

The voice you trust



for the family you love

September 2011

Dear Friends,

It is time for a little “straight talk” to parents, as you prepare to send your children back to school. Whether they will attend government schools, private or Christian institutions, or leave home to enroll in colleges and universities, they will encounter morally corrupt influences at every turn. May I take this moment to remind mothers and fathers of your responsibilities before God to help your kids cope with these pressures? Even your kindergarteners are at risk today. Here are my thoughts on the inevitable challenges they will experience from now to adulthood. These comments were first published in my book, *Bringing Up Girls*. The enclosed flyer includes a story that you must read. It will inform and delight your heart.

The River of Culture

Whether you have cuddly little preschool girls who are toddling around your house or budding young adults about to leave the nest, it is very important to understand how the culture is influencing their developing hearts and minds. We should never underestimate its force, which is like a powerful river that carries everything downstream with it. You can and must help your youngsters avoid being swept by the current into unknown waters. Protecting them from its ravages is far easier when they are young, because it becomes increasingly more difficult with the passage of time.

That is why a primary goal of parenting should be to introduce your children to moral and spiritual values during the early years. These underpinnings will help keep them afloat when the floodwaters come in the spring. Let’s talk about that responsibility.

In years gone by, the River of Culture was a gentle stream that carried children along toward adulthood. Most of my friends and I made the journey with hardly a ripple. Today, parents are aware that the quiet waters have become like the raging Colorado River crashing through the Grand Canyon. There are numerous places where the rapids threaten to drown those whose rafts are not piloted by an experienced oarsman.

Many of today’s teens are experiencing a river that flooded its banks in the sixties and seventies, long before this generation was born. That’s when a sexual and social revolution inundated the Western world. Overnight, a leftist ideology swept over the landscape and convinced the younger generation that if it felt good, they should certainly do it and that there were no unpleasant consequences for defying time-honored standards of right and wrong. God supposedly died in

1966,¹ and a goofy psychologist named Timothy Leary (some comedians called him “Really Leary”) told young people to “turn on, tune in, and drop out.”² I was there on a university campus at that time and I saw the impact of Leary’s terrible advice firsthand. Though I was young, it alarmed and offended me. I wrote the original edition of *Dare to Discipline* in the aftermath of that distressing time.

Now, decades later, we’re witnessing the effects of that revolution. Marriage as an institution has been devastated, more than 50 million babies have been aborted,³ violence has shot skyward, sexually transmitted diseases are rampant, and drug abuse still abounds. Yet few contemporary journalists have been willing to admit that something went terribly wrong in those days when caution, convention, and morality were thrown overboard. Do you think?

Those revolutionaries who set out to “change the world” so long ago were highly influential in their time, and in fact, they have had an enduring impact on the River. Most of their names have been forgotten, and some of their antics are laughable today. (Ask someone who lived in that era about the “bra burners” of the late 1960s.) But the passionate beliefs and convictions from the revolution have not only survived, they actually remain ensconced today within politically correct thought. Here’s a version of these ideas that the River has carried down to today’s adolescent society:

- Early sexual experience is healthy, and for girls, leads to empowerment.
- Virginity results from oppression and should be gotten rid of as soon as possible. It is an embarrassment to be an uninitiated girl. Some parents also feel the same way.
- The white male power structure is a major source of injustice in the world and must be resisted whether it appears in a family or in the culture at large.
- There are no innate differences between males and females, except for the ability to bear children. To be truly equal, men and women should act and think alike.
- Women and girls should imitate the predatory behavior of men. Casual, “no-strings” sexual experience is as satisfying to females as males. It no longer implies or confirms a relationship. Therefore, girls today are much less likely to wonder, “Will he call me in the morning?” For a girl to actually ask that question of a sexual partner would be a breach of etiquette.
- Modesty is old-fashioned and reflects the oppression of the past. Behavior that would have shocked previous generations doesn’t raise an eyebrow today.
- The source of true power for young girls depends on maximizing their sex appeal and then marketing it in the competition for boys.
- For a girl to become what was once considered “easy” or “loose” is now deemed socially acceptable by peers. Therefore, dressing and acting tough or looking like a prostitute is evidence of confidence and strength. Janet Jackson allowed her bra to be torn off in front of 90 million television viewers during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime extravaganza.⁴ It was just a “wardrobe malfunction,” said Justin Timberlake, who exposed Jackson’s breast. Most of the other female performers in that spectacle resembled streetwalkers. Who can estimate how many girls saw the

performance that night and decided to change their persona from wholesome to “bad”? The “raunch culture” was on parade.

- Girls are more likely than ever before to be the aggressors in male-female relationships. The traditional understanding that males are the initiators and leaders has been turned upside down. Now girls do much of the calling. They pursue. They often pay. And they regularly take their male friends to bed.
- Homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality are considered morally equivalent. They simply represent different lifestyles from which to choose.
- Romance has faded in popularity. There is no reason for a man to court a woman if she will offer him sexual favors before the two of them have even developed a friendship. Fewer couples say, “I love you” with deep meaning. Dating has also largely gone out of style. The new relationship is called “the hookup,” referring to repeated one-night stands.
- What used to be called “shacking up” or “living in sin” in most Western countries was considered shockingly wicked for centuries. It is now referred to in morally neutral terms, such as “living together” or “cohabitation.” It is a noncontroversial housing arrangement without moral implications. Parents may object until they get used to the idea, but peers will not blink an eye.

These are just a few of the concepts that engulfed the baby boomer generation more than four decades ago. Now, the grandchildren of these revolutionaries are growing up to accept and live by ideas that were once celebrated as “the new morality.” Behavior that was shockingly racy then has become the pop culture of today. Teenagers are taught its philosophy with an evangelistic zeal. The radicals who set out long ago to “liberate” women and shape the values of their children have been amazingly successful. Most members of the younger generation have no other frame of reference.

What does this mean for the mental, physical and spiritual health of today’s children and young people? The answers are striking and can be found in the writings of two brilliant young authors, Wendy Shalit and Carol Platt Liebau. Their books, written separately, are must-reads for every parent who wants to understand the culture and protect his or her girls from those who would subvert their moral character. Shalit wrote *A Return to Modesty* and *Girls Gone Mild*. Liebau is the author of *Prude*. These three books expose the toxic nature of the hookup (or raunch) culture and warn of its devastating impact on both boys and girls. I recommend them highly.

The theme of Shalit’s books is that modesty, which has represented the essence of womanhood for millennia, has undergone a radical transformation. Virginity is now seen as evidence of weakness and timidity. A modern woman should be brash, profane, aggressive, loud, angry, tough, and independent—anything but feminine and demure. Above all, she must be sexually liberated, which holds the key to her sense of empowerment. Engaging in casual hookups and immodest behavior, and even nudity in coed bathrooms, is thought to build confidence and display strength. This convoluted view of the feminine nature turns reality on its head. Nevertheless, the majority of today’s teens and young adults, especially those attending secular universities, have been indoctrinated with moral relativism from which libertine behavior emanates. Alas, the River has swept them downstream.

According to researchers at San Diego State University, a review of 530 studies over a period of five decades and involving 250,000 young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-seven revealed that only 12 percent of women approved of premarital sex in 1943. By 1979, it was 73 percent.⁵

Previous generations would not have believed this disintegration of traditional morality occurring in our day. Columnist Florence King summarizes it starkly:

“We went from a nation that believed a virtuous woman’s price is far above rubies [Proverbs 31] to one that believes a virtuous woman is as sounding brass [1 Corinthians 13]. Meanwhile, the New Woman went from prize to prey. Without the social conventions of modesty, her prerogative to say no was overridden by men’s prerogative to expect sex.”⁶

Liebau writes:

“In an earlier era, social success was defined by how much a particular girl could inspire a boy to pursue, woo, and do for her. Now girls compete for boys’ attention on the basis of how much they, the girls, are willing to do for the boys, sexually and otherwise. What this dynamic means, as girls themselves have pointed out, is that the boys call the shots more than ever. . . .”

“By offering their bodies so quickly and so easily, girls have essentially surrendered their most effective means for securing the kind of male companionship that they most desire.”⁷

Shalit emphasizes that it is foolish to believe a woman can easily detach herself emotionally from the men with whom she sleeps. To the contrary, girls in the hookup culture typically feel rejected, used, and abused when they offer their most intimate gifts and are then cast aside. When that happens, guys get what they want and girls just get angry and depressed.

Sleazy behavior also affects men, both emotionally and spiritually, but in a different way. This is how the apostle Paul described it: “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh’” (1 Corinthians 6:16). That is the way we are designed. An old proverb describes how ancient people viewed virginity. It goes like this: “Chastity is like an icicle; if it once melts, that’s the last of it.” In other words, virginity can easily be destroyed, but it can never be restored.

References to chastity, and especially nudity, can be found in classical literature from earliest recorded history. The book of Genesis indicates, for example, that before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they were “both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). After eating the forbidden fruit, however, the biblical text says that “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7).

Later, Adam tried to hide from God because he was ashamed of his nakedness. The Creator asked him a telling question: “Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:11). From that time to this, modesty about the body has been deeply ingrained in human nature, especially among women. It can be overridden and subverted, but at a heavy price.

As we have seen, the popular culture refers to public nudity as “becoming comfortable with your body.” Huge numbers of girls have accepted that interpretation and brazenly disrobed for Playboy, for movie producers, for soft-core and hard-core pornographers, and for anyone else who offers to pay them. It is another form of prostitution, of course. Some teenage girls seeking attention

receive no compensation in return. In a transmission called “sexting,” they send nude or sexually explicit photographs through their cell phones or the Internet to boyfriends, who download the images. The guys can then distribute the pictures widely for decades to come. More than 20 percent of teens have engaged in this activity.⁸

Whatever happened to the voice of conscience that told generations of young women that disrobing before strangers was wrong and cheap? It has been perverted by a popular culture that instead condemns modesty and morality, urging girls to get comfortable with nudity.

