

Why Charge?

I will never forget standing in the ballroom of a major downtown hotel in Dallas, Texas. I had just finished my keynote address at a National Youth Convention to over 4,000 youth delegates from throughout the country. As I stood there shaking hands, signing bibles, and answering questions I noticed one young girl standing off to the side noticeably waiting to be the last person to have an audience with me. At long last it was her turn. I greeted her and this was her response. "Mr. Fitzhugh," she began soberly, "I've never had anyone tell me I was pretty or special. So any boy that came along and said the right things I would easily fall for him. That led me into a pretty bad relationship. I knew he wasn't the right one for me but I thought I was in love. I won a college basketball scholarship to a school in California. After my first season in my first year I missed that boy so much that I quit the team, gave up my scholarship and moved back home. I quickly found out that while I was away he had been fooling around with two of my best friends. The moment I got home we fooled around too and he gave me a disease. It's something I have to live with for the rest of my life." She then broke down in tears.

My heart sank. Who can fathom the needless heartache, the emptiness, the volumes of shattered lives lying in the wake of the selfish offender who tramples the hearts of the lonely and desperate. We can never undervalue the empirical need to be esteemed and to have self-confidence because it's our self-esteem that thwarts veiled attempts to conquer us, dominate us, use us. Yet this one scene, the young heart starving for approval and applause succumbed by the aggressive hormone driven adolescent boy, is repeated often throughout America with the same or similar results school year after school year. I have heard this tale so many times I could probably finish the sentences of the next one telling it with some degree of accuracy. My heart breaks every time I encounter such a plight. Perhaps I am hypersensitive because I am raising two daughters of my own. Perhaps my sensitivity is because as the "baby of the family" I was a "momma's boy". I was a firsthand witness to mom's victimization, verbal, emotional and physical. I was there, seeing her attempt to pick up the pieces of a failed marriage and struggle to raise four children on her own. Or perhaps my sensitivity is the result of seeing my own sister struggle for acceptance and latch on to men beneath her because her self-esteem was too low to expect anything or anyone better. I have vowed to ensure that my daughters will never have to wonder if they are pretty enough, good enough, or special. As often as possible throughout their lives I have intentionally affirmed them. I, as often as possible, attempt to demonstrate how they ought to be treated, because they deserve it, every time. I often look deeply into their eyes, almost touching their souls when I declare with confidence, "You are so beautiful!" Because of my work and travels I meet so many, who like my young friend in Dallas, never hear such things. Consequently the first "wrong thing" that comes along and says the right things, bad things soon happen.

I searched for effective ways to address this phenomenon. I have the privilege of standing before thousands of teenage girls and boys in America who will at sometime find themselves in the valley of decision when it comes to relationship. What could I say that will make a difference. When did women become the enemy? The "final straw" came during a presentation in Springfield, Illinois. On occasion I'll randomly shake hands with a young man and with all seriousness ask, "How's your wife?" Their immediate response is hilarious. To the

girl I'll ask, "How's your husband?" In this instance the young lady responded, "How did you know I had a husband?" She went on to say, "I am graduating in two weeks. I have a husband but I am not married. I have been seeing a married man now for two years. He promised me he was going to leave his wife and five kids for me. I just found out I am a month and a half pregnant, now he says he doesn't ever want to see me again...what do I do?"

As a result of this and other instances I developed the young women's Power Phrase! I call it "C.H.A.R.G.E". When in assemblies or giving presentations throughout America, this is probably the one phrase when stated, more teens approach me after the show to hear it once again and write it down, than any other thing I say. It is a positive profession that establishes what behavior will be accepted and at the same time, what will not be accepted.

This is how I present it:

"Hey ladies! Whoever that guy is...and you know who I'm talking about don't you...the one that's trying to hang with you...not just anybody, but HIM...make sure he understands the meaning of CHARGE! C-H-A-R-G-E...tell him...Cherish Me, Honor Me, Adore Me, Respect Me, for I am, God's Expression! If he can't roll like that...he's not the one!"

Negative peer pressure and more importantly bad peer influence forces students into negative behavior all the time. True champions let the air out of this type of pressure by having a positive self-image of who they are. Without such self-image students attempt to find identity in fitting-in or going with the flow. I have discovered that any "dead fish" can go with the flow. I can take a dead fish, toss it in the river and it will take off down stream. I can exhort it to go, go, go when actually it's dead. Why is it moving? It's just caught in the current and going with the flow. The student who can act like, dress like, drink like, smoke like or cuss like everyone else does not impress me. Anyone can do that! The true champions in life are those who have the courage to go against the flow even when everyone else is going a different direction. A positive self-confession about who we are is one of the most powerful ways to stand against behavior or treatment by others contrary to who you believe yourself to be. Positive self-confession triggers confidence, character and courage. My dear young lady, inherent in your existence is the right and expected end that you be **CHERISHED, HONORED, ADORED AND RESPECTED!** You are **GOD'S EXPRESSION!** The next few pages will detail for you what such an experience should look like, sound like and feel like. Once you complete this short reading, and understand the height, depth, and breadth of who you are and what you deserve, never allow him, no matter who he is, to force you to lower your standards just so that he can raise his! Apply this Power Phrase not only to your relationships but apply it as well throughout your personal or professional encounters. If you tolerate the contrary, injury is certain, and you will never be fulfilled. And that which you tolerate you can never change!