

PROUD OF MY FATHER'S ROLE IN MY FAITH JOURNEY

When Mother's Day approached, I shared in my mid-week message how my mother played a significant role in my faith journey. My father did not attend church, but he also did not discourage my mother from taking me to church. Even though my father did not have a direct impact on my faith, he did have an indirect effect. I will always remember his response when I shared with him for the first time that God had called me to become a minister. He swore, breaking a commandment as he did so, but said, "It is your life!"

Even though he was not gushing with excitement about my call, my dad was very supportive once I started taking divinity classes at Knox College. Every week my dad would give me \$50 to help cover my costs. I never asked him for this, he would just hand me \$50 every Friday night when we visited the house. That money covered the cost of the three return trips I would take each week to Toronto by train. Contributing this money was one way that my father had an indirect impact on my faith journey and studies.

My father died from cancer after my first year at Knox College. His death also impacted my faith journey in an indirect way. My father died the day before I started my second year. I never had the chance to properly grieve his passing due to the busyness that comes from being in full time studies. During the Christmas holidays that year I had the opportunity to attend my first Blue Christmas service. It was at that service when I finally had a chance to grieve my father's death. I appreciated what that service did for my healing process so much that I started offering Blue Christmas services at Petrolia when I started ministering there. It became a very popular service in the community every Christmas and was actually reported on in the Sarnia Observer and by a Chatham radio station. I probably would never have offered these services if it had not been for my father's passing.

A third way my father helped my spiritual journey indirectly came as a result of his illness. I will always remember being at the Juravinski Cancer Clinic when my father was told he had advanced cancer in his mouth. My father passed away about five weeks after his diagnosis. Having journeyed with my father with his cancer, I wanted to take that experience and be a chaplain to others

going through that process at Juravinski and Hamilton Health Sciences. For four months in the summer of 2000, I interned as a chaplain there. To be honest, it was the hardest four months for me because it took me out of my comfort zone in so many ways. The lessons I learned about suffering and faith proved valuable for me as I started ministry. I may have never had that opportunity if it had not been for my father. While my mother had the most impact on my faith journey, my father did as well in an indirect way. I am proud of how both of my parents have played a role in my faith journey.

If my dad was still alive today, I think he would be proud of where my faith in God has taken me. Even though his initial response to my call to ministry was not positive, I know he was proud in his heart of what I was doing. I pray that it has been your experience as well that your father has helped you grow in your faith, whether directly or indirectly. I also pray that you were aware how proud your father was of how far you progressed in your faith journey.

Let us not forget during this time of year how proud our Heavenly Father is of us as well. Do you recall the two times in the Gospels when our Heavenly Father let it be known how proud and pleased, He was with His Son? The first time we saw this happen was at Jesus' baptism. As Jesus came up out of the water, we are told that the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove. Then a voice from Heaven said,

"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." (Matthew 3:17)

God the Father expressed this pleasure again when Jesus was transfigured. After Peter said he wanted to build three tents as memorials to Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, God responded with these words:

**"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to Him."
(Matthew 17:5)**

God the Father took both of these opportunities to let His Son know, and us as well, how proud He was of Him. I imagine the Father was just as proud of His Son when He accepted the cup of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Just as God the Father was proud of His Son, He is just as proud of us. May we never lose sight of the fact that ***we are children of the living God***, and

that our Heavenly Father takes a very ***active role in helping us grow and mature to become more like Christ.*** We are blessed to have a Heavenly Father who helps us to grow in this way. This Fathers' Day, may we take time to reflect on how proud we are to have God as our Heavenly Father and to think of all the ways that He has blessed us. May we also take the opportunity this Fathers' Day to stay committed to growing in our faith in the ways that He desires so that we will continue to make Him proud.

Now it is my time as a father to try and bless my daughter with the gift of faith. I have obviously taken a more direct role in doing this than my father did. I am thankful how active my Heavenly Father has been in this process for Coral as well. I witnessed this last September at Coral's graduation ceremony from the Christian school Central Baptist Academy. One of the awards presented at the graduation ceremony was for the highest mark in Bible class. When Coral was announced as the winner of the award, my sister-in-law turned to me and said, "You had a hand in winning that award!"

While I helped her at times, the credit really goes to Coral for her hard work and to my Heavenly Father for leading her to that Christian school and helping her to be spiritually nurtured there. I was a proud dad seeing her get that award and I know her Heavenly Father was feeling the same way as well. I wish my dad was still alive to have experienced Coral as his granddaughter. He would have been just as proud of her as I and her Heavenly Father are.

On this Fathers' Day, let us take time to remember how proud our Heavenly Father is of us, and to let Him know how proud we are of Him.

Keep safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean