

# CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

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## On Daughters and Dating: How to Intimidate Suitors

By Jen Wilken

I have two teenage daughters, so it was with some interest that I read a recent article entitled “Application to Date My Daughter.” It was pretty funny, playing on the idea of the stereotypical shotgun-toting father and the mortified daughter as they negotiate the tricky terrain of a first date. Then Christian bloggers grabbed the concept, and for the most part, these versions were funny, too. There were some common themes: slouchy-panted unemployed suitors, dads breathing out Chuck Norris-inspired threats. I didn’t lose my well-developed sense of humor until I made the tactical error of glancing at some of the comments. And then I was just flat-out sad.

Here is the comment that made me the saddest, posted by a well-meaning young Christian father: “Bro, this is awesome. My daughter’s only 2, but I am printing this for my fridge. Thanks for your godly example.”

Oh dear.

Okay, joke’s over. Bro. Let’s talk strategy for a second. Is that all you’ve got? You need a better plan than these low-level intimidation techniques. After all, she’s your *daughter*, for Pete’s sake. So let’s talk frankly about what you need to do to guard her interests when it comes to dating. Instead of brandishing a shotgun or breaking out an application, you need to build a wall.

That’s right, you heard me—build a wall. Go all “Rapunzel.” Build it so high that only the strongest of suitors can scale it. But don’t wait until your baby girl is a teenager, bro—start now. Start yesterday. There’s no time to waste.

### Build a Wall

In Song of Solomon 8:8–9 we hear a family’s hope that their young sister will grow into a woman of strength and dignity. Can you guess what metaphor they use to describe that kind of woman? A wall. Their sister assures them in verse 10 that she is indeed a wall, complete with towers. Her statement indicates assurance that she is not only strong, but also able to defend herself against any unworthy suitors. That’s what you want, bro—you want a wall.

Here’s the problem with shotgun jokes and applications posted on the fridge: to anyone paying attention, they announce that you fully expect your daughter to have poor judgment. Be assured that your daughter is paying attention. And don’t be shocked if she meets your expectation. You might want to worry less about terrorizing or retro-fitting prospective suitors and worry more about preparing your daughter to choose wisely. And that means building a wall.

Instead of intimidating all your daughter's potential suitors, raise a daughter who intimidates them just fine on her own. Because you know what's intimidating? Strength and dignity. Deep faith. Self-assuredness. Wisdom. Kindness. Humility. Industriousness. Those are the bricks that build the wall that withstands the advances of Slouchy-Pants, whether you ever show up with your Winchester locked and loaded or not. The unsuitable suitor finds nothing more terrifying than a woman who knows her worth to God and to her family.

### **Too Strong?**

But here's a hard reality: if you raise that daughter, she'll likely intimidate her fair share of "nice Christian boys" as well. Because a decent number of those guys have some nutty ideas about what it means to be in charge. I'm amazed and saddened at how often I hear young single guys say of bright, gifted single women, "Wow, she's so strong I don't think I could lead her." At which point, too many bright, gifted single women begin to consider ways to "tone themselves down" or "soften themselves a bit."

Raise a strong daughter, even if—no, especially if it means potential suitors question whether they can "lead her," whatever that means to them. You've just identified those suitors as ineligible, without so much as an application process. Leadership is not about the strong looking for weaker people to lead. It's about the humble looking for those whose strengths offset their weaknesses and complement their strengths. Strong leaders surround themselves with strong people, not with weak ones. Rather than finding the strengths of others threatening, they celebrate them and leverage them. This is Management 101, but I fear young Christian men and well-intentioned Christian parents of daughters have gotten a little fuzzy on the concept.

### **Put Down Your Shotgun**

I often think that if we scrutinized our parenting with the same intensity we plan to turn on our daughters' prospective suitors, we'd stop speculating about shotguns and applications and start building that wall. So, my well-meaning father of a 2-year-old, please don't hit "print" on that application just yet. Instead of cross-examining the man your daughter brings home, cross-examine the man who brought your daughter home from the hospital. She does not need the belated braggadocio of your intentions to protect her from slouchy-pants fools when she's a teen. She needs you to hitch up your own and invest in her character—now.

So put down your shotgun. Pick up your Indian Princess guide book, or your coach's clipboard. Take a seat at a tea party. Teach how to change a flat and start the mower. Discuss politics and economics and theology. Compliment a new outfit or an A in math. Tell her you think she is absolutely beautiful. Kneel at a pink chenille bedside and pray your guts out. Raise a daughter with a fully loaded heart and mind so that a fully loaded shotgun isn't necessary. She shouldn't need you to scare off weak suitors. Let her strength and dignity do the job. Resolve to settle for nothing less than the best protection for your daughter. Resolve to be the kind of man you want her to bring home. Resolve to build a wall.

"What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver. . ." (Song of Solomon 8:8-9).