

Give This Kingdom Gift That Keeps on Giving for Father's Day

God is the perfect Father. He wants to care for us; we are his precious and beloved sons and daughters.

But He also wants to care for us so we can love and care for others. And we do that best from places of abundance, not ones of depletion.

You see, we're pretty simple creatures. We're a bit like batteries, and they can only provide the power they are meant to provide if *they are charged first*. A battery must be *filled* with power before it can *discharge* power.

We too can only give what we have first received. When we're filled with God's love and care, only then can that love and care overflow onto others, onto spouses, children, friends, people in need. Only then are we able to love and serve as we are meant.

But if we don't let God love and care for us, then—just like spent batteries—we have nothing to give. And we are left trying to pull what we (think we) need from the world, especially from other people.

Maybe we try to take from spouses—love, attention, validation. We begin talking about “what we need” and “what they're not giving us,” rather than allowing our good Father, the God of heaven to fill us, energize us and overflow that love and energy onto the people in our lives.

Our Story

For years—too many—my marriage was characterized by *taking*, rather than *overflowing*. My wife and I harbored resentment

toward one another for what we thought the other needed to give to us, what we thought we needed, and weren't getting. During those years, there was too much complaining, too much arguing.

We were both depleted—not getting enough sleep, working too hard, focusing our waking hours and mental energy on to-do lists and getting things done. We were not allowing God to love us, individually, to fill us, restore us, as He wanted to. We were not looking to God at all during those seasons. Candidly, we didn't even know we could.

Things changed when we got into community. We let men and women speak truth, to pray for us, to show us how to live as sons and daughters. We visited Christian counselors. Through those experiences, we both began to explore and discover how God wanted to care for us—*each of us*, differently, uniquely.

God taught us how he had designed each of us to get rest and restoration, how he had designed each of us to connect with him. It was through Scripture and study, worship and community, of course. But it was also by engaging in deep conversation with friends; backpacking and seeing the wonders of his creation; quiet moments of solitude; reading good poetry, listening to good music.

We opened our hearts to these things—and our calendars. And God began to pour his love and care into our lives, separately, as he had always wanted to and never had been able to before. And His love and care filled each of us and began to overflow onto the other—and onto our three children and our friends and acquaintances. Even our extended families noticed a marked change.

That is *our* story (so far). But some of us don't try to take from spouses. Instead, we try to take from our kids—validation from their grades in school or performance on the sports field—rather than being full of the love of God the Father and

energy from God the Holy Spirit, full and restored and overflowing that love and energy onto them.

Or, we try to take from our friends—putting ourselves in positions of neediness. We ask, “Why, oh why, are they not being *true* friends to us?” We complain about why they are not doing what we want them to do, rather than being full and restored and overflowing love onto them—no matter how they act, no matter what they do for us.

Let's Make This Practical

One way to figure out how you (or your spouse) is made to find peace and rest and restoration is to ask this question: What do you love?

When you consider this question, focus on specifics—focus on what being cared for and being filled up by God means for you in the real world, practically.

Reading in a coffee shop on a rainy day, walking in a park, hiking in the mountains, mountain biking, dirt biking, sleeping under the stars, sleeping in on a Saturday morning, taking a nap on a Sunday afternoon, getting to bed early, getting up early to pray, listening to your favorite worship songs in your car, working on your car, helping someone else work on theirs, reading Scripture and praying at lunchtime, sitting by a crackling fire, chopping wood, playing golf or video games with friends, surfing, walking on a beach, writing songs or poetry, cooking, creating art, telling your story, singing in the shower, playing a musical instrument ...

The key is moving from the intellectual to the practical, from the general to the specific.

Knowing that you need rest is intellectual and general. Achieving rest by reading a book you enjoy is *practical* and *specific*. Knowing that you need solitude is merely intellectual and general. Achieving solitude by taking a walk

alone through an area you like is *practical* and *specific*.

Staying in the intellectual, in the general, is not very useful. It's in the practical and the specific that we get instructions and application for our lives—that's when things begin to happen.

What we also want to avoid is imitating each other—that is, we do not want to blindly copy someone else by engaging in something *for which they were built*. That doesn't work. God built us uniquely. Just because one person was built to be restored and to achieve rest in a certain manner does not mean that we were built that way. We may have been, of course, but we have to figure that out for ourselves.

The Gift of Abundance

When we discover a few things we love—and we diligently and regularly engage in them—then we can begin to live our lives from places of abundance. We can also give this gift to the people we love by allowing and encouraging them to engage in the things *they* love to do.

So, what's one thing you can encourage your husband to do this Father's Day? What's one thing that you know will fill his heart, connect him to God, give him the peace and rest and restoration he needs?

Whatever that is, make it a gift. Write it in a card and surprise him with the gift of abundance. {eoa}

Jennifer and Justin Camp are married and writers. They co-founded Gather Ministries, a Christian nonprofit focused on discipleship and encouragement. Justin recently released his latest book, *Odyssey: Encounter the God of Heaven and Escape the Surly Bonds of This World—it's another great gift idea for Father's Day*.