



bringing up  
GIRLS



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DR. JAMES DOBSON



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*Bringing Up Girls: Practical Advice and Encouragement for Those Shaping the Next Generation of Women*

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*This book is dedicated to my only daughter, Danae Ann  
Dobson, who has brought incredible joy and love to my life.  
As I wrote in the first chapter of the book you are about to  
read, "The passion I feel for the subject at hand is related to the  
daughter who still calls me Dad.  
She is grown now, but I love her like I did when we were first  
introduced in the delivery room.  
Something electric occurred between us on that  
mystical night, and it endures today."*

*I thank God for the privilege of being the  
father of this remarkable woman!*

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Bob West is a remarkably talented man who can solve the most complicated technical problem. I’ll never forget calling him early one morning in a panic. I said, “Bob! You won’t believe it! My screen has gone blank, and days of work are gone.” I was ready to run screaming down the road. Within minutes, he had straightened out the mess, and my text was restored. What a friend!

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Ron Reno is a vice president at Focus on the Family. He is a wordsmith and a thinker. Ron read a large section of my book in its final stages and made many helpful suggestions.

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Columnist Peggy Noonan was kind to allow me to quote her commentary entitled “Embarrassing the Angels.” It comprises chapter 6.

At my request, three young women wrote statements for my book dealing with the princess movement. They are Danae Dobson, Kristin Salladin, and Riann Zuetel. The opinions they expressed made a significant contribution to chapter 12, titled “The Obsession with Beauty.”

Drs. Joe McIlhaney and Freda McKissic Bush came to Focus on the Family to appear as guests on our broadcast. They are both obstetricians and gynecologists. These physicians were invited to talk about their own book, *Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex Is Affecting Our Children*. An edited transcript of our interview has been included in chapter 15. Every parent should read this section and, indeed, *Hooked* in its entirety. Appreciation is expressed to these friends and colleagues.

Dr. Roy Stringfellow is also a gynecologist in private practice in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is also one of my closest friends. Dr. Stringfellow reviewed my writings about female physiology and adolescent endocrinology and made many helpful suggestions.

Randy and Lisa Wilson are the creators of a wonderful program for girls called the Purity Ball. You will want to read about this concept in chapter 11 and then implement their suggestions on behalf of your budding Cinderellas.

John and Stasi Eldredge made a unique contribution to this book with their description of the female soul. What they wrote is wonderful.

Several dozen young women participated in a free-form discussion about their relationships with their fathers. They were attending the Focus on the Family Institute at the time, and they agreed to talk to me at length. Their edited comments appear in chapter 9. This is one of the most insightful sections of the book. To all these students, I want to say thank you for participating in this discussion.

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Kim Davis wrote a personal story about her life in “The Obsession with Beauty.” Thank you, Kim, for your transparency and insight.

One of my favorite short writings in *Bringing Up Girls* was written by Sarah Kistler. It is entitled “The Charm Bracelet.” Don’t miss it!

Chapter 10, entitled “Fathers to Daughters,” offers one hundred proverbs written or compiled by Harry Harrison. They are excerpted from his book *Father to Daughter: Life Lessons on Raising a Girl*.

Three other people made their own unique contribution to this book through their poetry and songs: Steven Curtis Chapman, Stephanie Bentley, and Edgar Guest.

Randy Negaard is a CPA and a comptroller for my personal corporation, which owns the copyrights for my books. In that capacity, he handled all the contractual negotiations and implementation for *Bringing Up Girls*. Randy and I work together closely, and he is diligent in addressing all business concerns that would otherwise be a distraction for me. I would rather write about marriage and parenting than crunch numbers. Randy makes that possible.

Senator Rick and Karen Santorum were guests on *Focus on the Family* to talk about Karen’s book *Everyday Graces: A Child’s Book of Good Manners*. An excerpt of that interview appears in chapter 5 of this book, titled “Teaching Girls to Be Ladies.” My gratitude is expressed to the Santorums for sharing their helpful advice on child rearing with our radio listeners and for permitting me to include their remarks in *Bringing Up Girls*.

Mark and Becky Waters describe their personal loss at the end of the book. I will never forget Mark’s personal letter to me, nor will you.

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Finally, my greatest appreciation is reserved for my wife, Shirley, who prayed for me, supported me, and was my sounding board through this process. It may not surprise you that she sees things from a mother’s point of view, which influenced my own writings. There’s no doubt about it. I love and appreciate this lady enormously.

Enjoy the book.





# THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF GIRLS

A FEW YEARS AGO I wrote a book called *Bringing Up Boys*,<sup>1</sup> which has sold more than 2 million copies. Ever since it was released, people on the street, in restaurants, or in airports have approached me and asked, “When are you going to write *Bringing Up Girls*?” My publisher has posed the same question every time we’ve been together. Now, even kids have begun to hound me. This scrawled letter came to my office recently:

*Dear Dr. James Dobson,*

*I’m 6 years old. I have two older brothers. I would like to know when you are going to write Bringing Up Girls? Because my mom really wants to train girls. I appreciate your work on the book.*

*Julie*

Okay, Julie. You win. I’ll do it. And I thank you for the nice note. I’ll bet your mom put you up to writing me, because the girl she wants to train . . . is *you*. I hope to meet you someday because you sound like a very special six-year-old.

