

What Will Your Child's Marriage Look Like?

The current generation of fathers has been decimated by the tragedy of divorce. Many men saw their parents divorce, and some have been through a divorce themselves. Which ever statistic you want to believe these days, 50% of all marriages end in divorce and it doesn't seem to matter if they are "Christians or not." These men have often told us that they wish they had seen a good marriage in action when they were young. They had a deep desire to see a committed, loving relationship between the two people they loved the most, and they are still missing that model now that they have children of their own. Then there are many who had parents who were never divorced but there was a lot of conflict in the marriage that it was carried down to children. There seems to be no question that we seem to have bags of "stuff" that are transferred from father to son or mother to daughter that make marriages really tough.

Have you ever thought about how your marriage looks to your children—or about how your attitudes toward marriage are influencing them? Whether you're seeking to be a cycle-breaker in your family, or you want to faithfully capitalize on the example your father set for you, it's important to purposefully set a positive example. If you fail to do this, the likelihood that your children will face divorce increases significantly. Your modeling influences your children's perspectives and practices in their own marriages.

I often use the example of a video that runs constantly on your life and when your daughter or son grows up, the video is switched on for your kids to see and they remember how it was and many times mimic what they have seen or heard. I bet I am no different than most. I wished I could have erased a lot of video drive and replace it with better film because of regretful actions and words. I know my wife was a victim of many things from her parents, as well as me, and the combination can be pretty disastrous. There are many things in our marriage we wished never happened and many times the past is very harmful to the success of a marriage. Many times, the pain is so deep, the memories never get erased. I often say that the past pains sometimes exceeds the joys because we tend to have a hard time letting go of the pain because we miss the good from focusing on the bad. That is a hard one when the pain cuts deeps with infidelity of a mate, constant spousal fighting, lack of respect from one another, joblessness, finances, debt, and the list continues. You know, it is just plain hard to make a good marriage work these days. Obviously, we, Americans or Christians have not seemed to have

mastered the principles of marriage – either by the world's terms or the biblical principles.

So, if you're married, search your heart. You may have a decent marriage, but are you living out the kind of marriage you want your children to have someday? Are you nurturing your marriage with trust, communication and thoughtful attentiveness?

If you're divorced, remember that your kids love both of you, and they don't want to hear their mother criticized. No matter what she's saying or doing, try your best, and respect her as the mother of your children.

Whether you may want to admit it or not, your life or message demonstrates your marriage relationship and your attitudes about women—good or bad—will continue to impact your children's lives long after they leave home.

Action Points

- Ask your children what qualities they're looking for in a future mate. Often, their answers will reflect something about your marriage.
- Talk with your wife: What's in store for our children if they pattern their marriages after ours? Come up with a plan to improve your marriage, no matter how great it is now.
- If you're a divorced dad, keep asking yourself the question, "What's best for my child?" Then, let your answers guide your actions—especially when you're interacting with your child's mother, and even if the result doesn't seem great for you.
- Make plans this week for a date night or another memorable time together with your wife. Try to live each day for the happiness of your wife and children the best you can.
- What are the most positive memories you have from your marriage? Continue to focus on those during times of difficulty.

It is Hard stuff! But when does change take place with our marriage statistics that begin to re-stabilize the family? I don't know about you but it greaves me to go to weddings or funerals and see two sets of parents, children and family members. Who will give your daughter away – you are a substitute father?