

My First Father's Day: Redeeming a Legacy of Loss

Growing up, my family didn't celebrate Father's Day. My parents divorced, after nine years of marriage, when I was 6 years old. My father was distant during the marriage, and he became even more estranged afterwards. When my father was convicted of murder and received a life sentence, it became solidified in my mind that I probably wouldn't ever celebrate Father's Day. My younger brother coped with this loss by giving his handmade Father's Day gifts to mom. I coped by ignoring the day completely, as if it were any other Sunday. But that legacy of loss is being redeemed in a major way this Father's Day.

It took time for me to forgive my father. I began the journey of forgiveness as a college student by exchanging prison letters with him. It was difficult to write that first letter; I had to think long and hard about what to say. My mind struggled to find a way bridge the gap between time and memories that were lost due to his absence. Elated to receive his response letters, I would sit in quiet isolation, just in case I read something that compelled me to cry. It was a deeply emotional experience for me. Writing these letters led me towards a path of deep empathy, and ultimately, forgiveness.

After my father went to prison, I felt ashamed and guilty. But forgiving my father required forgiving myself as well. I learned to let go of the feeling that I was somehow implicated in his mistakes. I embraced the present and reconciled with my father. Writing those letters helped me come to a deeper understanding of the traumas my father faced as a youth, and how he wasn't able to break from his past. I realized that I had a precious opportunity to move forward from the past and forge a new legacy.

My celebration of Father's Day 2019 marks a first step towards forging my own legacy. My wife and I are blessed with a wonderful 10-month-old baby girl, and this is my first Father's Day as "Dad." I had never been more excited for anything in my life than when I found out that we were expecting. I still feel that same joy and excitement about fatherhood every single day. I celebrate the victory of my new family legacy every time I lay eyes on my daughter. What was lost in my childhood is being transformed into one of my greatest wins. I can choose the type of father I want to be, and I can love my own father for the man he is today.

I grew up in Compton, where the expectation is that boys will be incarcerated at some point—if they even survive to adulthood. My father wasn't part of my life after my parents divorced, but God provided mentors, coaches and teachers—and my remarkable mom—who invited me to open my mind to greater possibilities. Since leaving home I've played college football, earned a degree in economics and been named a Rhodes Scholar. I just completed my master's work at the University of Oxford, and my first book published earlier this month. My family's generational cycles are being broken this year, as my uncle reminded me earlier this week.

A few days ago, I received a text message from my father's brother, and it broke me down to tears. My uncle has been working for UPS for 28 years, and he had just delivered boxes of my book to Barnes & Noble. He texted, "I deliver thousands of pounds of books to Barnes & Noble every time I am dispatched to this route. This entire truck is full of 40-pound boxes ... Its hard work ... about 13 trips to the third floor, about 600 pounds per trip, pushing a four-wheel cart. It is the hardest delivery ever in my time at UPS (28 years). But it's good to know that I'm there for you and the other great people ... being a part of the journey to reach & teach through your book/s. I'm delivering your knowledge, your mindset, & your love." His text message was accompanied by

pictures of him in his UPS uniform delivering the boxes and unpackaging my books.

Words are insufficient in describing how significant that moment was for me. My uncle has been delivering boxes for 28 years, and during this 28th year, he sees a familiar name on a box of books: Caylin Louis Moore. "Caylin" is the first name of his nephew, and "Louis Moore" is the name of his brother. The floodgates of forgiveness were unleashed as I read his words. Chains are being broken this Father's Day.

This is my first Father's Day, one of immeasurable significance for me and for all my family. The future can look different from the past. Each generation has the opportunity to decide what type of legacy it will leave. Forgiveness is possible. Redemption is real. The past does not have to be repeated. This year we celebrate. It's Father's Day for the win.

Caylin Louis Moore, the author of *A Dream Too Big*, grew up in Compton, California. A graduate of Texas Christian University, he went on to become a 2017 Rhodes Scholar. Caylin just completed his master's work at the University of Oxford, Jesus College (England) and aspires to become a university professor. Caylin, his wife Paola, and their daughter, Mia, will celebrate Father's Day 2019 in Austin, Texas.