

Talking with Your Daughter About Understanding BOYS

Bob and Dannah Gresh
With Jarrod Sechler and Suzanna D'Souza



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To five of my favorite fathers...

Jarrod Sechler

Dave Anderson

Pat Sullivan

Jim Burtoft

Troy VanLiere

... five guys I trust to call me a knucklehead when I act like one (one for each knuckle).

Watching their lives has made me a better father.

And to Dannah's dad and my dad, who love us like crazy.

—Bob

Thank You

This book was a team effort. In the history of all Gresh books, none have ever taken so many people to pull it together. We were writing a book for dads that also needed to appeal to their daughters but would likely be bought by their wives. Need we say more? We've done a lot of rewrites to get this...right.

Terry Glaspey, LaRae Weikert, and Barb Sherrill from Harvest House Publishers saw the ministry value of creating an 8 Great Dates book for dads and daughters. (Even though we all know moms buy more books.) They have a true heart for ministry and we love 'em.

Jarrod Sechler joined with Bob for long brainstorming sessions and wrote some of the content. (You'll hear from Jarrod personally in the pages ahead.) Another of Bob's friends, Jim Burtoft, gave us great ides and great feedback. They are both true friends to me (Bob) and my family. They carry the load with me when it is heavy, and they are two of the best dads I know.

Suzanna D'Souza was the editor for this project and also created a lot of the content. She kept us thinking like girls! (And with three dads working on the project, she was really outnumbered.) She was patient and excellent in all ways.



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A Note from Bob

aution!
As commentator Bill O'Reilly would say, "Caution—you're about to enter the no-spin zone."

It's amazing how political correctness intrudes into every aspect of our lives. It's even politically incorrect in "enlightened" circles to identify someone by such a limiting factor as *male* or *female*. Those in such circles see many more options.

We don't.

This book is written for dads and daughters. At times, it assumes that Mom and Dad are married. We believe that it's ideal (and biblical) for a man to marry one woman, raise kids, and be married lifelong.

We also know that we don't live in an ideal world. Family structures are so splintered today that we can't address all of them, and so we chose the father of the intact family to be the assumed reader of this book.

We have a huge heart for single moms, single dads, and splintered families. My heart breaks over parents who desperately need a godly male or female role model for their kids. (We have included a special section in this book for single moms.)

Customize the pronouns for your own situation, take what applies, and disregard stuff that doesn't match your family.

The role of women in the church and at home is a hot topic—and a complex one. Some women are girly-girls and some are tomboys, which makes things even more complicated. So...

After much discussion (and rewriting) we decided that our



model for womanhood was the mom of Proverbs 31. She was a mix of everything. (Her husband married well. So did I.)

Now, with that attempt to explain our approach in advance, let's go on some adventures together. Read on!

Bob

How This Works

by Bob

e're dads.
We're different.
We have different parts. We have different styles than women.

Statistically, we don't read as much—80 percent of Christian books are for women and are read by women.

I've made this book as easy to use as possible because your life is packed full of stuff, and I don't want to add any more weight (or aggravation) than necessary.

For years, moms have been using the Secret Keeper Girl 8 Great Dates books to grow closer to their daughters. Almost all of those books point out that the relationship a dad has with his daughter informs how she responds to boys. (I recently cheered on a fellow dad, Dr. Thomas White, the president of Cedarville University. He said this publicly: "Mess with me, that's bad. Mess with my wife, that's really going to be bad for you. Mess with my daughter—that's me being called to prison ministry from the inside!" Of course he was joking...sort of.) Here's a quick look at what's going to happen in the pages to come.

Part 1: Dads Matter-No Matter What the World Says.

This is an introductory welcome to the idea of "dating" your daughter. We'll give you ideas on how to spend time with your girl while teaching her things she should know. Skim these chapters if you want. Don't skip them.



Part 2: 8 Great Dates. Check them out and you'll see that they're really easy to use. Each date has simple plans to do activities that will help you talk to your girl. Look, let's admit it's sometimes awkward to keep the conversation going—these dates will fix that.

Part 3: Other Great Stuff. This section is used on an asneeded basis. Other than the "Talk with Dad" pullouts for your daughter, you may not need much of it at all. But everything is explained as you get to it.

I think you'll enjoy this. Step up. Do it right. You'll make memories for a lifetime.

Now I'll introduce Dannah. She's been working with and researching girls for 15 years, and she's literally written the books on how they tick. Read the preface and the following chapters. You'll see why these years are the most important ones of your daughter's life. This short time will shape her values forever.

Bob

by Dannah

t was one of the saddest days of my life.

Bob and I had worn each other out. After attempts at counseling, we were still unyielded to the healing power of Christ. With the help of two pastors and a counselor who loved us and wanted to see us go the distance, we had decided to separate for three weeks.

I would go to my parents' home in Pennsylvania.

He would stay at our home in Missouri.

I started my drive while the stormy morning was still dark—my two precious kids in the backseat. Tears blinded my eyes. The windshield wipers worked overtime. The weather seemed to be a picture of my marriage. I could hardly bear to wait this storm out. Tractor-trailers with the word "swift" seemed to litter the highway, and I made them my prayer.

Please, Lord, let this three weeks go by swiftly.

