

This Inexpensive Gift Will Likely Mean the Most to Your Daughter This Christmas

Dad, if you plan on being in line with the millions of other men across the country who will have waited until the last minute to get their Christmas gifts, then you're going to want to keep reading.

Why? Because I have a Christmas gift idea for you that your daughter will love!

Better yet,

- It won't cost any money
- It won't require driving to the mall (you're welcome)
- It will only take about an hour of your time
- It's guaranteed to be one of her all-time favorite gifts

Do you want to know what it is? Writing a letter.

One of the greatest presents you can give your daughter is to affirm her through writing. In a world where written communication is increasingly digital (texts, emails, tweets), a letter scripted in your own handwriting is sure to stand out as unique.

Let me share a story with you that highlights my suggestion.

In the summer of 2016, I had the privilege of attending FishFest in Salem, Oregon. What made it extra-special was that it was my first public appearance with KPDQ, the station that hosts my radio program, "The Dad Whisperer."

It was a day I'll never forget, due in part to the 104-degree weather, but also because it was meaningful to be a part of connecting with people while being entrusted with their

stories. I also gave away copies of my book, which was a fun way to share them as a resource with our listeners.

Early in the day, I talked with a dad who told me that his 17-year old daughter was living with her mom in the Midwest. He said that he made it a point to text her a few times a week because it was how they stayed connected. I affirmed him for consistently investing his daughter and then decided to say a bit more (I know ... big surprise!)

I encouraged him to write letters to his daughter periodically, adding that when a dad writes something in his own handwriting, it stands out from technology. I acknowledge that I may have misread his body language, but I got the sense that I'd said enough. So we smiled and said goodbye.

An hour or so later, a beautiful woman in her late 50s came to pick up her copy of my book since she was another winner. She told me that she even though she had two sons, she was looking forward to reading it, promising to give it away, when finished, to a dad of a daughter who could use it.

It was then that I took a risk by asking a question in the hope of opening up a "deeper conversation." I decided to inquire about her relationship with her dad.

She readily shared that her father was a quiet man, clarifying that they didn't have much of a relationship because he worked a lot. Then her tone changed, and she broke into a beaming smile while telling me one specific memory.

"When I was in eighth grade, my dad went out of town for business. It was during that one particular trip that he wrote me two letters. I don't quite know why he did it, but I'm glad he did."

I had a sense that I already knew the answer to my next question but asked it anyway, "Did you save the letters?"

Without hesitation, she confessed, “Yes, I sure did—and I still have them.”

I immediately told her I knew just the man who needed to hear her story. She graciously gave me permission to share about her treasured letters with this other father, who I believed would benefit from hearing a personal story about the importance of a dad’s written words to his daughter. I later found him, and we talked a bit more.

Suffice it to say, this woman’s story bears repeating in that it serves as a powerful lesson to fathers of daughters.

Dad, put your words of affirmation, acceptance, kindness, belief, encouragement, promise and praise into writing, because your daughter will treasure what you say to her for a lifetime.

Now let me reveal one more reason why a letter from you will have significant impact. It’s due to the fact that I have saved every single card my dad has ever made me—and I have a lot of them! I count them among my most valued possessions.

The time you spend now putting your thoughts, feelings, wishes, hopes and dreams into written form will pay dividends long after you’re gone as she reads and rereads your words.

Whether you’re a dad who has already begun this practice or you are a tentative newbie, I want to share a few ideas to support your pen-to-paper challenge. Here are a few dad-to-daughter letter-writing ideas to add to your repertoire:

- What is one of the first things you remember about her from when she was born and you looked at her for the first time?
- What beauty did you see in her then, and what beautiful features do you see in her now? (Girls love hearing

about their eyes, smile and the unique features you see as beautiful)

- Write about a favorite childhood memory you have of her.
- What strengths do you believe she has, both in terms of skill and in her person (her character, personality)?
- Tell her specific reasons you're proud of her.
- Write about what obstacles you have seen her overcome—emphasize such qualities as courage, resilience, strength, commitment, endurance, and power.
- Write about dreams you have for her future, whether in the form of your wishes for her or things you pray about for her—do this without preaching or lecturing, only encourage.
- Tell her what it means to you to spend time with her.
- Communicate why you love being her dad in this season of her life (add current things about her age right now that you're aware of and highlight them as positive).
- Let her know that you will always be there for her, telling her what it means to you to be her dad.

Dad, why not take the time right now to put your love for your daughter in writing. And as you give her the gift of a letter from you this Christmas, I guarantee that it will be one of her favorite gifts ever. {eoa}

Dr. Michelle Watson has a clinical counseling practice in Portland, Oregon, and has served in that role for the past 17 years. She is founder of The Abba Project, a nine-month group forum designed to equip dads with daughters ages 13 to 30 to help them focus more intentionally on consistently pursuing their daughters' hearts. She released her first book, titled, *Dad, Here's What I Really Need from You: A Guide for Connecting with Your Daughter's Heart*. She invites you to visit for more information and to sign up for her weekly Dad-Daughter Friday blogs where she provides practical tools so every dad in America can become the action hero he wants to be and his daughter needs him to be. You can also follow or send

feedback on Facebook and Twitter.