

Thoughts about my Father

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January 3, 1934 - July 1, 2017

By

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I have been "wandering through the fog" in my mind and emotions of knowing how to use the events of the past several weeks to instruct and guide my future - both immediate and long term. The reality of how quickly the ebb and flow of time, activities and daily duties wash the imprints of the moment away is interesting, frustrating and a bit discouraging - I guess it's all part of God's grace in healing and dealing with sadness. I want to capture and freeze-frame the inflection point of Dad's death to savor his life and guide my future, but I can't quite determine how best to do it among the noise of dealing with the stuff of daily life. Here are a few thoughts memorialized thus far.

- **My father had time for everybody.** He gave, He never took. He was on loan for all of us. If you wanted an experience with him, all you had to do was ask. He never said no. It was always about us, not him. I need to make time for people.
- **My father modeled integrity.** Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If he thought he wronged you...it was simple...make it right. Even if it was gray...make it right. He didn't play the margin when it came to integrity. I need to have an unwavering commitment to truth and integrity.
- **My father didn't withhold love.** If one of us were struggling in life, he would speak truth, pray and wait on us. Time, through God, will change people. He didn't have an "Angry Button", his default was always love. We always knew he loved our Mom. We always knew he loved us. He showed it through a spoken word of affirmation. He showed it through the outward affection of a hug. You knew, without a doubt, he loved you. When people are struggling, I need to love and wait.
- **My father was simple.** He wasn't complex. He left a note in my Bible near Psalm 131 and it said about himself, "this is me". It reads, *"My heart is not proud, Oh Lord my eyes are not haughty. I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul."* Dad lived a simple life, and loved the simple life. God, in his infinite wisdom, made following His will simple: Love God, Love others. This is the essence of our walk here on earth, and Dad captured it. A quote from composer Frederic Chopin describes my father with musical clarity. *"Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art"*. Dad was a masterpiece. I need to simplify life into two themes. Love God, Love Others.
- **My father laughed often.** Dad was not a story teller, he was the story! You see, he allowed himself to be the story line. Not the hero, certainly not the villain, but the character in the shadows that made you laugh, made the point and instructed us. That was his role. On our Cuba mission trip, at 82 years old, the group asked him what's the most important piece of wisdom you can give us. He thought, then said *"laugh as often as you can"*. Dad was comfortable

laughing at himself. He actually made it an art form. However tense the situation was, Dad could bring humor to it. It was his way of making us feel better by taking the focus off our own insecurities, and wrapping them in humor and an eternal perspective. He was a man who would downright gut laugh at himself, yet never laugh at the expense of anyone else.

I need to laugh at myself and with others.

In closing, returning to Praise the Lord Farms for the funeral evoked feelings of wanting things the way they were. The smells, the views, the way my parents arranged the house for 52 years, the landmarks around the farm that are attached to life lessons Dad taught me, **on that very spot**. My own humanness fears to end a chapter that was so good. But the longing God desires, looks forward. Forward to a better place where God convenes with each of us and those who have gone before. Dad had that longing, and knew we were “on loan” for this world.

My desire to restore the past, however sweet it was, is absent consideration for Dad. It is selfish for me to wish him back from the destiny he so purposefully sought, Heaven. He is simply in a better place than here with us. This earth is not our home, and we must sit tight to making it so.

My father's heritage will be elevated and magnified as his children and grandchildren continue to resonate his beliefs and practices. His legacy will have a significant multiplier effect across society and the world, this side of heaven. It's not lost on me the abundant grace God bestowed by giving me a father who modeled what it means to be a faithful husband, nurturing father, useful friend and spiritual leader. My Dad left me with no excuses.

**Richard Lunsford was a man, young men dream to be, and old men wish they'd been. He lived with purpose and no regrets ...yes, my father finished well.
Thanks Dad....see you soon.**

Richard Holt Lunsford