

Have You Thanked God Lately for What He Gave?

“Who gives this woman to be wed to this man?” Even though I was expecting this question, hearing it asked by the minister (who is my other son-in-law, Evan) caused a bit of pause. Keep in mind that other than writing a *bunch* of checks, this was my only real part in the ceremony. I was being asked to *give* my daughter to the man standing beside Evan. Not to go on a date. Not for a week-long vacation. But *forever*!

This beautiful bride-to-be, standing beside me and holding my hand was my *daughter*.

When she was born, I cut the umbilical cord. My wife and I stood beside her hospital bed at one year of age as she fought an unexplainable blood infection. I taught her to ride a bike. To swim. To drive a car (hence much of my gray hair). Much of the money I have made in my life somehow poured *through* her hands.

Megan (or “Boo” as she will forever be to me) is our daughter. Daddy’s girl. My blood runs through her veins. I would, without hesitation, give my life for hers. I love her. Period. With all my heart. And I was being asked to *give her away*.

Jared (her fiancé) is an amazing man. He loves God, not just as talk, he walks it. He can pray. I know; I have prayed with him. Worship is a lifestyle to him. He has incredible talent as a musician and a voice that surprised me the first time I heard it. But, like my friend Charles Billingsley, he does more than sing. He worships. And he leads others to also worship.

God’s divine providence brought him into Megan’s life. He loves her. I mean *really* adores her. He has adopted baby Elijah and cherishes the idea of being his daddy. Their story

is a miracle. Even with all of this, I still took pause in answering the question. And then, this is how I answered, "Her Heavenly Father, her mother and I." And I did it with a willing, joyous, proud heart.

However, if Jared had not been the man he is, if he hadn't loved her with his whole heart, if he was abusive or rude, if he had treated her with disdain and disregard, I promise you, the answer would have been very different. In fact, we would not have even come to this point. Because with all that is within me I would have tried to stop the relationship. Megan is my daughter and I would *never give* her to a man who was not worthy.

But God shows us a different kind of love. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son." Gave Him. Simply because He loves the world. Love so powerful, so intense, so pure that He gave His *only* Son. And here is what totally blows me away about that kind of love. God gave His Son to a world that hated Him. He gave His Son to a world that would not even acknowledge that He was His Son. He gave to a world that totally and completely rejected Him. He gave His Son to a world that He knew would mock Him, brutally beat Him (to the point that He no longer even looked like a human being), strip Him totally naked, make Him carry His own instrument of death, spit on Him, whip Him, and ultimately kill Him in the most degrading and inhumane way possible.

God, the Father, knew this. And yet He *gave*. At exactly the right time, when humanity was helpless, and being good enough to get to heaven was hopeless, God *gave*. Maybe if it was for good people, friends, people who loved Him, it could possibly be understood. But for sinners? Amazing. Amazing grace and mercy.

This week, as you journey in this walk we call Christianity, think about this kind of love. Love that *gave*. A gift you do

not have to earn, and no payment is necessary on our part because the debt was paid in full by the very Son of God. A God who *gave* freely and unconditionally. Take some time to thank your Father. Thank Him that He loved. Thank Him that He cared. Thank Him that He *gave*.

Prayer Power for the Week of June 12, 2016

This week as we approach Father's Day, take time to reflect and thank your Heavenly Father for His unconditional, everlasting, undeserved love. Thank Him that He loved you so much He *gave* His perfect Son for you. Ask the Lord to help you honor your natural and spiritual fathers by allowing Him to express His love through you. Thank Him that even if you don't have a hands-on dad, your Heavenly Father is more than enough. Pray for those who have suffered losses through flooding, high winds and tornadoes. Remember our military and continue to pray for the protection and peace of our nation and allies (John 3:16; Psalm 68:5). {eo}