

Funeral Testimony for Dad

I would like to say a few words about my Dad. Although I will be reading my testimony, I assure you that these words are no less from my heart. I am reminded of the words of God's wisdom given through Solomon when he said, "*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*" My desire is that through my Dad's passing every one of us will take seriously what God wants us to see.

Dad was nearly 45 years old when I was born, thus my actual memories of him can only go back to the last 30 some years of his life. That is only the last 40% of his life. I am thankful, however, that the years I had with my Dad were his best years. "How were they his best years", you may ask? I call them his best because it was in these years that he had matured the most in his relationship with God.

I would like to in mostly chronological order mention key memories with Dad and the impact they had on my life. No doubt my siblings share many of these and could add many more as well.

1. I remember clearly as a very young child in Wichita, KS, my Dad sitting beside my bed at night and teaching me to memorize a passage of Scripture; a passage I have never forgotten (Ephesians 2:8-9).
I am thankful that Dad taught me from a young age that God's Word is important and also that I had a desperate need in my life, a need more important than my next meal. Dad told me countless times his testimony of coming to faith in Jesus Christ as His Savior. He grew up going to church, but that's just what everybody did. He was chatecised at the typical age and professed to believe the key doctrines of his church; however, he did not know the LORD. I found and have his original catechismal book and was amused to open the first page and see Dad's writing, where as a child in his classic humour he had written, "If there is a flood, throw this book in, it will float..... IT'S DRY!!!" Dad was sincere in his testimony that it was not until he was 26 years old that he first heard the message of Jesus in which he understood the personal nature of being saved... that he had a decision to make, that he was not going to Heaven simply because he assented to some doctrinal points in a catechism class. Dad's life was changed when he finally understood Who Christ is and what Christ had done for him.
2. Another memory from my early years was a time when Dad had spanked me for something, I don't remember anything about it but this one key thing. I can still see myself standing in the bathroom alone with Dad and he had called me back after the spanking and apologized to me that he had been mistaken in who had disobeyed... I'm sure it must have been my brother! I am thankful that my Dad taught me by his actions that God is the ultimate authority and that a real man is willing to apologize.
3. I have many memories in my preteen and teen years of occasionally coming down the stairs early enough in the morning before Dad left for work, to catch him at the dinner table reading his Bible. If you've ever seen my Dad's old Bibles, you know that he read them until they fell apart, making countless marks, footnotes, and underlines. I am thankful that my Dad showed me the immeasurable value of a personal relationship with God that is based on the Authority of the WORD of God.
4. I have fond memories of woodworking and vehicle repair projects. I remember once tearing apart a steering wheel column, but we first had to go to the library (remember before Google

that you had to go to a LIBRARY for information?) and we found the right car manual, printed off several pages, went home and fixed the car. We now live in on an isolated island in the Canadian arctic, and many times I have looked up instructions and sorted through piles of metal or such scrap, in order to fix things myself. I am thankful that Dad taught me to have a basic perspective that I COULD fix things if I tried.

5. I remember being proud that my Dad was a part of the Apollo programs and that his name is on the moon. I have had fun on several occasions telling people that MY name is on the moon. Of course, they look at me funny, but then I tell them that it is because I share my Dad's name. And isn't this much the same of what a true believer's pride and joy is? We have NOTHING in our own abilities or deeds to take pride in apart from the relationship we have with our Creator and Savior, and that we bear HIS NAME! Dad was known amongst us siblings that you would never get a short answer to a question. We would ask him something like, "Dad, how does gravity work?" Dad would start to explain things and then inevitably he would say that infamous line.... "go grab me a piece of paper." Dad drew his explanations on all kinds of surfaces, paper, napkins, it didn't matter. I am thankful for the love of knowledge, science, and TRUTH that my Dad exemplified to me. He would sometimes teach a Sunday School class on Creationism, and that love for truth is something that he planted in my heart.
6. Dad was also honest with me and my questions. I remember coming to him in the work shop at our house in Edmond as a preteen. For the first time the question had arisen in my mind, "why do I have a brother and sister with a different last name from mine?" Dad did not hide the reality that he and mom had previously failed marriages. Dad answered my question honestly. I am thankful for that honesty and that I was able to grow up in a home where I felt that all of us siblings in the home were just that, brothers and sisters. I am also thankful that in all my years of knowing Dad, he never spoke disparagingly to me about his first wife. To those who knew my Dad in his earlier years, and possibly did not know him for the man that God was making him to be, I encourage you to give my testimony consideration. Dad was not perfect, he had struggles, and some relationships were left unrestored, but Dad was a trophy of the grace of God. There are some relationships that I PRAY to God will one day be completely restored. Although we did not have a perfect home and there were struggles, one thing that made a big difference for me was that I was told the truth.
7. In my teen years I went through many typical struggles with coming of age. Dad was always someone that I could go to with my struggles. Dad bought me my first razor, Dad taught me the facts of life in a safe, loving, and proactive way. I am so thankful that I was not left to explore all my questions completely on my own.
8. Around the age of 17, a few of us guys at Harvest Hills Baptist Church had a desire to meet after the evening service to have a prayer time together. This had a lot of impact on me in my High School years. We would sit and each give a testimony of something from the Bible we had read and how it impacted us, then we would pray together. Sounds great, right? But for the rest of the family, it meant hanging around after church even later. Ultimately, Dad had to make the call, would he support this activity and tell the rest of the family they would just have to wait

