



# Father of the Bride

**Rated:** PG • **Running Time:** 1 hour, 45 minutes  
**Starring:** Steve Martin as George Banks; Diane Keaton as Nina Banks; Kimberly Williams as Annie; Martin Short as Franck; George Newbern as Bryan MacKenzie  
**Director:** Charles Shyer

**Themes:** Releasing a grown child, adjusting to change, embracing in-laws, unconditional love and acceptance, wedding chaos, family memories, parental sacrifice.

## Story Summary

George Banks considers love and matrimony wonderful things ... until they happen to his only daughter, 22-year-old Annie. He looks forward to her return from Rome, where she has spent four months studying architecture. Although George is a successful businessman, his first love is his family and the Southern California home where they've created precious memories together.

Playing basketball in the driveway. Teaching his children to ride bikes. Pitching tents in the backyard. Seeing young Annie slide down the banister. George is a contented man about to get a life-changing surprise.

Annie has returned from Rome looking more grown-up. During dinner, she drops the bombshell that she's engaged to Bryan, a young computer genius she met abroad. Her mom, Nina, listens excitedly to her news, but George is shocked and suspicious of this young stranger poised to take his place as Annie's hero. Instead of seeing the woman his daughter has become, he still imagines a 7-year-old with pigtails. George realizes he has reached that fearful place "when you quit worrying about her meeting the wrong guy and you worry about her meeting the *right* guy ... because that's when you lose her."

George's vocal disapproval drives Annie from the dinner table. Nina chides him to go after her and apologize, which he does. He sets aside pessimism and sarcasm long enough to play a spirited game of one-on-one with his little girl and brace for meeting her fiancé. The young man turns out to be charming, though it's clear that, in George's mind, no one would be good enough for Annie. His negativity extends beyond Bryan to everything related to the engagement. Bryan's wealthy parents. The length of

**Cautions:** There's some alcohol use (beer, wine, champagne) and several exclamations of "oh my god." At one point, George and Nina seem resigned to the fact that unmarried couples have sex. George nervously tells Annie and Bryan as they head out for a drive, "Don't forget to fasten your condom—*seat belt*." Later, Nina reminds her husband that they had been intimate numerous times in her parents' house.

the guest list. Nina putting the kibosh on his idea of holding the wedding at The Steak Pit. The truth is, it's tough for this aging dad to release his daughter into adulthood. His role

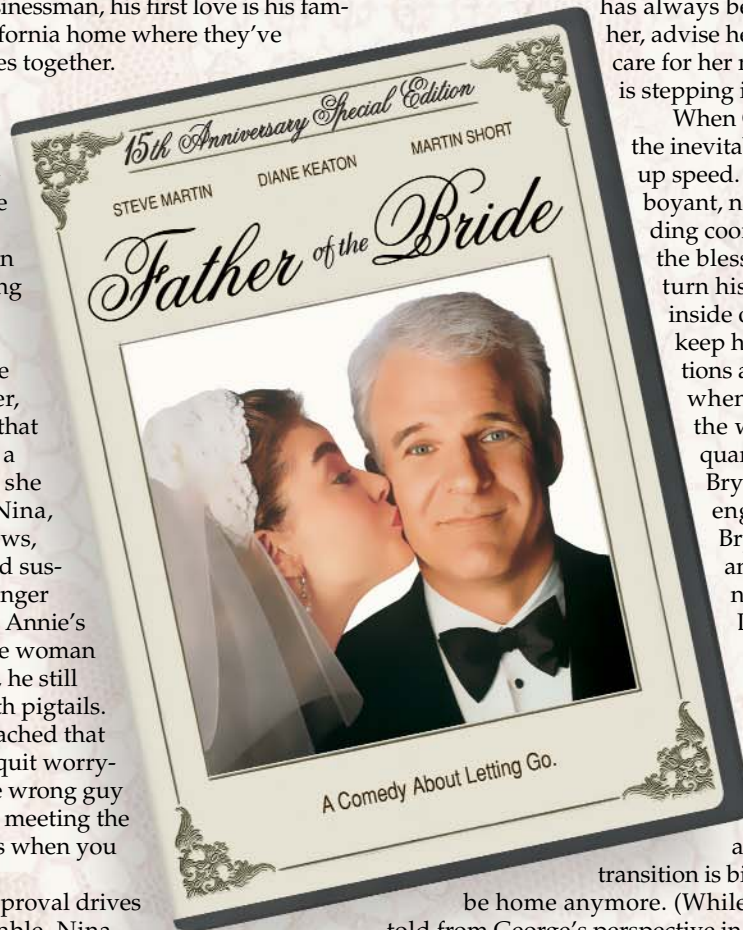
has always been to protect her, advise her, worry about her and care for her needs. Now another man is stepping in.

When George finally accepts the inevitable, this crazy ride picks up speed. With the help of a flamboyant, nearly unintelligible wedding coordinator named Franck, the blessed event threatens to turn his emotions and pockets inside out. George struggles to keep his cool amid complications and ballooning costs. Just when he makes peace with the whole thing, a lover's quarrel between Annie and Bryan threatens to end the engagement. It seems Bryan's gift of a blender is an affront to Annie's feminist ideals, and it's up to Dad to smooth over the rough spots. Soon the wedding is back on.

