPHASIZED  
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### Your best shot

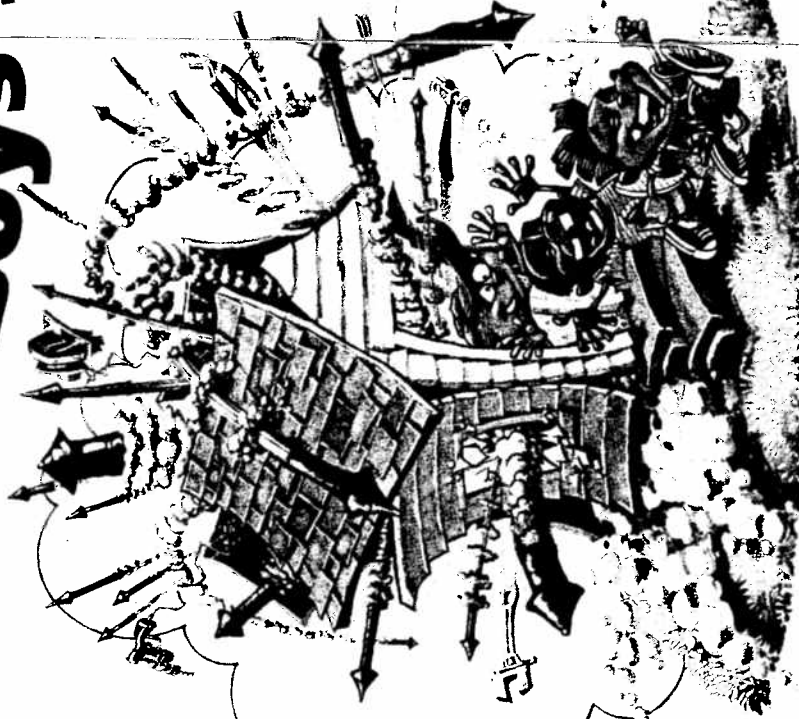
Begin these and other conversations early, geared to the age and maturity of the child. They must be well-planned and carried out as the years unfold. Haven't you heard grown men say with conviction, "My father always told me . . ."? This is because the things emphasized during childhood often stay with a person throughout life, even if they haven't appeared to "stick" at the time. In short, this kind of specific instruction is the substance of your responsibility to affirm, recognize and celebrate your son's journey into manhood.

Admittedly, as I've said, some of the ideas I've suggested sound like "yesterday." But they still make sense to me because most of them are bib-



PHOTO:ISC

# Boys Will Be Boys



If competent child-development specialists recognize that there are subtle but significant differences between little girls and little boys—much as there are subtle but significant differences between a daisy and a hawzooka. As a parent or prospective parent of boys, you need to be aware of these contrasts. If you are going to base your parental expectations strictly on your observations of the nice little family down the block who has only little girls, you are in for one way-big rude awakening.

Please consult my handy, patented "gender differences chart for children" to get a sense of what I mean.

- Little Chrs**
- 1. Hug
- 2. Giggle
- 3. Hold hands
- Little Boys**
- 1. Hit
- 2. Throw objects
- 3. Make noise

These differences have NOTHING to do with the environment in which children are raised. And if you have boys, understand that NOTHING you do will change the fact that deeply imbedded in their DNA right next to the hair color gene is:

- 1) the get dirty gene
- 2) the pick your nose gene, and
- 3) the "Hey, let's set off some fireworks" gene.

You can no more change these hereditary traits than you can turn a dachshund into a tofu-consuming, vegetarian zealot. Nevertheless, there are sharp, ideologically driven crusaders who for decades have tried to convince parents that if we would cast

aside our stereotypes and raise boys and girls identically, the end result would be a nation of healthy, balanced young people who would equally participate in all career paths, including the defensive line for the 49ers, and differ only in who has to shave facial hair.

Yeah, right. This premise ignores truckloads of data that clearly indicate that throughout the centuries and across all racial and geographic boundaries, little girls have been hugging and giggling and holding hands while boys have been

bitting, throwing objects and producing various noises, pausing only when they got some fireworks.

I can attest from personal experience that the genetic male impulse to ignite fireworks is so powerful that it is completely uncontrollable. This is probably why the Bible does not forbid it, any more than it forbids breathing.

I first experienced the potent effect of the fireworks gene when I was 7 years old. My brothers and I

fell under the strong influence of the fireworks gene. We were on a family trip, driving from northern California to Memphis, Tenn. On that trip we discovered that New Mexico consists mostly of a string of Dairy Queens, gas stations and fireworks stands that sell stuff we could NO WAY EVER buy in California, including surface-to-air missiles.

