

## A Zipper Bible, New Clothes and a Hat Just Like Dad's

Memories of Easter-time-past flood my soul during this season. While we were growing up there were so many special times and special moments. It was at this time of the year I obeyed the call of God on my life and surrendered to preach, delivering my first sermon thirty-five years ago.

Although the photography in those days was more primitive compared to today, we still had our "Kodak moments." One of the most memorable moments was captured on film forty-six years ago, when I was seven years of age. We were about to walk down to Sunday School from the parsonage. I remember the bright sun blinding our eyes as I walked out the door. The sun seemed to shine so brightly on Sunday and Easter Sunday seemed even brighter than normal. Mom looked so pretty, even my sister Judy looked pretty on Easter. Everyone was in a hurry until we walked out the door and it was like the action was in slow motion as Mom arranged David and me for a picture. I smelled Avon in the air as Mom grabbed us by the shoulders and stood the two of us like little tin soldiers. She said, "Stand still and face the sun so I have plenty of light."

There we stood, my brother and I – squinting in the bright sunshine, armed with our zipper Bible, new clothes and a hat just like Dad's. Packed away in a cardboard box full of our family pictures is the Easter picture of my brother and your pastor. Whenever we look through the pictures and that comes up, we sigh, we reminisce, and if David and I are together we comment, "There we stand – zipper Bible, new clothes and a hat just like Dad's." Allow me to share with you thoughts about those three precious items from an Easter a long time ago.

### I. A Zipper Bible

David was first to own one of these beauties. He held it before me like it was a treasure (indeed it was). When I received my zipper Bible I felt like I had joined an elite club. It was shiny black with a delicious leather smell. It was surrounded on three sides with a strong metal zipper. On the end that is zipped was a brass cross that controlled the opening and closing of the Bible. I can hear my brother and myself talking about our Bible. "Smell that leather, Dave?"

"Yeah, Johnny. How about this cross?"

"Hey, look how it zips up!"

"Man, it will stay dry in the rain!"

"Dave, look at the fancy red edging on the side of the paper."

"Look at this, Johnny – thin India paper."

"What's India paper, Dave?"

"It's the best!" was his reply.

The pulpit and Sunday School was not the only place we learned to treasure the Bible. Early on it was taught, revered and protected. We didn't put other books on top of it. Then at Easter it was part of our outfit. "*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

### II. New Clothes

There were many days growing up when money was not available for luxuries. Mom would get a little anxious around Easter, because she wanted us to look our best on Easter. If she could not dress us nicely, it would break her heart. Easter forty-six years ago was taken care of in a most touching way.

A man in our church asked if he could pick David and me up to play with his kids and be with his family for a couple of hours. Well, the next thing I knew we were in a store in downtown Washington, D.C. trying on pants, sports coats and shoes. When we had our picture taken we were wearing the new

clothes a hard-working man had purchased for my brother and me.

There were many times as a preacher's kid I felt like we were obligated to wear everyone's hand-me-downs. On that Easter I don't believe I ever felt as important. "Wow! New clothes! I guess 'cause my dad's the preacher! It must be special to serve God!" That thought never left me. Even as the boys in their dress uniforms from the Naval Academy in Annapolis came to our services, I was not dressed down from them one bit!

### III. A Hat Just Like Dad's

I try to hold back talking about my dad lest you weary with the hero of my youth. Daddy liked history, so my brother and I like history. Dad wore wing-tips, loved Mom, dressed in dark suits with red ties, had a book in his hand often, and longed for his native state – Texas. We emulated and imitated much of what he did.

There was one feature in Dad's wardrobe that David and I were not able to imitate and that was his fedora hat. That is, until Easter forty-six years ago. Part of our outfit was a brand new fedora, just like Dad's.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's grandfather was a Puritan minister who wore the wide broad-brimmed hat. In his ministry in Victorian England he once commented about his Puritan ancestor, "There are times to this day I can feel the shadow of his broad brim."

There were many times David and I would go to Dad's closet, climb onto a chair and reach for Dad's hat. We loved to strut in front of the mirror pretending we were Dad. We would say things like, "I'm home, honey." "God bless you, brother!" All in a lower voice than our own.

On that Easter, there we stood with hats like Dad's and they were our own. I've been putting a hat on like his ever since. When I prepare for a sermon, I feel the shadow of that brim. When I visit in the hospital, preach a funeral, perform a wedding, and occasionally weep for someone in need, I feel the shadow of his fedora. I miss him, but somehow when I wear that hat, I'm still in fellowship with him.

- Pastor Pope -

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