The night before the ceremony, Annie and her father chat about her own odd feelings. She's excited

about marriage, but the transition is bittersweet. Home won't

be home anymore. (While most of the story gets told from George's perspective in a way that allows young viewers to appreciate what a parent goes through, this moment helps adults understand adolescent anxiety.) As unexpected snowflakes begin to fall, Annie also fears that inclement weather will cost her father even more money. But George has surrendered everything to forces beyond his control. Now he is focusing on what's truly important. He tells Annie, "I know I'll remember this moment for the rest of my life." Despite some challenges, the wedding is a



success, and George discovers that the special love shared between a father and daughter can never be replaced.

### Before You Watch

If you have a teenage daughter, buy a few bridal magazines and flip through them together. Find out what styles she finds appealing and, by extension, some of her dreams for that special day. Cut out favorite photos and paste them in a notebook, or make a collage that you can reflect upon when she actually gets engaged. Also, by looking at those magazines, gather a sense of what the editors consider important about weddings. Do you agree? And talk about why brides traditionally wear white, relating that to previous discussions you have had about sexual purity (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

### Bible Bookmarks

Prov. 22:6; Isa. 26:3, 43:2; Jer. 29:11; Mark 10:7-9; 1 Cor. 13 and 6:18-20; Eph. 5:21-33; Phil. 4:6-7

### Talking Points

**1** George talks about life's surprises and how they can sneak up and grab hold of us. Have you encountered any surprises lately? Have circumstances challenged your expectations? Take comfort in scriptures such as Philippians 4:6-7, Jeremiah 29:11, and Isaiah 26:3 and 43:2, which can keep us from overreacting as George did.

**2** George admits that he's "not a guy who's big on change." How does his refusal to go with the flow compound his problems? Can you relate? What eventually changes his attitude?

**3** Playing basketball is a bonding activity for the Banks family. What's yours? Do you have favorite memories of things your family has done together? How has your home played a role in those memories?

**4** Read 1 Corinthians 13. In describing their affection for one another, what did Bryan and Annie say that proved that their love was unselfish? Invite your teen to describe the qualities they plan to hold out for in a mate. Ask, "How much input should a parent have into who their child marries?"

**5** Annie says that, until she met Bryan, she "didn't believe in marriage," fearing it would cost her her identity and play into pre-feminist social politics. How has our culture changed its attitude toward marriage—for better or worse—since the 1950s? Read Ephesians 5:21-33 for a biblical view of love, service and submission intended by God to strengthen marriages.

**6** Bryan's dad says, "Sooner or later you just have to let your kids go and hope you brought 'em up right." Proverbs 22:6 seems to agree. Ask your teen, "What

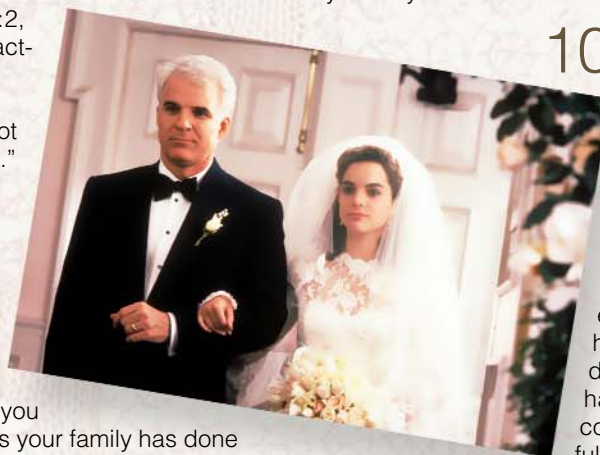
things have I done well to prepare you for life on your own? Is there anything I could do better?"

**7** Annie describes the weird feeling of spending her last night in the house where she grew up ("Kinda like my last night as a kid. ... It was so strange packing up my room"). Yet "leaving and cleaving" is part of marriage (Mark 10:7-9). Ask, "What frightens you about the thought of leaving home someday? What about it appeals to you?" Talk about your own transition into independence and share significant lessons you learned.

**8** Sensitive to the fact that his preoccupation with the wedding has interfered with Matty's father-son time, George wants to make it up to him. Are you so focused on something that you've let relationships slide? What can you do to remind those people how valuable they are?

**9** Separately, come up with five adjectives to describe Annie and George's father-daughter bond, then compare your lists. What aspects of their relationship do you admire most? Do parents and children always have to agree in order to have a good relationship? Why or why not?

**10** While in jail, George promises Nina, "I will try to remember my daughter's feelings, and how with every roll of my eyes I am taking away a piece of her happiness." We can disrespect each other with nonverbal expressions even when we'd never use hurtful words. Do you ever do that? Discuss those habits and how you might communicate more respectfully to each other.



### Follow-Up Activity

Pull out photo albums and talk about your own courtship, engagement and wedding day. Special memories. Pleasant surprises. Humorous things that went wrong. What did the process of planning that important day teach you about your spouse and members of your extended family? Help your teen understand that an elaborate, romantic ceremony and reception shouldn't be the ultimate goal, but rather a spiritually grounded beginning for a lifelong journey.

### Just for Fun

Annie and Bryan get an early wedding gift of a Venus de Milo statue with a clock in its stomach. It's a subtle homage to the original *Father of the Bride* (1950), starring Spencer Tracy and Elizabeth Taylor, which featured the same tacky present. Also, keep an eye on George's socks, which are white in the supermarket but black in jail. Oops! —by Bob Smithouser