

Just Like Your Dad©

Genesis 1:26-27; 1 John 3:1-3, 18-24

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FATHER'S DAY

As most of you know, my dad passed away last November. I have this picture of us that we took last June when I visited him. Little did we know that it would be the last visit before I came back because he was in trouble with his health. As you can see, he was on oxygen because of really bad COPD. That wasn't what caused him to go to the hospital but his breathing was the cause of his not recovering from surgery.

My daddy and I had a fairly good relationship in the past few years but I have to tell you he was a stubborn, hard headed, impatient man who intimidated me much of the time. We loved each other but he could shut me up pretty fast.

His hearing was horrible and he talked loud and couldn't tell what I was saying back so he would be very impatient and it was always a bit tense when I went to see him. But I did go every year. And I called him every night that I didn't have a meeting for the last two years of his life. I know it meant a lot to him that I did it, even though he told Mark, his pastor, that I called him every night just when Jeopardy was coming on.

I won't go into all the details but I will say that when my mom and dad divorced when I was eight or nine, I was relieved. He moved to North Carolina where he lived the rest of his life. I did not have much of a relationship with him for many years but as time went by he began reaching out and we began to get closer. We had many talks and there were tears, and there was forgiveness.

My dad became a Christian and joined the church, probably about 10 years ago. It was an answer to prayer. He didn't stop intimidating me but he did mellow out and I know he was proud that I am a pastor.

The older I get, the more resemblance I see to him in myself. People used to say I looked like my mom but I think I look more like the DeHaven's now that I'm older. My brother, David, looks a lot like our Dad. He doesn't like for me to remind him of that. I guess that tells you the relationship he had with him.

The other day I was buying a Father's Day card for my stepdad and it occurred to me that this is the first year that I am not buying a card for my dad. I hate to admit it but buying a card for him was difficult. I wanted one that said I loved him but not that said what a great dad he was, when I was growing up, or how he taught me all these good things, or how I could always depend on him, or look up to him. That card would be a lie.

I did find one last year that I could honestly finally give. It said that I was glad he was my dad. And yes. That finally was true. I am very glad he was my dad. The good, the bad and the ugly. He was human. He was insecure in many ways. He could be judgmental, but he could be compassionate. He was a mixture of fun and anger and hope and perseverance.

He was just a lot like many of us, really. I have to say, I do miss talking to him. He loved watching *Dancing with the Stars* and I would watch too, and it gave us a common thing to talk about that wasn't about health or politics.

So, I might look some like my dad, but I have to say it bothers me when someone in my family says I'm hardheaded just like my dad. Or I'm stubborn, or set in my ways like him. I don't think I am. But I know at times, I can be outspoken like him. I can even be condescending like he could be. I hate that about myself and try hard to not be that way.

The next picture I want to show you is this one of my stepdad, Craig Buckner. This was taken last Saturday when I was home for the sale of the ranch I grew up on. It went very well, but he was, and has been an anxious, nervous wreck trying to decide about selling and getting ready. My mother died 13 years ago and he has had difficulties with anxiety ever since.

Do you think I look like him? Someone once said I did, which is funny since he is not my biological father. He became my stepdad when I was ten, though. He was always there, he was a good provider, he was a great tease, which I hated at the time, but he was dependable, steady, a faithful Christian, a hard worker, a kind man who loved my mother and loved her four children as well as the two of his that came along.

He wasn't perfect. Our relationship was not perfect as you can imagine. We had our problems. But he was a good example. He was a role model. I can easily find Father's Day cards that say what I feel about Craig Buckner.

And while I don't have anything in my looks that resemble this man, I hope that people see his characteristics in me. I hope they see someone who is dependable and kind and compassionate; a person of faith who is a sinner but who loves the Lord and loves other people.

Today, as we celebrate Father's Day I'm sure that many of you have good memories of your dad. I hope that most of you grew up with a good, strong, loving father. It's so important for children to have that male in their lives who is strong and firm, yet fun and loving, who can be tender and compassionate, someone dependable and trustworthy.

I hope that you, who are father's, found your way to be like that with your own children. But, we all know that dads are human. No one – not one dad – gets it all right all the time. You've probably made mistakes that you regret. You may have disappointments from your own father. But somehow, as we understand the gospel of loving and forgiving we try to get to that place no matter where we've been. If you are a dad, be honorable. Strive for giving your best.

Now, you may wonder what this has to do with God. The questions some of you wrote were about God's image, what God looks like, do we look like God? Will we look like God in heaven? Will we have bodies or will we be spirits?

Well, we heard Randy read from Genesis 1 that we are created in God's image. I always find that passage interesting as it has God saying, "Let **us** make humankind in **our** image, according

to **our** likeness;” I’ve always wondered who the **us** and **our** is. Is it the three persons of the Trinity? The Father, Son and Holy Spirit? I don’t think so because we believe that God is One, not three. Three personas in one God. Which is another entire sermon.

So, it must mean there are heavenly beings there with God and they were there from the beginning, before creation. Angels probably. So, will we look like angels? Will we be angels?

I don’t think we will be angels because scripture definitely differentiates between humans and angels. But Jesus does say, in Mark 12 when asked about marriage in heaven that when we rise we will not be married but will be like the angels – who are not married.

Jesus said, “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen God.” But Jesus became human – took on human form – to be here with us. So, I don’t think we can count on God looking like a human just because Jesus did for the purpose of coming to earth.

John says in chapter one and again in chapter six that no one has ever seen God, except Jesus. And in 1 John he says: “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:12

And of course, our scripture today from 1 John says so beautifully: “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are... ²Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”

The truth is, we can search and search throughout the Bible and we will never be satisfied with an answer to what God looks like or if we look like God. We traditionally use the term “Father” when we speak to God because that is the model Jesus gave us. That is what Jesus called God. “Father.” “Abba,” which means “daddy.”

But there are scriptures that refer to God as a mother hen, or like a mother who comforts her child. God has many characteristics. God is ever-present, omnipotent, majestic, creator, judge, redeemer, full of mercy and forgiveness and love. So much so that God sent his son to come to earth to reveal God’s love to us, and to sacrifice himself in our place so we could be saved from the bondage of sin and death.

John says in our passage: “And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.”

Would you rather look like your dad – have his eyes and nose and mouth. His bald head or his double chin? Or would you find it more important to mirror him by his actions and his honorable characteristics?

Whether or not you can say that those things are true about your earthly father, the more important thing is that we have a heavenly Father. We know that throughout the Bible we who

are believers are called children of God. And while we may or may not actually look like our heavenly Father, the way that we resemble Him, the way we “mirror” our Father in heaven is by taking on the traits of him – the one who abides in us because we have been given his spirit.

And we have come to know the Father through Jesus – through his life on earth and his teachings and his self-giving love. So, the more we read the Word of God and the more we learn about Jesus, the easier it is to know the Father and to reflect him to others.

So, on this Father’s Day, as you think of your earthly father and honor him – do you look like him? Do you celebrate him and your relationship? Do you wish things were different? As you are celebrated as a dad – do you have regrets? Are you trying to do more? Are you happy with yourself?

I would say be kind and loving and forgiving – to your dad and to yourself. We are all human and we are all sinners in need of grace; in need of a Savior.

And thank God! Yes, thank God, our heavenly Father that we have been given that Savior out of his love and forgiveness for us. We are his children. We belong to him and we are asked to be like him – loving others, forgiving others, showing compassion and care.

Are you just like Dad? Let us be like our heavenly Father. Amen.

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