



## **iQuestions Faculty, Joe White**

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Question:

*How do I deal with being a friend versus a parent to my child?*

Answer:

Being your child's friend and being their parent is probably two of the most difficult hats that a parent will wear.

Boy, was I naïve as a parent. I thought going into this parenting thing was going to be some kind of a big party. I was so excited about it. And you know what? A lot of times it was a party. But there were a lot of times when it wasn't a party.

I remember when my oldest daughter was in seventh grade, and my second daughter was in fifth grade, and that little second daughter was the most honest person I had ever met. Daddy had really gone all out that year, and I thought I could open my shirt and see "Super Dad" on my chest or something like that.

I'd taken those girls on vacations, spent time with them, taught them how to serve a volleyball, how to shoot a basketball. I was doing it all. And I was wanting some rewards, and I remember I wasn't getting a lot.

So, we were driving down the road one day, and I looked over at my daughters, looking for a little encouragement as a dad. And I said, "Hey, hasn't this been a great year? Hasn't this father-daughter year been just super, and we had a great time in vacations?" and I just kept throwing things out. I wasn't hearing anything back. Dead silence.

And finally, Courtney looked at me—my second daughter, who was sitting in the middle seat in the pick-up truck—and she said, “Dad, Jamie doesn’t like you very much.”

And I said, “Really?” I said, “Peanut, tell me about that.” (I called Jamie “Peanut.”)

And she said, “Daddy, I haven’t liked you since November.”

Well, it was March. And that really hurt me. I looked over at her, and I said, “You know, Peanut, that really hurts my feelings.” I said, “Tell me about it.”

She said, “Well, Dad, my friends go to these kinds of parties, and you don’t let me. My friends go to these kinds of movies, and you don’t let me. My friends do this, my friends pierce anything”—my friends, my friends, my friends—“and you don’t let me do those things.”

I said, “Well, that hurts a little bit, Jamie. But you know what? Princess, my job is not to be your friend. You know what? My job is to be your daddy.”

And I said, “You know, Jamie”—and I just pulled this number out of the sky—“someday, when you’re twenty-three years old, you’re going to be in some little chapel somewhere. You may be twenty-eight or twenty-one, but you’ll be in a little chapel somewhere, and you’re going to be putting on a little white gown and a little white veil, and out there in that chapel is going to be the boy that you’ll love more than any other boy that you’ve ever met in your life. And I’m going to humbly walk you down that aisle. And, Peanut, at the end of that aisle, I’m going to put your hand into his hand, and that’ll be one of the neatest things that I’ve ever done, to turn you over to the boy who will love you for a lifetime.”



And I said, "Jamie, when you walk down that aisle, you're not to be ashamed. You're going to be a proud little girl, and you're going to have a lot of regrets as you go down that aisle."

And I said, "Princess, my job, as your daddy, is to build an environment in our home as best I can to help you walk down that aisle with no regrets."

And I said, "Jamie, when I give your hand away to that boy that day, in marriage, that's when I want you to turn around and look at your daddy and say, 'Daddy, I want you to know that I like you today.' And Peanut, you know what? If you don't like me until then, that's okay, because I am going to be your dad, and I'm going to do the best job I can, and if I ever get to be your friend, then that will be a privilege along the way."

You know what? That went on for about another five or six months, but then one day, I took her on a little trip together, and she went into the mall on that trip, and she came out of the mall with a little gift from me. We got back in the car, and she said, "Daddy, I have a present for you." And I said, "Well, Peanut, thank you for thinking of me." She said, "It's a CD. Can I play it?" And I said, "Sure," so she popped it into our little CD player in her car. And the CD said, as you've heard on the radio so many times:

Have I ever told you you're my hero?  
You're everything I wish I could be  
Have I ever told you you're my hero?  
You are the wind beneath my wings

We had other hard times. There were other times when I wasn't her friend. It was difficult. Honestly, it was a difficult trek. But if I had it all to do over again, I'd do it again in a second, because now we're best

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friends today, and now I get to be best friends with her children as a granddaddy.

You be their mommy, you be their daddy—and if you get to be their friend along the way, consider it a bonus.

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