

Spiritual Tip

How to Stand Against Popular Opinion

By Rick Warren

In 1979 I was finishing up seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and I felt like God was calling me to Southern California to start Saddleback Church. So I phoned a guy that I respected a lot and told him what I thought God wanted me to do.

You know what he told me? "Rick, that's the dumbest idea I ever heard. You go out to California, and you'll never be heard from again. It's not going to happen." He poured cold water all over my dream!

Any time you get serious about using your life the way God wants you to use it, there are going to be people who oppose it. You're going to have friends and maybe even family members who oppose you, because Satan is going to throw everything he can at you to keep you from fulfilling your calling. One reason why so few people actually fulfill God's calling is because they are unwilling to go against popular opinion.

If you want to follow God's calling on your life, you must be willing to reject negative advice, no matter who it comes from.

The Bible says in Numbers 14:2-3, "Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. 'If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!' they complained. 'Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?'" (NLT) When faced with difficult circumstances, the Israelites decided they actually preferred slavery to freedom because it was safe. Rather than following God and doing what he had called them to do, they wanted to go back to their old way of life.

But one of their leaders, Caleb, had uncommon courage. He decided he was going to face the challenges with God's help, even if he was scared. He was ready to reject negative advice in order to follow God's calling.

In fact, Caleb didn't just receive negative advice. Numbers 14:10 says, "The whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle."

I love the fact that God's presence saved Caleb and Joshua. That will happen in your life, too. Pioneers always get the arrow in the back. You've got to determine now to reject negative advice if you're going to go after God's calling in your life.

Talk It Over

- What slavery are you willing to go back to rather than move forward and take a risk?
- When you evaluate the advice you've received lately from people you love and trust, how much of it helps you move in the direction of your calling? How much of it is negative advice?
- Why is it so difficult sometimes to go against popular opinion or the advice of our friends?

Marriage Tip

Why Couples Stop Talking

By Dr. Greg Smalley

I once heard a story about a retired business executive and his wife. One evening, the wife called friends to ask what they were doing.

"Oh," said the other wife, "we're just talking and drinking tea."

The executive's wife hung up the phone. "They're drinking tea and talking," she told her husband. "Why don't we ever do that?" The executive said, "So, make us some tea." Soon they sat with their freshly brewed tea, stirring the tea and staring at each other. And stirring. And staring.

"Call them back," the executive barked, "and find out what they're talking about!"

Many husbands and wives may find that this older couple's dilemma sounds far too familiar.

Good communication is the lifeblood of a successful marriage, so when spouses stop talking at a deep level, their marriages slowly begin to die. After all, a marriage will only be as good as a couple's communication.

One of the more sinister reasons husbands and wives quit communicating is that they "administrated" marriage almost to death. They're often caught in a destructive pattern where they spend their limited time together talking about work, the budget, children, chores and so on. The conversations become "transactional." Certainly there's a need to discuss household management, but couples cannot allow "business meetings" to dominate their conversations.

Administration meetings often lead to arguments, and these couples become trained to think that "talking" will lead to conflict and disconnection. The problem is that husbands and wives unintentionally condition each other to feel that it's neither fun nor safe to engage in conversation. So they stop talking.

The key to positive communication is found in knowing and being known. This means that you're interested in and curious about this person you married. Listen when your spouse talks. Ask open-ended questions. Your spouse desperately wants to be known.

The other side of that coin is to let your spouse know what's going on in your life. Volunteer information about your deepest thoughts, beliefs, feelings, hopes and desires.

Good communication requires an active effort. You can more successfully build a strong marriage if you offer to both know and be known.

Dr. Greg Smalley is vice president of Family Ministry at Focus on the Family. This article appeared in the March/April 2014 issue of Thriving Family magazine. Copyright © 2014 Focus on the Family. ThrivingFamily.com.

Parenting Tip

What Little Girls Wish Daddies Knew

By Tara Hedman

I'm spending the morning waiting for my car in the repair shop. Four men in flannel (I missed the flannel memo) and I sit around smelling tires and inhaling exhaust fumes while an enchanting little fairy is in constant motion around her daddy. She climbs on him, giggles, turns around, and then she's back to twirling on the tile.

She's bouncing and spinning around in her pink frilly skirt. Her black cable knit tights are sagging around her tiny knees, and her puffy coat makes her arms stand out further than is natural. To top off the ensemble is a shiny crystal tiara. It's been tacked down to her head with what appears to be about 60 haphazard bobby pins.

She's probably 4 years old. So little, so vulnerable. She doesn't seem concerned about it as she sings about teapots and ladybugs in her black Mary Janes. I feel myself tear up as I watch her. I tear up as I watch him watch her. She could not possibly know at 4 what impact this man, his character or his words will have on her for years to come. And, maybe he doesn't know either.

So, to all the daddies with little girls who aren't old enough yet to ask for what they need from you, here is what we wish you knew:

1. How you love me is how I will love myself.
2. Ask how I am feeling and listen to my answer, I need to know you value me before I can understand my true value.
3. I learn how I should be treated by how you treat my mom, whether you are married to her or not.
4. If you are angry with me, I feel it even if I don't understand it, so talk to me.
5. Every time you show grace to me or someone else, I learn to trust God a little more.
6. I need to experience your nurturing physical strength, so I learn to trust the physicality of men.
7. Please don't talk about sex like a teenage boy, or I think it's something dirty.
8. When your tone is gentle, I understand what you are saying much better.
9. How you talk about female bodies when you're "just joking" is what I believe about my own.
10. How you handle my heart, is how I will allow it to be handled by others.
11. If you encourage me to find what brings joy, I will always seek it.
12. If you teach me what safe feels like when I'm with you, I will know better how to guard myself from men who are not.
13. Teach me a love of art, science, and nature, and I will learn that intellect matters more than dress size.
14. Let me say exactly what I want even if it's wrong or silly, because I need to know having a strong voice is acceptable to you.
15. When I get older, if you seem afraid of my changing body, I will believe something is wrong with it.
16. If you understand contentment for yourself, so will I.
17. When I ask you to let go, please remain available; I will always come back and need you if you do.
18. If you demonstrate tenderness, I learn to embrace my own vulnerability rather than fear it.
19. When you let me help fix the car and paint the house, I will believe I can do anything a boy can do.
20. When you protect my femininity, I learn everything about me is worthy of protecting.
21. How you treat our dog when you think I'm not watching tells me more about you than does just about anything else.
22. Don't let money be everything, or I learn not to respect it or you.
23. Hug, hold, and kiss me in all the ways a daddy does that are right and good and pure. I need it so much to understand healthy touch.
24. Please don't lie, because I believe what you say.

25. Don't avoid hard conversations, because it makes me believe I'm not worth fighting for.

It's pretty simple, really. Little girls just love their daddies. They each think their daddy hung the moon. Once in a while when you look at your little gal twirling in her frilly skirt, remember she'll be grown one day. What do you want her to know about men, life, herself, love? What you do and say now matters for a lifetime.

Daddies should never underestimate the impact of their words or deeds on their daughters, no matter their age.

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