

Reflections with Sharon

Lessons my father taught me

Read Proverbs 22:1-6

Probably no one person has singularly impacted my life as much as my dad. From the time I was a little girl growing up, my brother and two sisters used to accuse Daddy of being partial toward me. They called me “Daddy’s favorite.” There was no denying that I held a soft spot in my dad’s heart. We shared a special bond and in my childish little heart, my daddy was my hero.

A strict disciplinarian, my dad liked to quote the Bible verse, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” He was convinced that a child needed to have the “rod of correction” applied to his “seat of understanding,” on a regular basis. But luckily for me, I very rarely got the “rod.” My siblings were quick to iterate that it was because I was Daddy’s favorite, but I want to believe that it was rather because, to Daddy, not much “foolishness” was bound in my heart.

As little kids, we had fun with our dad. When he came home from work, we would race to see who would be the first to untie his shoes. Whenever he was about to leave the house to go out, we would all grab on to his legs and demand to know where he was going. He would laugh and say, “In my two yards and a half.” I still don’t know what he meant by that.

Our favorite time with Daddy was at the beach. A first-rate swimmer, he would put us on his back one at a time and swim far out away from the shore with us before bringing us back to shallow water. He enjoyed a challenge and would often engage a near-by tourist in a swim race. He won almost every time and it was hard to tell who was having more fun: Daddy as he swam or we children who cheered for him at the tops of our voices!

The older we grew, the more we came to understand that when it came to our dad, life was not all fun and games. A man of faith, he not only practiced what he preached, but also demanded the same level of commitment from his kids – we were expected to walk his talk like perfect little soldiers of the cross of Jesus Christ. Woe to the one who was caught telling a lie! Woe to the one who got in any kind of trouble at school! Woe to the one who was rude or disrespectful to authority! Woe to the one who was caught chewing gum or talking in church! Woe to the one...!

When we gave our mom a hard time, she had only to say, “Wait until your dad gets home...” and instantaneously the angel in us would come out! It really took pretty little to provoke a spanking – Did I say spanking? Probably the word “whipping” or “beating” or even “flogging” would be a more accurate description of the kind of discipline administered at our house – some disgruntled neighbor had only to say that one of us had passed by her house without saying “Good morning” and without ever asking whether the complaints were true or false, the “transgressor” would experience the full force of Daddy’s wrath.

But although he may have been a bit overzealous for his kids, Daddy was a man of principles, and deep down what he wanted more than anything else, was for us to turn out right. He taught us life lessons that are permanently etched upon the walls of my heart: Set high standards; It’s always the right time to do the right things; You can’t fool God; Tell the truth even if you get punished afterward; Do what God tells you to

do and leave the results with Him; No matter how impossible it seems, right always wins in the end; You cannot hide from God; Live a pure life; God always makes a way; Never give up!