

5 Tips to Help When Your Husband Is Hurting on Father's Day

(Please share this with a dad you know who may be hurting on Father's Day.)

Father's Day is Sunday. Are you a dad with a broken heart? Is your soul weighed down with disappointment, worry or sadness? If so, this day can be hard—even excruciating. Positive memories from the past can't compete with your negative emotions. The pain in your chest remains constant.

You hope no one asks about your child or how you're doing. There's a lump in your throat—but you hold back. You can't let anyone see you cry. You're a man. You're tough. Besides, if you let the tears come they might not stop. Then someone will certainly ask what's wrong and you couldn't handle that.

Can't I Get a Free Pass?

Can't I get a free pass for Father's Day? you wonder. Most of your friends have plans with their families, but not you. How you envy their fun-filled weekend. Their children will enjoy spending time with them: cookouts, camping, beach trips and other fun activities. Perhaps you have other children who will be with you—but not the one you A Bache over and can't stop thinking about.

The neighborhood may be filled with happy families, but if asked, "What are you doing for Father's Day?" you change the subject as fast as possible, hoping no one notices your avoidance maneuver.

Back at work on Monday, smiling co-workers will inquire, "How was your Father's Day?" That's the open door for you to brag

about how thoughtful your children were, on what they did to show you how much they love you. Everything in you wants to slam shut that door. A feeble response slips from your lips as you slink away with a fake smile.

A Bitter Reminder

You'd give anything to be reconciled with your child, to see them or hear their voice again—and for it to be because they want to see you or talk to you, not because they need money or some other favor. Isn't this how God, our heavenly Father, feels about us? Oh, how He understands.

Some of you don't even know if your child is alive. Oh, the agony.

I remember how difficult Father's Day could be for my husband. If he didn't hear from our daughter, my heart would ache for him. At first, he tried not to show his true feelings, but they were hard to hide. Knowing he was in pain hurt me, too.

He wanted to crawl into a hole until the day was over. Those 24 hours became a bitter reminder of what he didn't have any more—of the one who was missing. He'd long for the past, when our daughter couldn't wait to be with him—when he was her hero.

What Happened?

Can you remember those days? What happened?

Drugs and alcohol. Rebellion, bad friends and depression. Anger, lying and many other things happened.

Everything changed. Nothing's the same.

This blog is for every dad whose hurt will be compounded on Sunday. I hope your son or daughter will at least call to wish you a Happy Father's Day, even if they aren't ready to say "I love you".

Remember This

But if not, please remember this time in their lives is a season. Lord willing, there are many more yet to come. What you're experiencing is right now. The present. Today. It's not the end of the story—not yet. The Master Author is still writing the next chapter.

In the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15: 11-32), Jesus gives us hope that one day our children could come to their senses, do a turnabout, and be restored to us once again. They could come to us next week and say “I love you, Dad. Please forgive me. I'm sorry I've been such a jerk.” Our heavenly Father longs for this from his children, too.

However, you may not hear those words next week or next month. The wait could be long. You might wonder when this will be over.

Please don't despair. Don't give up. Don't quit praying.

When my husband was on the verge of despair, a wise friend told him, “As long as Renee is still breathing, there's still hope!”

Dear Dad, keep on believing and praying.

Five Tips to Help You Cope

1. Keep trusting God.
2. Lower your expectations and thank Him for what you *do* have. Comparing yourself to others always leads to disappointment.
3. Limit the amount of time you allow yourself to fret about your troubled child. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and get busy helping someone else.
4. Release your pain. Give it to God. Focus on who He is and what He can do.
5. Don't ever give up. You have no idea what Father's Day

could bring next year

I really like this Bible verse. It gives me a tremendous amount of hope: "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden" (Ezek. 36:35a).

Holding on to Hope and *The One Year Book of Hope* are two great books by Nancy Guthrie that offer hope in life's trials.

Prayer: *God of Hope, please comfort every hurting, disillusioned Dad who reads this. Remind them that You see their pain. You understand and You care. Renew their hope that better days may be ahead. But if not, help them continue to trust and keep their eyes on You. In You, they have everything they need.*

In Jesus' name. Amen. {eo}

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