

THE JOURNEY WITH DAD

INSPIRED BY MARK 9:30-37

Daniel and his family left from home and began a journey through grief, but he did not wish anyone else to know about it just yet. He was teaching his children, not so much with words of wisdom, more with paternal portraits that will continue to teach throughout their lives. Daniel was telling them, “Remember that Jesus, the Son of Man was handed over to men and they killed Him. That was a terrible experience for everyone — even Jesus. But His story didn’t end there. Three days after His death, the Son of Man rose.

So, too, am I a man, and I am being handed over to a debilitating disease and it just might kill me. But in three days, I am leaving to enter an intense, last-chance treatment facility. Whatever comes of that, we will all be OK. My story will not end there.” But his children did not understand what he was saying, and they were afraid to question him. Dad was to be obeyed, not questioned. They had never heard him speak like this before. Mom and Dad didn’t share any personal struggles with their children. It just wasn’t done. Children should be shielded from adult problems and the heartache that accompanies those pains. This was different.

Daniel decided this was not the time to keep secrets. This was a time for open, honest conversation. He wanted nothing left unsaid. To their three sons, it sounded like this was going to be a terrible experience for everyone. They had a 7-hour drive ahead of them. Ample time to pray and process what lay ahead. The minivan was loaded down, as countless times before. They often hit the road for long weekends and summer fun, exploring new places and taking in the Lord’s beautiful gift of nature. This was different.

Daniel and Elizabeth were listening to relaxing, inspirational music up front. The three boys traveled in the back. They were all teens now, growing into young men. Douglas typically had his nose in a good book. Eric preferred to spend the time playing games and watching videos on his phone. And Thomas always doodled in his sketch book while listening to podcasts. On this trip, the boys engaged in private group texting so their parents couldn’t hear them trying to figure out what the heck was happening. This was different.

They finally arrived at the hotel. They would stay there as a family before Daniel checked into the Treatment Center. Once inside their suite, he began to ask his sons, “What were you texting and thinking about on the way? You boys were awfully quiet.” But, they remained silent. They had been discussing along the way who was the best behaved among them. Who was less of a burden than the others. Because *surely* one of them was to blame for their father’s current condition.

Daniel sat down, called the boys in close to him, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to go first, you may ask me anything you like. No judgement. No anger. No sugar-coating the truth. You all are old enough to hear about what is really going on. Taking a framed photo of his sons when they were much younger, he placed it on the coffee table in front of them. He said to them, “I once held you in my arms so you would know you were safe. I’ll do it again if you allow me.

“But most importantly I want each of you to listen very carefully to this — there is nothing any of you did to cause this, and there is nothing any of you can do to fix it. You all carry my name, my dimples, and my dark green eyes. Whatever happens, remember I love you. And more importantly, you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. He is the one who made me *your* dad, to teach and to guide you. He is the one who will guide you through the rest of your days. Listen to Him.”

###