

CARP USA: Things to be grateful for - We Resemble Our Parents

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I was recently asked a simple question, "Why are you grateful for your dad?" I wish the question was asked in a different context like "Are you grateful for you dad?" because it would have given me the space to answer "Kind of. But..." as I name all the things that stop me from being grateful to my father. But, through this question, I was able to recognize certain frames which I used to evaluate my father. The frame that says, "He has many limitations." Of course our parents have their limitations, but, for the first time, I was able to put those frames aside and think of all the things that I am grateful for.

My father is a great father; he is loving, caring and very funny. But at the time of my mother's passing in 2011, my father found himself in a very difficult situation taking care of all four of my siblings and his elderly parents. He invested a lot into our family, but we found many shortcomings which blinded me to my father's hard work and love for us. Instead of seeing a father who fought to take care of my family all alone after losing his life partner and the source of love, my mother, I started to count only his limitations.

As I look back at my father's love for me and my siblings, I found many things that I am grateful for. My father didn't hesitate to take his weekends to spend time with us to go to the park. He took us out to play sports and to play games until late at night. Even now, at the age of 62, he still takes my younger brothers out to play and spend time together. My father never left relationships on a bad note. He always initiated making up and apologizing when he and I got into arguments.

As I chose to look at what I'm grateful for, I experienced a transformation of heart towards my father: a transformation of blame to gratitude. I felt repentant that I failed to see the love that was always given to me and my siblings, the love that I chose not to look at because I was caught up in my own concept of my father.

The last couple years have also been a time to discover my unique character. As I recognized the ways that my father loved me, I realized that I loved others just like my father loved me. I realized that I love to spend time with people during my free time. I love taking people out to McDonald's--which was my dad's go to place for a snack--or any other restaurants to enjoy food. I apologize immediately after I get into arguments with people. And I recently realized that I even hiccup like my dad...

All these characteristics, which I thought I developed on my own, were actually a reflection of the love that I experienced throughout my childhood. As I recognized my father's characteristics in me, I couldn't stop thanking my father for his investment. My father's character and love needed some time to blossom to help me continue the legacy of my father's love. I am also excited to discover the seed that my mother has planted in me.

The central teaching of CARP's Founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, emphasizes the importance of family. They describe the family as the school of love. The family is the place where we learn and practice to love and care for each other. However, as a child, it can be easier to focus on our parents' limitations; we don't take the time to notice our parents' love for us and the impact it had on us. Rev. Moon states,

"Children are the substantial manifestation of their parent's love and investment. They are an extension of their parents' life and the embodiment of their parent's ideal." - CSG pg 304



It was very easy for me to see the negative qualities which I inherited from my parents, but when I realized the good qualities and the love that my father poured into me, I came to appreciate who I am and my parents.

We also have our Heavenly Parent, God. By recognizing our parents' unique love, we find our resemblance to our Heavenly Parent as well. As we can understand and recognize God's loving character in our parents, we will further understand our Heavenly Parent's love for us and within us. And, ultimately, we can come to resemble God who reflects perfect and unconditional love. Like Jesus said in Matthew 5:48,

"You therefore must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

By growing in our relationship with our parents, we also grow in our relationship with God. My journey to forgive and understand my parents opened a path for a deeper relationship with God. Therefore, I ask you this question, "Why are you grateful for your parents?"