

10 Questions to Ask Your Dad Before He's Gone

"Larry, I'm sorry ... your dad has died."

With these words, my bond with my father changed forever in an instant of time. They remain indelibly etched in my memory.

Hours earlier, Stanley Tomczak returned from a church service, sat in his chair to read the devotional classic, *Streams in the Desert* and suddenly slumped forward, entering eternity. There was no warning. There was no preparation.

I was out of state in Akron, Ohio, minutes away from launching a new church plant. I also slumped my head forward, aware Dad and I would never have the chance to converse with one another again on this side of eternity.

Hours later that same Sunday night, I stood bedside with my wife and little son staring silently at his corpse on the gurney. Flashbacks flooded my mind from our three decades together.

"He's gone." I kept repeating under my breath. "He's gone."

A Library Burns Down

Someone once said, "When an older person dies, it's like a library has burned down." Gone are all the experiences, lessons and memories stored within.

My dad came from Poland as a child. He never finished high school and never owned a car. I led him to Christ in his 60s and baptized him in a California swimming pool when he accompanied me on a ministry trip. And yes, he had his flaws like every imperfect person does.

What sustained me in my grief during the next months was the

certainty of his salvation and the storehouse of memories treasured from our times together.

As Father's Day approaches, I share the above not to be morbid or put a damper on hopefully your upcoming time honoring your dad, but rather to provide you with an opportunity to enhance your day and deposit something in your and your family's hearts.

Recently my 30-something daughter skillfully asked me some thought-provoking questions about my formative years. Nostalgia aside, it deepened our bond as father and daughter. Also, it was a lot of fun, so much so she wanted to resume the next day!

My wife did something similar with her parents a number of years ago. She actually recorded her aging parents' responses to her questions about their lives' journeys. The timing was very good, as her father passed away last year, but the memories and insights remain.

This Father's Day, how about you do like Jesus did as he sat in the temple courts amidst the spiritual fathers of His day, "listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46).

Turn off the TV. Close the computer. Brush aside distractions and venture into the adventure land of memories and distilled wisdom. "Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning" (Prov. 9:9).

"There's gold in them thar' hills," so dig in to discover God's nuggets for you this Sunday.

10 Questions for Your Father

- What was one of the happiest, proudest moments of your life?
- How did you get your first jobs and what memories do you have of your early job experiences?

- Who are three people, dead or alive, who've had the greatest impact on your life and how?
- What are your favorite song, movie and book?
- What do you think was the dumbest thing you did as a child?
- Looking back on your life as a teenager or adult, are there some things you'd do differently? Why?
- When I was a child, do you remember specific memories with me or hopes you had for my life?
- If you could go back and change one significant experience in your life, what would it be and why?
- When were you the most discouraged and how did you overcome it?
- Was there a turning point/defining moment that helped you grow into the man you are today?

Redeeming the Time

Scripture instructs us to pray, "Teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts to wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). God equates wisdom with how we use our time.

On the special holidays like Father's Day and Mother's Day, we have golden opportunities to seize precious moments with loved ones, while they're still with us. It's important we don't squander these moments remembering the brevity of life and finality of death.

"If a man dies, can he live again? He shall never be roused from his sleep" (Job 14:12).

A few weeks ago while filling my gas tank at Costco, an attendant told me of his fellow co-worker who just passed away.

Sudden cardiac arrest took his life while on his job. He was in the peak of health as a former Marine, had two children and recently lost his wife to cancer. He was 43.

Whether your father has 50 years to live or 50 days, pay tribute to him in a special way this Father's Day. It's a simple fact that, without him, you wouldn't be here!

Happy Father's Day 2016.