

392 04/30/04 How to help our girls

For the last two months, I have been writing about the crisis facing our girls. The symptoms of the crisis include the pressure to be too thin, obesity, the use of drugs and inappropriate behaviors to dull emotional pain, immodest dress, poor academic performance and a high incidence of teen pregnancy.

These girls will be the mothers of our next generation. We all do what we see our parents do unless we make a conscious, dedicated effort to change. We must help our daughters and granddaughters break the cycle.

What can our community do? We need to:

- Put pressure on media and businesses to promote a healthy, athletic girl as the ideal body image. Speak out with your voice and your money.
- Provide activities for all our girls that give them a sense of worth based on other than just their looks.
- Provide free parenting training through organizations and churches.

What can individual parents do? We must take charge of our daughter's life at an early age. We need to

- Actively teach her appropriate behavior and dress for a girl who is a daughter of the King.
- Model a good exercise and nutrition lifestyle.
- Make certain that her dad or another father figure spends time with her and lets her know that she is beautiful and loved.
- Assert ourselves to say "No" to activities and choices that will be harmful to our daughter.
- Get involved with our daughter in fun activities that allow her to enjoy being with us as well as feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Really listen to her. Talk a little, but listen more.

Will this be easy? Absolutely not! It may very well be the hardest thing we as a community and as parents will ever do. However, I really do not believe we have a choice if we want to save our daughters.