

Fathers

By Patrick Wyett



As I write this, today is Father's Day. I am very blessed; I have both of my parents, my father and my mother. I know many of you don't; your dear ones already having departed this earthly life. I also know that for some people the word "father" represents somebody who was never there -- a void in what should have been a happier childhood.

Or maybe "father" is a word that evokes painful memories of a drunkard, drug addict or worse. Whatever the word "father" means to you, we all have the commonality of having two fathers, our earthly father and our Heavenly Father.

Let me give you some thoughts on my earthly father.

He took care of his family. My dad sustained a back injury when he was a young man that only grew worse over the years. He worked on the assembly line at a carmaker. When his union went out on strike, he took a job at a steel manufacturer. There were times when it was all he could do to walk out at the end of a shift and come home.

His pain was constant. Sometimes debilitating. I remember seeing him lying on the floor, trying to find relief. But my dad had a family to take care of. Off to work he'd go, day after grinding day. I reflect on his grit and am proud. My dad took the responsibility of providing for his family as a solemn mission. We always had something to eat and a place to live.

My determination, my sense of duty and responsibility, my honor, comes from my father.

My dad worked second shift, my mom stayed home and took care of us kids. With school during the day and my dad's job in the evening, I didn't see much of him during the week unless me and my brother were badly misbehaving, which we were sometimes prone to do. Then we'd see him when he got home. He didn't like those times, having to discipline us, and we liked them even less but they were necessary. As a kid, I didn't understand it was for my own good. It was.

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

You see, I was learning discipline and that there are consequences for making bad choices. Those consequences only become more severe as we reach adulthood if we don't learn those lessons in childhood.

Here's an important point. My dad took us to church. He didn't just send us to church, he took us. Actions lead, not just words and good intentions. Plant the seed of Christian faith in a child. Instill that understanding. It does not guarantee the choices made when that child matures to accountability, but it's always there, a conscience whispering truth in a world of temptation and destroying lies.

As one ages, there seems to be more time for reflection even as time itself seems to speed up and fly by. There are joys and regrets, things we like to relive in memory and other things we'd like to redo. My dad is older now, as am I. The seed that he and my mom planted in my heart so many years ago, has grown into a Christian faith that will one day see my soul harvested into the eternal presence of my Heavenly Father.

There's even a bonus. As I've indicated, my dad is a Christian, as is my mom. We all have the same Heavenly Father! As death will inevitably come and separate us, that separation is only temporary; a brief flash in the continuum of forever.

In heaven we will never be separated again.

“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In 2007 I made a phone call home from overseas. I was calling my parents. My mom usually answered but this day and time she was out. My dad answered. This was providential. A horrible thing had happened, the details of which I'll not recount here. Suffice it to say it is the worst thing I've ever experienced, initiating a time when my Heavenly Father had to carry me for a while, to completely bear my burdens.

Remember the poem “Footprints”? It perfectly applies to that particular point in my life. The day I made that call, my Heavenly Father already knew who I needed to talk to.

My dad answered, I relayed to him what had happened. I could hear the care and hurt in his voice when he responded, for he too had experienced the same thing. I knew this but we'd never talked about it. Now we did. My dad isn't an outwardly emotional man but he certainly has deep feelings and the requisite sound advice and wisdom you'd hope to get from your father.

As I said, I'm blessed. My dad had an empathy for me that day from eight thousand miles away because he'd been there and done that. Because he loved me. That demonstration of a father's love for his son meant so very much to me, then and now.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

My Heavenly Father had the right man for the job of being my earthly father picked out before I was born. So precious am I that He sent His only Son to die for me that I might have eternal life through His sacrifice. Remember this?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

It applies to all.

I am loved, what more could I possibly ask for or receive out of this temporary existence in a fallen world? You are loved as well. In those times of pain and sorrow, God hurts with and for you. He longs to welcome you home. Pray, read your Bible and endure until that time.

For what is life but an opportunity to prepare for the certain eventuality of death? Or for some, the Lord Himself returning for us.

This Father's Day, now past as you read this, I honor both of my Fathers.

As I strive to do every day.

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