

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: Our family followed the story of the girl in Florida abducted by a man who apparently just led her away. How can I talk with my 12-year-old daughter about the dangers of being kidnapped? I don't want to frighten her, but she needs to understand the danger.

ANSWER: You understand your position correctly. On the one hand, you don't want her to live in fear and paranoia; on the other hand, you don't want her to be naïve about the dangers a 12-year-old faces these days. Every parent must prepare his or her children for life in a dangerous and sinful world. **However, we must take care not to violate our children with too much exposure to evil as we equip them to survive.**

Now is the time to have **on-going, age-appropriate** conversations about ways to keep safe from bad strangers. Often we forget about the stranger danger when our children get older. She is not too young for you to discuss sexual predators and the tactics used to abduct young men and women. Your daughter will key off of **your** mood and attitude. Approach her seriously, thoughtfully, and calmly. Make certain the following points are covered.

1. Begin your talk by praying for and with her. Thus, you are demonstrating whence **your** trust and safety come.
2. Open up your Bible to Matthew 10:16. Talk about what it means for Christians to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (We are not to be naïve about evil, nor should we take part in any evil.)
3. Explain that you are having this talk because there are actions she can take to keep herself safe. At times, she will be on her own.
4. Tell her that there are a few people out there who try to kidnap young women in order to hurt and kill them. (This might be the time to talk with your daughter about rape.)
5. Let her know that these bad strangers usually try to trick you and lie to you. At her age, the trick and the lie may involve something like offering easy money, providing free clothes or make-up, promising "modeling" or "acting" opportunities, pretending to be a friend of her parents or friends, needing help of some kind, offering a ride, etc.
6. Talk to her about safety skills like walking with her head up in an alert and purposeful way, avoiding places that are not well lighted

and/or offer hiding places for strangers, practicing screaming for help and fighting back, running into a place of business for help, backing away and running when approached by a stranger, keeping a safe distance between herself and a stranger, being aware of a “bad feeling” about someone, staying with a group, etc. (We know from case studies that most abductees are led away without resistance. They either fall for the trick and lie, or they didn’t have a plan of resistance. Those who fight back or run and yell are the ones who have a chance of escape.)

7. Alert her to the dangers of meeting people online, agreeing to meet such a person, and/or giving out any personal information.

8. Have your daughter fingerprinted.

9. Remember that this conversation is not a one-time event. It is part of an on going dialogue. Use the opportunities of life to reinforce everything you have said (i.e. practice and role-play situations).

Ultimately, you want your daughter to trust in the protection and love of Christ. She need not live in fear, nor should she be an easy target. Trusting in God does not mean that we “test” God by doing nothing in a proactive way.

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