

# Greg Laurie: The Antidote to the Excruciating Pain of Losing Your Dad

I recently watched a documentary on the life of David Cassidy titled *David Cassidy: The Last Session*, and let me tell you, it was just absolutely heartbreaking.

To me, the story could be summed up this way: David had a deep longing for a father.

He had one, of course, in Jack Cassidy, who was a Broadway star and celebrity in his own right. But Jack divorced David's mother and, in many ways, he walked out of his son's life. For the rest of David's life, he seemed to live in his father's shadow.

I can relate, to a certain degree, with the difference being that I never knew my biological father, and I had a string of so-called stepfathers walk in and out of my life. Jack Cassidy, according to David, was also an alcoholic.

Even when David had his all-too-brief interactions with Jack, they never connected on the level David longed for. David was a struggling actor and musician when lightning suddenly struck: he was cast as Keith Partridge on the massive hit TV show *The Partridge Family*. Ironically, the woman cast as his mother on the show was David's step-mom, Shirley Jones, who was married to David's father, Jack.

As David's stardom was rising, his father's career was declining. Jealous of his son's sudden rise, Jack's pride kept him from having any significant conversations with his son. He couldn't even bring himself to tell David he was proud of him. Tragically, Jack died one night in a raging fire after falling asleep with a cigarette. And although David had become a

global teen heartthrob and had everything the world could offer at his fingertips—money, fame, sold-out stadiums and adoring fangirls—he was still absolutely devastated and longing for more. His face graced the cover of every teen magazine—not to mention the lunchboxes, comic books and anything else that could be merchandised. Yet he still longed for the one thing money and fame couldn't give him: a deep, meaningful relationship with his father.

At the peak of his fame, David hit rock bottom and wanted out of his hit TV show. He longed to be taken seriously as an artist, but that never actually came to fruition for him. David turned to alcohol, and it left an extremely devastating effect on his health. By 2017, he was in a fast and sharp decline.

His fans became troubled when he could not remember the lyrics to many of his older songs, and it was especially worrisome when he began to slur his words. He was arrested three times for drunk driving, the last two arrests coming within only six months of each other.

Originally thought to have dementia, Cassidy finally admitted all of his issues were actually due to his alcoholism. It was a shocking confession, and the fact is, David had followed in his father's very footsteps. David Cassidy finally admitted, "There is no sign of my having dementia at this stage of my life. It was complete alcohol poisoning."

In the documentary *David Cassidy: The Last Session*, David said, "I did this to myself to cover up the sadness and emptiness." Cassidy died of liver failure in November of last year.

According to his daughter, David's last words were, "So much wasted time!" In one of the most poignant scenes from the documentary, David is struggling to finish a vocal for a new project he was working on, called *Songs My Father Taught Me*.

Unable to hit the notes, he asks the producer to play his father's recorded version of the same song. Breaking out in tears, David cries out, "Dad, I miss you!"

It broke my heart to watch it.

How I wish I could have told David about how I never had a father growing up either. I wish I could have also told him that there is a Father in heaven who could be the dad his earthly father never was.

If you are a dad, make sure you let your son or daughter know that you love them. It really does matter. Even if they are adults, they still long for your approval; they need to hear it. If you are a child estranged from your father, reach out to him today—not because he deserves it necessarily, but because it's the right thing to do.

Jesus wanted to show us what God in heaven is like, so He told a story of a boy who ran away from his father and dragged his family name through the mud. The young man finally came to his senses and reluctantly decided to return home. According to Jesus, when the boy was a long way away, the father ran to his wayward son, threw his arms around him and welcomed him home. This is how the Father embraces us—without hesitation, without a tally of what we've done wrong. His arms are always wide open, waiting to invite us back into fellowship with Him.

Maybe your heart is heavy because you are estranged from your father, or perhaps your dad has passed on. Remember this: there is a Father in Heaven who loves you. He will welcome you home to a loving relationship with Him. He is always near you, even on days—like today—that may make you feel isolated and alone. Run to His arms.

Accept His open invitation. It made all of the difference in my life, and I know it will do the same for you. {eoa}

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