

PK's Perspectives ... Lessons in Fishing

William Olin Rustin. My dad. Born in January 1932, died in April 1997. Dad was 65 years old when he stepped into the presence of Jesus; I was 36 years into my earthly journey. Some days it's hard to believe 26 years have elapsed since we buried my father; other days the emotions associated with his passing rise closer to the surface of my heart. I wish you could have known my dad — he was called Bill-O by those who knew him best. He wasn't perfect by any standard but he passionately pursued intimacy with Jesus...he was a son of God.

There are things I began to understand about my father only after I left the nest, started making my way in the world, and especially after I fathered children of my own and the mantle of "Dad" was draped over my shoulders. I didn't fully realize the priceless fathering legacy my dad bequeathed me until I came face to face with the challenges of raising my children.

For instance, my dad loved to fish and taught me everything I needed to know about fishing. Patience first and foremost! The best way to secure a worm or cricket to the hook so the fish couldn't swipe my bait without swallowing the hook. Controlling my emotions when setting the hook (although I remember the many times I pulled so hard when I felt the adrenaline rush of a fish bite that the bluegill or redbreast would exit the water and sail over the boat in a grand arc that ended in the water behind me!). My dad taught me how to avoid getting finned, to use needle nose pliers to remove a hook that was deep in the fish's gullet, and how to add my prize to the stringer hanging from the side of the boat. As a child, I never caught on to the fact that my dad didn't get to do a lot of serious fishing while he was teaching me to fish.

Many were the times we would head home with a stringer sporting 40 or 50 bream. My dad brought me into the fish cleaning process, too. Taught me how to remove the fish scales, how to cut off the head, slice the gut, remove all the innards, and spray the fish clean with the hose...all the while implanting in my psyche the sportsman's mantra - "If you catch it, you clean it." It wasn't until I was teaching my own young sons about cleaning fish that I realized my dad didn't need me to help clean the fish; he could have done it better AND faster without my seven-year-old hands contributing. I was probably cleaning one fish to his ten. Dad didn't NEED me to help him...he invited me to help so he could teach me, so he could impart wisdom, so he could nurture the intimacy and richness of our father/son relationship.

And dang if my earthly father wasn't teaching me truth about my eternal Father! It's a truth that challenges how I approach life - this idea that God doesn't NEED me to accomplish His plans yet He absolutely WANTS me to walk & work beside Him so He can teach me, implant holy wisdom, and nurture the intimacy and richness of our heavenly Father/son relationship. I've wasted a lot of energy and toted a load of stress when living as if God needed me to get all the fish cleaned! I know it sounds ridiculous when written down, but I don't think I'm the only one guilty of trying to do God's work for Him rather than with Him.

I'm thankful for my good, godly father who pointed me to my good, holy heavenly Father. Grace & peace, love you. PK