

Leonard man says Father's Day will be bittersweet for him

Written by Nathan Parks

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Like a lot of holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries, Father's Day can hold moments of sadness and also moments of joy as it is celebrated each year. For me, this year it will hold both. I'll feel the sadness of not being able to go pick out the perfect card. The card that always said something sarcastic, yet witty, that my dad always appreciated getting. I think he liked those types of cards because they reminded him that we shared a lot of the same sense of humor. This year, I won't be able to go buy the same Old Spice cologne that my father always received. I'm not even sure if my father liked that cologne, but the previous years' bottle would always be empty by the next Father's Day. This year, I don't get to go buy socks. I know, socks seem kind of an odd gift, but my dad, for some reason, wore holes in his socks about like a little kid. To this day I have yet to figure out how he managed to do that.

You see this year I don't get to do any of those things because my own father went home to be with the LORD in 2008. Some of you can identify with that because it has been a very long time since you have been able to shop for the perfect Father's Day card or the goofy gift.

So let me tell you what I will get to experience this Father's Day. GOD has blessed my wife and me with two great sons. Cody is my 11-year-old and Ben is my 6-year-old. Both, of course, are intelligent, funny, artistic, witty, and all of the other good describing words that parents bestow upon their children. This year, like every other year, I'm sure I'll get the perfect card, my own version of socks and cologne, and other little manly gifts, such as tools or knives. One of my favorite gifts I receive each year is a painting. My wife or I will cut a small piece of pinewood, not much bigger than a sheet of paper, and the boys will paint me a picture. Every year I'll put their names, age, and date on the back and proceed to hang it up on my garage wall to look at throughout the year. That is always one of my favorite gifts because it's almost like getting a glimpse of them from all the previous years.

This Father's Day I'll also get a very bittersweet gift. This year I get my 6-year-old son Ben's health. You see on May 3, my baby boy was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Now right away when a doctor tells you they found a tumor in your son's brain, through teary eyes all you can see is the giant, ominous word -- CANCER. I'm pretty sure I didn't hear another single word the doctor said until he uttered the words, "It's not cancer!"

Regardless of the diagnosis, my boy was sick. I had witnessed him, just two days before, have what's called a partial seizure. He had succumbed to a seizure at school earlier that day and I had him at home working on getting him to the doctor when, while sitting in my recliner, eating a popsicle, he muttered the words, "Daddy, I feel it again!" I look over at my little boy

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just in time to see the popsicle hit the floor, his eyes roll back into his head, and his little 44-pound body start shaking. It was just like something you see in the movies. Everything sped into slow motion. I'm pretty sure I leapt my whole living room in a single bound, all the while saying out loud, "GOD, help me to know what to do."

Now having gotten into a scuffle or two in school, being a military man, and serving overseas, I've been in some situations that can get the heard pumping. I will say though that in my short 32 years, I've never been that scared, witnessing my son having a seizure and knowing I was completely helpless to stop his suffering. It's a feeling I choose not to experience again if I can help it. Needless to say GOD got us through it and we ended up at Children's Hospital in Dallas where he got, and continues to get, the best possible care.

So I say this Father's Day is going to be bittersweet for me. This year, while reading the perfect card that I know my kids spent hours picking out, while opening my own version of the same old cologne and socks, and while admiring the new painting they made me while nailing it up next to the previous years painting in the garage, I'm going to relish in the health of my little family that GOD has blessed me with. I'm going to relish in the fact that even though I had lots of years of buying Father's Day gifts, this year I get the best gift of all. I get to be a father, which is what I believe that Father's Day is truly all about.

So dads, hug your kids extra tight and extra long this June 17, and know that the best gift you could ever receive is all wrapped up in your very own arms.