I have received thousands of other interesting letters from boys and girls, most of whom are older than Julie. Some have been rather angry with me because they blame me for the way their parents disciplined them. A college student sent me a poem to express that sentiment a few years ago. It read:

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*Roses are red and violets are blue  
When I was a kid, I got spanked 'cause of you*

One of my favorite letters came from a fourteen-year-old girl named Tiffany, who was steaming when she wrote. She came right to the point:

*I hate you dr dobson.  
i had to watch the dumbest movie today about sex. you made  
the movie. HA! like you'd know anything about it. also my mom has  
started not letting me go to movies she has not read reviews about,  
thanks to your gay little "plugged in" program. now i have no social  
life since all my friends go to the movies and see good movies. all i can  
watch is ella enchanted. woo-pa-dee-do!*

Then Tiffany took off the gloves. She must have seen a very old picture of me wearing out-of-date glasses, which prompted this last jab:

*i hope you get some new glasses. because physiologist or not, your  
other ones take up your whole face.  
Love Always, Tiffany*

What a sweet girl. Only a fourteen-year-old could start a letter declaring that she hates me and end with assurances of eternal love. I'll bet Tiffany is a challenge for her mom and dad, but there are better days coming. The parents I am advising today were testy kids like Tiffany when I wrote my first book on child rearing, but now something rather funny has happened. They have grown up and produced strong-willed children of their own, and they're looking for help. It is rewarding for me to watch a second generation of moms and dads learn to deal with the same issues and problems that they presented to their parents twenty-five years ago. Who knows? Maybe I'll have an opportunity to advise a third generation when Tiffany's first baby comes along. She and other young moms from her generation will see things from an entirely different perspective then. But I am getting ahead of myself.

The title I have chosen for this book, *Bringing Up Girls*, makes a fundamental assertion. It assumes that parents have the responsibility of not simply overseeing the growth and development of their girls (and boys) but of raising them purposely—building into them certain qualities and traits of character. Wise King Solomon addressed that obligation more than 2,900 years ago when he wrote, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, κῆν). The apostle Paul added another dimension when he said, "Fathers, do not exasperate

your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Think for a moment about the implications of those Scriptures. Do they mean that a child should be taught to revere God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to understand the spiritual dimension of life? Yes, that is their first and most important meaning. But I believe they instruct us to do more than that.

Children are a gift from God, and we are stewards of their welfare. Training up our daughters in this sense implies helping them to navigate the cultural minefields that lie in their paths—teaching them eternal values, talents, and perspectives. It means instilling within them an appreciation for truthfulness, trustworthiness, self-discipline, self-control, generosity, and sweetness of spirit. It means teaching them modesty, morality, and manners. It means helping them overcome the natural inclination toward selfishness, aggressiveness, violence, and slovenliness. It means teaching them to work and learn and think. That is just the beginning, which is why parenthood is such a daunting responsibility, requiring careful forethought and planning. This is what we will be talking about in the pages that follow.

The passion I feel for the subject at hand is related to the daughter who still calls me Dad. She is grown now, but I love her like I did when we were first introduced in the delivery room. Something electric occurred between us on that mystical night, and it endures today. When Danae was three years old, I was a professor of pediatrics at a medical school and a researcher at a large children’s hospital. Five days a week, as I prepared for my long commute through Los Angeles traffic, Danae would cry. She didn’t want me to go. I always gave her a big hug and promised to hurry home that afternoon, but she was heartbroken. I can still see this precious kid standing in the doorway crying.

Danae was particularly upset one morning as I explained again why Daddy had to go to work. Her beautiful blue eyes welled up with tears, and she said sorrowfully, “It’s all right, Daddy. I forgive you.”

I asked my daughter a few weeks ago if she remembered those days. She has a remarkably vivid memory of her childhood, which is almost scary at times. She not only remembered her tears on the morning I was describing, but she recalled something that I had forgotten.

One day when she was three, she and her mother came to the front yard to wave at me as I drove away. I had already backed out of the driveway, however, and didn’t see them standing there. Danae recalls that she sobbed in disappointment. But when I was a long block away, I happened to catch a glimpse of my little family in my rearview mirror. They were still frantically waving good-bye. As I was going around the corner, I put my

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arm out the window and waved in return. Even after all these years, Danae remembers the excitement she felt at that moment when her daddy saw her and returned her wave.

How could I, and indeed, how could *we* allow ourselves to get so busy with the cares of life that we would neglect our vulnerable little boys and girls and leave them unprotected from evil influences? How could we fail to give them the love and attention they crave? And how could we send them into a dangerous world without laying a secure foundation to hold them steady? No other priority comes close to this responsibility to raise our children, as Solomon said, in the way they should go. This is where we will head in the pages that follow.

We will be discussing information, approaches, answers, solutions, and recommendations that have stood the test of time. Our focus will be on the influence of mothers, fathers, teachers, and peers. We'll deal with girls of all ages, from babyhood to adulthood, and will consider the land mines that surely lie ahead. We'll talk about teaching girls to be ladies. We will discuss the search for self-worth, sexual awakening, single parenting, emotional development, and the how-tos of raising girls. And of course, we'll deal with puberty, adolescence, and the obsession with beauty.

Ultimately, we will talk about spiritual training at home and why moral purity must be taught from the preschool years to the empty nest. Therein lies our hope. There is so much to be said here. More than three thousand pages of research and reference material have been accumulated in preparation for this book. It is my thirty-third and has taken me more than three years to complete. What took me so long was trying to decide what to leave out. Everything seemed significant to me.

What I will share with you, moms and dads, has become my obsession. I get a lump in my throat when I think of those precious kids who know so little about life, and I worry about how we can protect their innocence and preserve the joys of childhood.

That is our task. So get a cup of hot coffee or put on a kettle of tea, settle down in a comfortable chair, and let's talk together.