

Father's Day-Leaving a Legacy

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Today is Father's Day. It wasn't created as a federal holiday until 1972 when President Richard Nixon signed Father's Day into law. Today, economists estimate that Americans spend more than \$1 billion each year on Father's Day gifts.

Personally, I think we should celebrate all influential males in our lives, whether it is our husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, uncle, brother or a teacher we may have had. We can honor those who have influenced us and thank them for helping us. My biological father was influential in my life . . . he taught me how not to live my life. He wasn't mean, just unavailable. I have, as I have become older, come to realize that I am thankful to him because without him, I would not be here. He gave me life, along with the genes for curly hair, silver hair and high blood pressure. But most importantly, he did give me life. Growing up, however, the most influential male in my life was my step-father, a kind man who came into my life when I was 6. Along with my mother, he taught me how to treat other people and taught me how to be strong and stand up for myself without hurting others. That is the legacy he left for me, and for that I am forever grateful. Even though my step-father has been gone for 20 years, he is always in my heart, guiding me. He continues to guide our daughter, through what she learned from him and the way he lived his life. Our grandson will never know him, but he still experiences his legacy. The same is true for Wayne's father. Our grandson will never know him except for the memories and legacy shared through our daughter.

Let's face it; impermanence can be a little frightening. Impermanence means at some point, we will be forgotten. Life moves on and the world keeps turning whether we are here or not; or said in another way, "The carousel never stops turning." I think we will all be forgotten within 3-4 generations. My great-grandchildren will probably have no memories of me, outside of photos on the computer. That isn't something to be sad about; life moves on, we make memories and be the best we can be. It's all we can do.

In Colorado, I used to be fascinated by old cemeteries that were around ghost towns and old mining towns. The tombstones were all from the 1800's. I used to wonder who those people were, where they came from, how they lived their lives and how they died. Whoever they were, the only part of them left was what they handed down to their families, whether it was something material or the memories, principles and integrity handed down. We are no exception. We will be gone but we will pass on our legacy.

Legacy . . . sometimes it is the "stuff" that is passed on. Sometimes it is the memories and the words that are passed down.

What do you think of when you hear the word "legacy?" For me, legacy speaks to the idea of impermanence, one of the cornerstone concepts of Buddhism, of the ever present change in our lives. Legacy is what is left behind when we pass on, whether it is a legacy at our job when we retire or the legacy we leave our families. What will your

legacy be? Since we are not the Dalai Lama or Martin Luther King, our legacy will not go down in history, to be studied in school. Our legacy is our story. Our legacy is in Buddhism . . . how we treat other people, how we practice the basic concepts of Buddhism. Do we show gratitude not just for the big things but for all of the everyday things that happen? Do we show compassion for all beings or only those people we know? Do we actually practice the Golden Chain, thinking and saying good words and doing good deeds? Remember, practicing the Golden Chain is as simple as saying “hi”, even if you saw someone 10 minutes ago, or holding a door open for someone else. .

What will your legacy be? Will it be something others want to follow and emulate or will people look at your legacy and think “that’s definitely not the way I want to live.” We are in charge of our legacy, guided by our Buddhist concepts of kindness, compassion and gratitude. What will your legacy be? Choose well. Be kind and gentle to everyone you meet. Live the Dharma every day.

Please put your hands together in reverence for the words of the Buddha.
“When words are both true and kind, they can change the world.”