until we were done, or would he give in to pressures to just go home, it was getting late you know. Dad supported my desire and told the rest of the family that they would all just have to wait. My Dad was passive by nature (at least as long as I knew him) and he was passive in some areas to a fault. I am thankful, however, that in some key decisions in my life he was NOT passive and that he took a very active role in helping me make some critical decisions.

9. At this same time I expressed to Dad that I felt God calling me to ministry. Dad never complained that I did not share his love for engineering. Rather, he encouraged me and told me he would support me. When it came time to decide on a college, Dad put his foot down and told me that he had decided on the college for me to go to. I was not interested in where he wanted me to go, but the bargain went like this, "if you will go to Ambassador Baptist College for the first year, I will support you to go to a Bible College of your choice after that year." With some struggle, I agreed to the deal, and before the first year was over, I KNEW that Dad was right, and I spent another four years studying at that school.
10. Dad also helped me form my perspective of what kind of wife I needed to find. I remember clearly a conversation with Dad in the living room of our home and he shared candidly what he and mom hoped and prayed for the kind of girl that I would marry... and that is the kind of girl that I DID marry. After 12 ½ years of marriage, I can say that the wife that God gave me and that my Dad helped to find, is the greatest gift from God, other than my salvation, that I have ever received.
11. I have come to see that some of the greatest lessons of life are not just what we say to our children, but also how we LIVE before them. My Dad was nearly 45 years old when I was born and his last child was born 10 years later.... do the math, Dad was an old man still having kids! He taught me to value the blessing of children over financial security and physical comfort. I'm only 35, and I can only imagine how exhausting a newborn could be at 55 years old. Dad taught me with his life the truth of God in Psalms that "children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." My parents rejected the popular thinking in our culture today that children are a tremendous burden and financial strain, that having children was something to be controlled as though God, the Giver of Life and the Provider of our Daily Bread, would give us something that He would not personally give the strength to handle, the finances to afford, and the Wisdom to train. I am a father with soon to be 9 children, and I carry the heritage from my parents of faith in the Goodness and Grace of God, and a simple, but firm faith to let God decide the size of my family, and my little arrows you see today are largely a part of my dad's heritage that he left to me.
12. As I finished up college and informed Dad that God was leading me to move away to a remote and isolated part of the world, he never complained about it. As his mind began to fail in his last years, he would occasionally say, "I'm glad God called you to the north, I just wish He had called you to northern Oklahoma."

The last years of Dad's life were not easy for any of us. With his failing mind, it was as though we lost him in a very slow death. Alzheimer's is a disease that slowly robs you of the person you always

knew and leaves them only a shell of what they once were. My youngest children remember their Grandad often as being grumpy and easily agitated. I have had to struggle with that, but I also do not despair. Because of Jesus Christ, I can promise my children that if they will believe in Christ, they will one day see their Grandad as I once knew him, and even better than the best that I knew him. Dad's story has not ended. His legacy lives on in his children. I thank God that I have no regrets with my Dad and I lay him to rest with thankfulness, joy, and absolute confidence that we will meet again soon.