

## TEENAGERS NEED FATHERS WHO LOVE THEIR MOM

It's alarming to think that Al Bundy, that bumbling buffoon of a father on TV's "Married With Children," could serve as a spokesman for a large number of today's children and teens. On one early episode, Bundy walked in the door after a day at work and muttered, "Ah, home sweet hell." Sadly, this line of "comedy" conveys all too well the reality of what life can be like for kids in a home where dad and mom's relationship is far from what it should be.

Our kids are growing up in a culture saturated with divorce, separation, family discord, and marriages held together by a thread of tolerance. It is a common TV scene when a husband and wife are fighting and screaming while a child stands in an adjoining hallway hearing mommy and daddy fighting and then asks, "Mommy, are you and daddy going to get a divorce." Actually, it was easy for that child to come to that conclusion based on what they see and hear in the world around them.

The kids I work with constantly remind me that they need models of marital commitment—and who better to provide that model than their own dad! Here are two specific reasons why today's fathers, raising kids in today's youth culture, should go the extra mile in loving their wives:

*By loving your wife, you will counter the hapless and hopeless home messages in contemporary media.* Over the years I've read magazines and watched TV programs with interviews with musicians and songwriters. I've been interested in those who produce music filled with messages promoting and/or reflecting anger, sexual promiscuity, rebellion, discouragement and hopelessness. In the overwhelming majority of interviews, the songwriter will share memories of an ugly childhood as he inspiration for his or her music. And you shouldn't be surprised to learn that many of their fathers were divorced, absent, or indifferent towards their mothers. Art truly does imitate life.

When Nirvana's Kurt Cobain recently shot himself, many adults who knew nothing about his music missed the significant of his death. Never before had music so dismal and dark been accepted by so many. Teens latched on to his lyrical hopelessness because it accurately reflected where they were themselves. What most people don't realize is that if his parents had gotten along when he was younger, the world might never have heard of Kurt Cobain. At age seven he was known as a happy, energetic and bright child full of artistic promise; when he was eight his parents divorced and his life was never to be the same. Cobain never found peace in life, and he paid dearly in his death.

*By loving your wife, you will enable your kids to love and be loved.* Seth grew up in a home where his mom and dad didn't get along. Eventually, they divorced. Seth's insecurity and his inability to like what he sees in the mirror reflect the findings of research and casual observation: as a young adult, his view of himself is related to how he saw his father treat his mother.

**If Seth is anything like others who have traveled this road, he can expect bumpy going ahead. Marital discord hurts children deeply. Some are plagued by a lifetime of anger, worry, rebellion, depression, grief, sexual confusion, fear, and an inability to trust. Statistically speaking, people like to Seth who bring that kind of baggage into a marriage are likely to experience severe relational difficulties themselves. On the other hand, kids who have seen Dad love Mom for better or for worse exhibit self-confidence and are better equipped to love husbands, wives, moms, and dads.**

**A teenage boy recently gave me a note he had written to his dad. He told me that his home life had been rocky; there were times in the past when his dad would yell at his mom so much that she wandered if his father loved her. Lately, as his father works harder at loving his mother, his fears are slowly being erased. The boy's note is only a sentence long, but it reflects the hopes and dreams of teenagers everywhere: "I love you dad, and I hope that it continues to get better between you and Mom."**

**Dad, your kids need a father who loves his wife. You can become an anchor of certainty and a beacon of guidance and hope while your kids navigate the turbulent years of adolescence.**

**In all things, listen, listen and love, love,**