

Dad's Eulogy

What has been obvious to us is how many of you saw our family as your surrogate family. And no one felt that more than Shari's kids.

As the preacher in the family, my mom asked me to give the remarks for our family. Yesterday, Tyler Gattin, dad's oldest grandson told me that he'd like to share. After Tyler is done, I will come up & give our eulogy to my dad.

When Mary Mueller died, her husband of 39 years, the famous man of faith, George Mueller, tasked himself to preach her funeral. The text that he chose was Psalm 119:68, which states of the Lord, "You are good & you do good. Teach me your statutes." Mueller's sermon had 3 parts to it: "The Lord is good in giving her to me;" "The Lord is good in keeping her so long with me," & "The Lord is good in taking her from me."

So, as any good preacher, who's worth his weight will tell you, nothing we have is original, I'd like to do my best, to honor God & honor my dad by using 2 of those points...because I do believe in the goodness of God for allowing me to be raised by this wonderful man.

Ron York will always be...my dad. He will always be the husband of 1 wife, Barbara, who he loved for 52 years (he died on December 1, 2 days short of their 52nd wedding anniversary); he will always be the dad of Shari Lynn York, who he gave his life to protect & provide for; and he will always be the dad of Kevin Michael York, the son of his older years, who was his best friend & saw it as the greatest honor to be the best man at Kevin's

wedding. And, he will forever be Pawpaw & Grandpa Texas to 12 grandkids who love him dearly.

God is good in giving dad to us:

God is good in giving Ron York to us for a variety of reasons, but here's a small sampling, before I get to 3 main reasons. They say that imitation is the highest form of flattery, well, when it comes to my dad, you can see a bit of him in all of us. As we've gone through photos this past week, we have noticed that at various points in dad's life, we all looked like him at one time or another. Now, dad always thought he had the best looking eyelashes in the world! And of course those were past on to me***:). But in reality, I seemed to be the one who got the gift of making people feel comfortable & yet having a bit of an edgy side. We all know that Dad was a fantastic conversationalist...who would literally talk your ear off (I can remember him walking beside one of my coach's cars & for a 1/4 of a mile to talk with him)...and there's no doubt that my sister got Dad's gift of gab. And then there's the protector mindset of his family that was almost assassin-like where if you mess with one of his kids & you're messing with him. Well, that was clearly given to Kevin. Not to mention the red beard. We all have a bit of dad in us.

But there are 3 things God is good in giving dad to us, that really stood out to me as I've thought about how to honor my dad:

God is good in giving Ron York to us because Dad taught us to compete & work. I have always said that my tenacity, my competitive drive came from the most competitive man I

knew...my dad. He taught us the value of looking another person in the eye & telling them the truth. He taught us to never shy away from conflict or challenges. He taught us to do the right thing, no matter the cost, like the time I stole a Snickers bar from Mr. Pickard's store...how do you do that?? And dad made me go apologize & offer myself to work for free. I never stole again. Some would call it stubbornness & impatience, & they're right, more than they even know, but looking back...I would call drive, tenacity & work ethic. The Lord is good in giving us that.

The Lord is good for giving us something that Dad loved...baseball. It's not a joke in the York house that if you want to be a part of the clan, you need to love this glorious game. As a matter of fact, when Kevin's wife, Amber was entering our family, my wife Jill gave her the best advice, "you need to learn to love baseball." To which Amber thought, "oh ok, I'll learn that." But as she told me this week, she had no idea. My dad, more than any other man on the planet, gave us a love for this game. He may not have known the intricate details of situational hitting or the strategies of a 1st/3rd situation, but he loved the beauty, the sounds & the smells of the game. And he loved his kids/sons/grandsons in this game. I cannot remember a game that my dad did not attend while I was playing. Kevin can't either. Dad was always there, in the stands. He would go over Kevin's videoed at bats, hit me fly balls on Sunday afternoons at Ovilla Park; traveling all over creation for Trevor's tournaments & making sure that we had everything we needed to succeed. And then as we started coaching, Kevin talked to Dad weekly & I talked to him after every big game. The highlight for me was in 2002, winning our 1st State