I felt like I couldn't breathe, but I wanted to make it in time, so I kept driving. In a matter of hours, my daddy would be shooting off a masterpiece that would paint the night sky with color. There would be no missing what had been deemed one of America's ten largest fireworks displays. ² The speed limit was frustrating me as I headed toward the Great American Fourth of July Fireworks Festival in my Pennsylvania hometown.

Finally, as dusk invited 200,000 eager tailgaters to pull out their lawn chairs and blankets, my white minivan pulled into the VIP parking lot. The crowd was thick. And it was way before cell phones. How would I find my parents? I headed to the VIP tent and hoped one of them would be nearby. If I timed it just right I would see my mom hostessing all of the community leaders, but getting to see my dad before the show was probably an impossible dream. They both knew why I was coming.

Mom was there, as I'd hoped. My kids wasted no time in climbing all over her, and she was happy to hand her walkietalkie and hostessing title over to her assistant so she could wear her "Grammy" hat. But not before giving me a hug, and then a job—because she could see I was about to lose it. I needed to stay busy.

The hot dogs I cooked that night may have looked a little like charcoal when I was finished. My mind kept wandering as I looked into the distance, hoping my dad might stop by the tent.

I still remember what he was wearing when I saw him. A yellow Land's End windbreaker cut the evening chill. He walked toward me with purpose and enveloped me in his arms.

Then, I cried.

And I'm crying now as I write about it.

What safety was in that hug! I knew then that it was going to be all right. My daddy's hug fueled me with hope.

ABOUT DAD'S HUG

According to Dr. Meg Meeker, a father's degree of physical affection toward his daughter is directly related to her self-esteem.³ Hug her. Often. And long.





Dads Run Deep

by Dannah

ou probably picked up this book with the sole intention of helping your little girl grow closer to you. But I'm praying it also helps you come to terms with your feelings about *having* a Father.

Maybe your relationship with your own dad has been phenomenal and the two of you are especially close. Or maybe it's nonexistent and the only thing the two of you have in common is DNA. Maybe dad was your biggest fan at soccer practices. Or maybe he filled your college fund but never filled your love tank. Maybe you never even knew your biological father. Or maybe you knew him well and you've had to grieve the painful loss of a best friend.

Good, bad, or distant-dads run deep.

Deeper than we might think.

An article published by the *Journal for the Scientific Study* of *Religion* discovered a strong correlation between a child's image of her parents—specifically her father—and her perception of God. ⁴ In fact, the correlation was even stronger for girls than it was for boys.

Which means that if a little girl sees her father as powerful and nurturing, then she'll easily come to terms with a God who is omnipotent but still cares for the sparrows. ⁵ Conversely, if a little girl sees her father as distant—or if she doesn't see her father at all—then it'll be difficult for her to embrace this idea of a God who calls himself Emmanuel, God *with* her.



Some of us are already pretty familiar with the God of Scripture who calls himself our Father. Our *Abba*. Literally meaning "daddy" or papa. See, in America, a baby begins to speak between 14 and 18 months and her first word is usually *da—da, da, daddy*. But a Jewish baby in first-century Palestine at the same age would have begun to say *ab—ab, ab, Abba*.

According to the great, dearly loved and much missed Brennan Manning, "Jesus is saying we may address the infinite, transcendent, almighty God with the intimacy, familiarity, and unshaken trust that a sixteen-month-old baby has sitting on his father's lap—da, da, daddy." ⁶

Do you trust him like that? He is a good Father. Even if yours wasn't.

TO SINGLE PARENTS

Right up front, Bob and I want to acknowledge that you might be doing your parenting on your own. This makes the book and the dates all that more important. The special challenges of single parenting include helping your children have a healthy view of how men and women were designed to be a reflection of God's image and to form families. We want to encourage the single dads to plow through this with passion! For single moms, we have a special section near the end of the book with advice. Check it out on page 135.

Bob is not perfect. Neither am I. And we've chosen to begin this book with a glimpse into our brokenness for a reason. We've picked up far too many books on parenting or marriage and felt defeated by the perfection in the pages. Devotions every morning during a full breakfast? Never did it! A family night every week? Meant well, but just couldn't seem to be that consistent! Praying for our children as we tucked them into bed? Sometimes we just didn't have the energy for much more than a rote, meaningless prayer. Oh, we did a lot of things right, and we prayed with and for our kids and taught them to love God, but we aren't the poster parents for all things Christian.

We are the poster family for a God who repairs. In fact, one of our favorite verses is Psalm 127:1:

"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."

One day I was studying this verse and learned that the Hebrew word for "builds" in it means "to make and to repair." I don't know about yours, but the Gresh house has needed a lot of building and a lot of repairs. I praise my precious Lord, who has done more renovations on these two parents' hearts than my uncle who owns a remodeling business has to homes. Bob and Dannah Gresh were certainly two "fixer-uppers"!



Need a little fixing up? You've come to the right place.

Stop for a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to make your heart soft and tender to the truth and encouragement in the pages ahead. After all, how does a parent connect their daughter to God as a Father—unless *you* know Him in that way too?

Invest time in thinking of God as your heavenly Father as you approach these dates.

"[The Spirit which] you have now received [is] not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption...in [the bliss of] which we cry, Abba!...Father!"

Romans 8:15 AMP, brackets in original

