

The Role of Father in the Family*

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:1-4

Through their presence, fathers have a lifelong influence on the lives of everyone in their family:

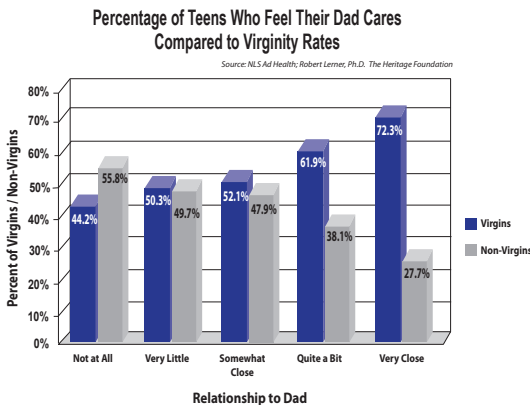
- Fathers who attend religious services weekly during their child’s adolescence significantly reduce the likelihood that his children will cohabit as adults.
- Fathers who attend religious services during their children’s adolescence increase the likelihood that their children will marry.
- Fathers who attend church often are significantly more likely to participate in one-on-one activities with their children.
- Married fathers who are theologically conservative are more likely to praise and hug their children very often than fathers who are not.

Likewise, a father’s absence harms his family:

- Teenage girls whose fathers left their families any time between their birth and age 13 were far more likely to become pregnant and engage in sexual activity than teenage girls who grew up with their fathers in their homes. The effect is stronger the younger the child is when the father leaves.

Social science shows the importance of a father’s involvement with his children. Fathers, is there anything here that prompts you to do something with your children? What are you doing with your sons so they too will become great fathers?

The graph below shows how a teenager’s strong relationship to their father is linked to chastity. We can take heart that a father’s role in his children’s sexuality does not have to be punitive – it can be preventative.



For links to the research behind these statements, please visit www.marri.us/churchbulletins

*It bears emphasizing that these patterns hold for the groups involved, not for all the individuals who make up each group. There is naturally a wide variation among individuals.



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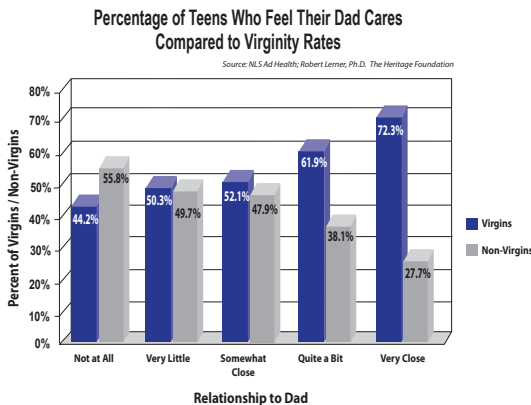
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