Championship in Oregon & having my dad in the stands. I'll never forget the tears running down his face yelling "You did it!" Both championship games that we've won...he was there. He jokingly told me that the championship games I lost was because he wasn't there...well now...he can be at every one! The crack of the bat, the beauty of baserunning, the importance of catching the ball with 2 hands, & hustle are all things we learned from dad. It's something that Shari has passed to her kids; something I've given to my family & something Kevin & his family enjoy. Every ballpark we go to, we see dad in the stands. The Lord is good for giving this to us.

But God is also good for giving dad to us because he taught us to love family, through ups & downs. I have always felt that my parents being together for over 50 years was the coolest thing in the world. They taught us that marriage is to be worked at, never trifled with & to be fought for. Each of us, as York kids, saw firsthand the difficulties they faced & knew how challenging our dad could be. But, we have always appreciated that they stuck it out...no matter how hard, difficult or painful. They are living proof to us that "until death do you part" still matters. Words do not express our love & appreciation to them for that. God is good in giving us this picture. Our dad taught us what it means to be steady & faithful husbands & fathers. Kevin & I know that if we ever hurt our wives or did something to one of our kids, my dad would meet us somewhere & pull off his ring belt & whip us. He taught us to protect, provide, & care for those in our house. And he always found ways to invest in all the things that we enjoyed as kids/grandkids: like Shari's bowling; his grandkids activities,

whether that was animal projects for the fair; soccer; football, or anything they wanted to do. He loved his family. And that was obvious even at the end...when dad would hallucinate or he would get afraid, he would tell those caring for him...I just can't leave my wife & kids. He felt he was put on this earth to make sure we were all okay. And, dad, we're all here today because you were good at it. Dad was faithful to the end & the Lord is good in giving us this.

But let me end with the fact that God is good in keeping dad so long with us:

There are moments in my life with my dad that I marvel that God kept us all alive...one icy Christmas Day we drove on an overpass, only to have our van shoot directly for the curb & the side-railing. As we hit the top railing, I could see over the edge of the railing from my seat. But for some reason, the van was pushed back onto the road. We were all safe. Kevin said he saw a hand push us back...but whatever it was, God saved us, so we could stay longer together.

I told Kevin this week that now I'm a grown man, I'm at the miracle that my dad could be as small as he was, as mouthy as he was & still be alive! His good friend from high school, Roy Yates, who's with us today, told me last night that dad used to be "fat & sassy", which describes dad perfectly. He should've had his rear-end kicked on more than one occasion & I can remember many of them. The Lord is good in keeping dad with us.

And I think that there are reasons why the Lord did not take my dad while he was flipping cars in the ditch trying to speed home through the hills of North Carolina when he was young; why he didn't die in Vietnam; why he wasn't shot in the middle of the night during his work as a milk man for Oak Farms Dairy; why he could still be alive after being so competitive during our little league games that he was near fist fights with umpires.

My dad died at the young age of 72. It's old by some standards but young by others. He had Parkinson's with Lewy Body Dementia that took away much of the drive & passion that marked much of his younger years. But I am glad for these last years of dad's life for a few reasons:

The first one is that dad really grew as a man & a father. It's no secret with those that knew my dad in his younger years that dad was very intense, headstrong & had a bit of anger issue. One of the fruits of dad's intensity was that our relationship through my teen years was strained at best. While my teen years were really good, my relationship with my dad wasn't. Most of you who know me well & knew my dad well, knew this. But, what many may not know is that there was a turning point in that relationship when I was 21 when both dad & I came to realize the ways we had both treated each other was wrong. In a strange twist, at the same church service, both dad & I were convicted of our sin of anger towards each other & separately made our way to the church foyer. But what we didn't realize was that we'd meet there. At that moment, my dad & I in tears, reconciled. Things would never be the same after that moment. One of the great

