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Positive Parenting
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FAITH FATHERS

I have blessed you ... to be a blessing.
Through you, all of the families of the earth will be blessed.
Genesis 12:2-3

Clarence B. Pedersen was a giant of a man!

When I called his beloved wife, Joyce, to check on his height, she told me that he was only six feet tall. I would have estimated 6'4" or 6'5". For me, his height was measured by his enormous moral stature: he was a man of great faith, service, love, patience, integrity, and presence. He lived that character in everything he did, as a husband, father, grandfather, uncle, neighbor, friend, police officer, and, most especially, as a man of God.

The qualities so many of us loved, admired, and emulated in Clarence seemed paradoxes: kind and gentle, he was a pillar of strength; highly principled, he was nonjudgmental and respectful of all; jovial and quick to laugh, he took people seriously; unconditionally loving to kids, he held them accountable; helping others generously, he received help gracefully; utterly committed to his family, he reached out to others who needed his love; a leader in so many venues, he lived to serve others; although he enforced the law, he lived grace.

So many of us were blessed to hear his gorgeous, rich baritone voice ring out in our sanctuary. It was a gift God gave him. He took good care of that gift, trained to use it in worshipping God, and shared it generously. Many hymns and anthems I can only hear in his beautiful voice.

Clarence was a officer on the Minneapolis Police Force. A commanding presence in his blue uniform, he was handsome, strong, and fair. He earned respect by his utterly appropriate use of the power he wielded. In addition to all of the duties you imagine a police officer providing, Clarence was the man they sent into kindergarten classrooms to perch on a tiny chair in a circle of young children, teaching them respect for the law, personal safety, and trust for police officers. Can you imagine a better role model?

He was respected by all those he served with and those he served. At Clarence's retirement party, Chief of Police Tony Bouza surprised those gathered, when he addressed the crowd. "I am probably the only person here who is not disappointed that Clarence Pedersen is retiring. I waited my entire career to be the Chief of Police. Then, I overheard a mother point me out to her young son and tell him that I was the most important policeman in the city of Minneapolis. Her child replied, 'No, Mom. That is Officer Pedersen!'"

At Clarence's funeral, I was moved to tears by the Police Honor Guard, who marched, slowly and elegantly, in silence out of the sanctuary, a wordless tribute by officers of both genders and every age, to one of their own. After the service, I spoke to a very young officer and told him how sorry I was that he had never known Clarence. "Oh," he replied, "I knew him. I grew up in his neighborhood. Officer Pedersen is the reason that my twin brother and I became police officers."

When we think of those we honor on Father's Day, let's remember those who have been "faith fathers" to us. By their example, by their words, by the ways they treated us and others, they have reflected Christ's light into the world, making it a brighter place for all of us. They may have been our fathers by birth, adoption, foster care, marriage, or any of the other myriad ways God knits our families together. They may have been friends, neighbors, scout leaders, teachers, pastors, camp counselors, or mentors. Let us give thanks to God for these amazing men in our lives.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. So, who are your "faith fathers"? Name them and send them a card or a letter, a text or an email, a call or an invitation to gather. Then, tell them the role they have played in your life.
2. Ask your kids who are their "faith fathers." Ask them to draw a picture, write a card, dictate a letter, or tell them on the phone or face-to-face.
3. Adults, share the men who have been "faith fathers" to you, especially those that your children may not know. Tell their stories. What did they do? How did they act? What about them formed faith in you.
4. If you have a "faith father" living in your house, thank him for being that man, who has made Jesus live for you. Describe what he has been and done that has helped you love Jesus, too.
5. When you pray, thank God for the gift of these amazing men - yes, human and flawed, too - that have helped you to know God. Pray, too, that God will use you, male or female, to help others see Christ's light in the world.