



What a Father Could Say to a Trafficked Daughter

By Alvin Erickson
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Two Stories First

These two stories tell of two fathers mentioned in the support group we had when my wife, Ina and I were dealing with a trafficked daughter. One father was an Episcopal priest who lived in the New England area. His daughter had been trafficked. His wife was in our support group. She worked for Honeywell. At this time the daughter was in prison in Georgia but was getting out. The mother wanted the father to get involved but he kept his distance. The reality for many young women in this kind of circumstance is they need a trustworthy man who cares about them. This might be the only hope they have. One they can rely on, who loves and treasures them. This father was not ready to be that person. Sadly!

The mother went to Georgia when her daughter got out of prison and brought her back to the Twin Cities. All was well for the moment, but the mother had to go to her job. Meanwhile the daughter was left alone. Either she or some man called on the telephone. This was before cell phones. After two days when the mother came home from work, the daughter was gone. She was back on the streets. Later the daughter had a baby somewhere on the west coast and left the baby on the porch of someone's house and took off. My heart went out to her for all the heartache she experienced in her lifetime. Much later I heard the mother died. How much agony can a person take? The mother was heartbroken by all these circumstances.

Another mother in our support group had a daughter who was trafficked to Chicago. Somehow, she got away from the pimping guy and came home. When the mother came to the support group, she agonized over the refusal of her husband to talk to his daughter. He thought that it was her fault for going to Chicago and getting herself into such a fix. Months passed but the dad would not forgive his daughter or talk to her. Finally the daughter took off, went to Las Vegas and got right back into the fix she was in before—



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selling herself. What a tragedy! Sometimes parents don't understand either the vulnerability of our kids or the sophisticated scheming of the traffickers. Unfortunately they don't realize how important their love, understanding and support is.

It is easy for a man in America to be a wimp, to not lead with strength, virtue and honor. Is not this one of the reasons the sex industry flourishes?

How can a father support a daughter and family after a trafficking situation? How can he be a hope and a support?

First of all, most fathers do not understand how choices are made inside of choices. A squirrel entering a trap with peanut butter on the far end is indeed making a choice. However, the person who bought the trap and put the peanut butter at the far end of the trap also made a choice. So the squirrel is making a decision to enter without realizing that some other being has also made the decision to entrap the squirrel. We can call this making a choice inside of a choice.

If a father sees this for what it is, then that father can speak frankly to his daughter and say, "You got set up by someone presenting to you what looked like a good thing but they had their own plans, pretty sure as to how you would respond. We never taught you about these things so we actually did not do what we could have done. We did not equip you to see through set-ups. We did not inform you of the kind of people who are out there. We did not take seriously how at your age you were inexperienced with the sophisticated schemes people have to take advantage of the unprepared. I choose to love you now as I always have in the past. I choose to stand by you here with all that's happened. We are going to get through all the trauma you have experienced. You are important and valuable to me. You are still God's child and that means God loves you. You will have moments of self-blame. You will have memories that create havoc in your mind and soul. This is not easy to deal with but here I am. I am for you, not against you. There will be moments where you might lose control. There will be moments where you will remember what the trafficker told you that your parents don't care about you anymore. That is all baloney. Don't let these thoughts get a foothold in your thinking. You are special to me, to our family. God forgives whatever there is to forgive. I forgive whatever there is to forgive. Forgive me for not preparing you. Will you do that? Listen to the words I am speaking. They are the truth, not the falsehoods and lies somebody concocted to get control of your mind. It might take a while. You are on the road to recovery and that is a good road to travel. Do you get what I am saying?"