benefits of this is the fact that these past 27 years of my life, my dad became one of my dearest friends & he will forever be my biggest fan. I'm glad that God didn't take my dad before that happened. It's a gift really. And I'm glad that the lessons he learned from raising me, he transferred to my sister & brother. Kevin's relationship with dad is really the culmination of the lessons that dad learned from his younger years & from raising me. I can say that because he told me that. I cannot express the heartfelt joy that I have in the fact that my dad & brother were sincerely the best of friends. Another fruit of this change & is that it also allowed dad to cultivate a unique & fatherly relationship with Shari's children. Much of who they know of as PawPaw, the gentle, loving man who would do anything for them, is because of the Lord did not take dad from us sooner. And I'm really glad about that. The Lord was good in keeping him so long with us because of this.

God is also good in keeping dad so long with us, because it allowed dad to express his love & pride in us. There's something near & dear to a child's heart to know that their parents love them & are proud of them. And I think it's because the Lord put this in our design as humans. The Bible tells us, "Children, honor your father & mother for this is the first commandment with a promise." God not only commands this of us, but puts the desire for it in our hearts. In his younger years, dad was not as freeflowing with his praise or his love as he was later in his life. But each of us, at various points got to see & hear dad express his love to us. Shari & Kevin, said dad told them regularly that he loved them & he hugged them. As my relationship with dad was

reconciled, he regularly told me & others of how proud he was of me. There wasn't a time when we talked on the phone or when he was with me that he didn't talk up Kevin's kids, teams & coaching or tell me of his grandkids pursuits. His grandkids could feel his pride in them & love for them. From the stands or at the fairgrounds, PawPaw & Grandpa Texas never left a moment from telling them that he loved them & that he was proud of them. You could feel his love & pride. He told me at the end of every call to "give everyone a hug & a kiss for me." It's one of the greatest joys & motivators of my life that I know my dad is proud of me. I want people to think that my dad was the greatest dad on the planet. The Lord was good in keeping dad so long with us, so we could know that he loved us & was proud of us.

Finally, the Lord was good in keeping dad so long with us is because it allowed dad to be at peace with death. When I was 9 years old, at 1st Southern Baptist Church of Ovilla (now Ovilla Road Baptist Church), my dad & I made a commitment to Christ on separate sides of the church & then were baptized together. But, as many of you who knew my dad know, he wasn't an overly spiritual man. And even though he trusted Christ all those years ago, for the longest time my dad told me that he was afraid of death. It terrified him actually. And in reality, who's not to one degree or another. But, during this last year, while mom was recovering from back surgery, the Lord gave me a special gift. My dad came to stay with us in Oregon for about 6 months. During that time, I had the joy of hearing my dad come to grips with the fact that he would die sooner rather than later & hearing him, with confidence, tell me of his belief in Jesus Christ. Dad became

convinced that he would be with Jesus when he died. And it settled his soul. He had similar conversations with Jill & with a member of my leadership team at my church. I think, that the Lord is really good for keeping dad with us so that dad's soul could come to trust fully in Jesus. I'm very grateful for that. That's why, while I'm bawling my eyes out, I know that one day all of us who have put our faith in Jesus, will once again, see my dad. The Lord is good in keeping dad so long with us.

I knew this day was coming. I knew that because I'm the preacher in the family that I would be tasked with this role of honoring my dad in his funeral. And I've asked myself this question: what is my dad's legacy? What did my dad leave behind? He's a man who loved us; a man who protected us & provided for us; a man who tried to teach us the value of hard work, hustle & baseball. But that's not really his legacy...his legacy is us...I have always felt this. Dad's legacy is found in the nearly 1/3 of my church members who played baseball for me or had a son play for me; his legacy is found in the young men from Kermit High School Baseball team who have contacted Kevin to tell him that they're thinking of him & are grateful for the impact of Kevin in their life. And I think that all of us who are left behind, who were raised by Ron York, or who were related to him, should consider that. What is dad's legacy? What did he leave behind? It's you. And the best way you can honor him is to take things he left you & use them for the greater good.

I love you dad & I am forever grateful that God made me your son.