Mark, Brad and I bought tons of these explosives and set them off along the highway whenever we got bored, which was about every six minutes. My wife, Dale, was not enjoying it nearly as much as we were. In fact, she was so unamused that she even resisted the female impulse to hug us and giggle and hold our hands.

"Why don't we try to reach Memphis before we reach serenity?" she would ask as we launched another round of bottle rockets.

We finally reached our destination, where we were able to take in many interesting sights—such as the Mississippi River at night during a fireworks show and a Methodist church parking lot where we basically replicated a scale model of a World War II bombing run on Berlin. Dale finally dragged us off to some museums, art galleries, historic sites and just about anything else she could find that didn't involve matches.

Needless to say, no little girls participated in this event, occupied as they were with hugging and giggling and holding hands. Years later, I was not at all surprised when my own boys, Mark and Brad, hit me with the same old fireworks gene.

## A reason for the other

You may recall from the book of Genesis that, following each of His creative works, God saw that "it was good"—until He created Adam. Then He said, "It is NOT good for the man to be alone." Bible scholars will tell you that the Lord's statement about

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hands, their wives get to deal with it and you have no more legal liability.

And when you have grandchildren, if any of them are boys, do NOT let them near your tool shed. ■

*I have Meurer avoid still like to set off fireworks but, alas, he lives in California.*

*Adapted from Brotherhood Dance by Dave Meurer, copyright 1999, Bethany House Publishers. Used by permission.*

# What else would they be?

# For many parents, 'having it all' means having some and lying about the rest

By Marjorie Williams  
Washington Post

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "White House Staff Make Family a Priority," proclaimed a headline in the Feb. 15 Post, over a story showing that the Bush administration plans to encourage one of the capital's sunniest self-delusions.

This administration has a "more than symbolic" commitment to ensuring that high-ranking aides and officials make time for their families, according to the story. How do we know? Well, there's Karen Hughes — one of President Bush's very closest advisers — who leaves the office by 7 p.m. to get home to her family. One day a week, she actually leaves at 5:30.

There's Juleanna Glover Weiss, Vice President Dick Cheney's press secretary, who leaves by 6:30 or 7, "telling reporters to reach her

on her cell phone after that." Weiss is sympathetically described as having her sick 2-year-old daughter sit in on three vice-presidential interviews, waiting until Weiss could take her to the doctor

— proving once again that a man can pocket the Nobel Prize for paying the most cursory attention to his child.

They only work 12 or 13 hours a day! Lynne Cheney's chief of

## *The 'family-friendly' Bush team proves again that a man can pocket the Nobel Prize for paying the most cursory attention to his child.*

for her ear infection and fever. There's strategist Mary Matalin, who makes certain to get home by 7:30 "most nights" to "go through the entire nighttime cartoon lineup" with her two kids.

There's even senior adviser Karl Rove, who is awarded points because he "traveled home to Texas the weekend before last to see his wife and son," who haven't yet moved to Washington

those who work in the Bush White House. As a working mother, I live in a glass house. I trust that most parents are doing the best they can, and if the Bush administration is prepared to cut a little slack for a parent who leaves early for a school conference, well, that's better than not.

But it does behoove us not to lie to ourselves about the essence of the conflict between children and career, which is that it can't be wished away. It is the nature of important jobs that the people who hold them commit more of their time and energy to the office than do people in jobs on which less rides. For this reason, official Washington is implacably, impartially hostile to family life.

You can tinker with this truth only at the margins, and to pretend otherwise is just to write one more chapter in the big book of lies titled "Having It All."

Of course, the fine print in the

article tells the true story: of legislative director and father-of-three Nicholas Calio, who says, "I haven't had dinner with my family on a weeknight since we started, to be honest." Of Eskew, who arrives at the office at 7:15 and often stays past 9 p.m., and who speaks, without thinking twice, about how impressed he is at Hughes' "keeping her son involved in her life." (Hello? Is this something about which parents are supposed to have a choice?)

Or consider the story's list of the influential women who staff the Bush administration. In stories like these, the mere presence of women is reflexively assumed to be a Force for Family Friendliness.) It cites Margaret LaMontagne, the domestic policy adviser, whose children live, for the moment, with their father in Texas, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and strategist Margaret Tutwiler, both single

and childless. It might have gone on to wonder why none of the administration's three female Cabinet secretaries has children. Bluntly, the long climb to the top is still most easily accomplished by women without children, or by men whose wives have no other jobs. At one extreme of the spectrum, liberals believe this is a social conspiracy that should be redressed; at the other, traditionalists see it as evidence that mothers belong at home.

But most working parents, muddling along in the middle, live in the uneasy conviction that it's just life. Child-rearing, done right, is a hugely consuming job. Anyone with a demanding career has made a choice for which his or her family will pay something, and it's insulting to everyone who agonizes about such choices to pretend that the cost can be paid with good intentions.