How sad are the children and teens whose parents accept and endorse the distortions of the hookup culture in this way. Rather than offering wisdom, they add to the confusion and temptations of youth. The ultimate responsibility for guidance and moral training of children lies with mothers and fathers. I will repeat the stern warning to all of us as inscribed in the Scriptures, as follows. Its meaning is unmistakable:

Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land will not fall to harlotry and the land become full of lewdness. Leviticus 19:29 (nasb)

Christian parents who take that verse seriously and literally (as I do) will appreciate the following statement. It offers the most cogent defense of virginity I have read.

Virginity actually represents an expression of respect for the awesome power of sexual passion—and a manifestation of fidelity to something higher than momentary desires. It is, as essayist Sarah E. Hinlicky has written, “a sexuality dedicated to hope, to the future, to marital love, to children, and to God.” It’s also an expression of self-respect. Girls who refuse to play the hookup game are asserting that they deserve something better than sexual fumbling either with boys who want them for nothing but their bodies, or with those who may claim to care about them—but not necessarily enough to commit to a formal relationship such as marriage (or to promise marriage should an unexpected pregnancy result). Being a virgin means being truly in control of oneself: body, heart, and soul. It’s a way of determining which boys care about a girl for herself, rather than simply for her body. And although it’s no guarantee against heartbreak, virginity does ensure that a girl will never know the bitter regret of having given part of herself to someone who was unworthy of the gift.⁹

This is Truth with a capital T! It must be taught to your daughters especially, but also to your sons. I can almost hear some critics saying, “You are espousing the old double standard that told men they could have their fun while women had to be the gatekeepers for morality.” That is emphatically not what I am communicating. The fact is that while sexual purity is wholesome and morally significant for both sexes, and the Scriptures make no distinction between them, it remains true that women clearly pay a higher price for sexual misbehavior, emotionally and physically. It has always been that way. It will be true for your daughters, too.

Begin steering your boys and girls away from the hookup culture when they are young. Initially, that is accomplished by teaching reasonable standards of modesty and virtue. Tell them that some things are right and others wrong, and spell out the differences between the two. Explain that moral principles are eternal and are established by our Creator, to whom we are accountable. Those standards are a reflection of His very character. His Word is the basis for behavioral boundaries, which are given for our benefit. Teach the meaning of marriage, and explain why

virginity is a precious gift to a future husband or wife. Tell your sons and daughters they have no right to give it to anyone else, and assure them that they will never regret preserving it.

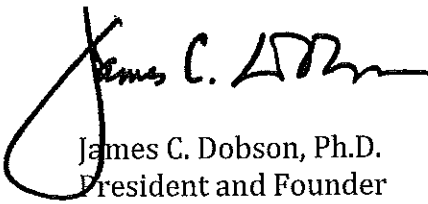
Above all, pray daily for your children by name. Help them avoid jagged rocks and obstacles on the River of Culture. Doing that job properly may protect them from a lifetime of grief.

Well, that is my letter for this month. I thank all of you who have written or called to tell us how much you are enjoying and profiting from my written messages. These letters are a form of ministry that are intended to serve as an extension of what we are trying to accomplish here at Family Talk.

I know that other ministries are using their monthly letters to inform constituencies of their financial needs, and to ask....perhaps beg...for money. I understand their need to do that. We are struggling, too, during this "down economy." I have thought once or twice that we were not going to survive, and in fact, this is one of those times. Our summer's income was discouraging. We received about one-third of what is required to pay our staff and support our radio expenses. We have made it to September by very careful management, (I don't take a salary,) but now Family Talk is literally on the edge. If you can help us, we would be most grateful.

God bless you all. I hope you will let us hear your responses to my letter.

Your friend in Christ,



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
President and Founder
Family Talk

Family Talk has now met all qualifications for membership in the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, (ECFA). See the logo below. This means that we conform to a high moral standard of ethics and money management. It also certifies that we are governed by an independent board of directors that is ultimately responsible for policy decisions. None of these board members receive a salary, nor do I as its chairman. We pledge to live up to the ECFA guidelines for as long as God allows us to represent Him in ministry. Our purpose is to operate by such high principles that if our donors and friends examined our books and attended our meetings, they would see nothing to embarrass the Cause of Christ or contradict our Statement of Faith.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

If this is the kind of ministry you value, we would appreciate your help to finance our work.

1. "Is God Dead?" Time (April 8, 1966); see <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19660408,00.html>. 2. Laura Mansnerus, "Timothy Leary, Pied Piper of Psychedelic 60's, Dies at 75," New York Times (June 1, 1996). 3. Based on numbers reported by the Alan Guttmacher Institute. 4. "Court Tosses FCC 'Wardrobe Malfunction' Fine," Associated Press (July 21, 2008). 5. B. E. Wells and J. M. Twenge, "Changes in Sexual Behavior and Attitudes, 1943-1999: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis," Review of General Psychology 9 (2005): 249-261. 6. Florence King, "In All, Modesty," National Review (January 25, 1999). 7. Liebau, Prude, 186, 88. 8. "Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults," National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (December 2008). 9. Liebau, Prude, 191-192.

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