

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

700 Prospect Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44115-1110
Phone: 216.736.3700
Fax: 216.736.3703



Bentley de Bardelaben

Executive for Administration and Communications

Witness for Justice #533

June 20, 2011

A Father's Day Tribute

Bentley de Bardelaben

In lieu of Father's day, I find myself reflecting on three people who greatly influenced my role as a dad as well as a human being. Each in their own way helped me to value all peoples with dignity and grace.

First is my father, Robert Lee. I must acknowledge my dad's impact on how I view the world around me. In fact, I would bet that many of the things he taught me, he did without speaking one word. Rightly or wrongly, he modeled them. When I think of how I came to understand *strength*, it wasn't because my father is a bit of a fitness freak. No. I am not referring to strength that is physical, but instead is psychological. This is an inner value that can be attributed to one's character.

Further, Dad gave me the gift of *self-assurance* and *truth*. I have no doubt that I walk through the world because he taught me to "never let anyone other than myself define me" and to do so telling my truth. There have been times when those values appear on surface to be rooted in arrogance, but they are not.

Next are the words and actions of Jesus Christ. Those who know me recognize that I came to developing a faith later in life. To that end, when I chose to follow Christian teachings, I had a clearer understanding of how they would affect my life. Christ showed me how to live a life of **justice**. More pointedly the pursuit of justice couldn't benefit me solely. It had to be for the greater good—justice for all.

It goes without saying that Jesus taught me how to **love**. This love is not romantic, but instead values each and every human being as a child of God. This is commonly known as *agape*. Further, Jesus presented **forgiveness** in a way that offered me release from self-imprisonment to myself or the other. Without having learned that lesson, I would be emotionally crippled by some of my past decisions and actions.

Finally on my list, come parent and life lessons from a very dear friend, Derrick. As the eldest child, Derrick inherited being a parent to younger female siblings who were 10 and 9 at the age of 20 while he was still in college. Their primary care giver and mother died from cancer, turning their worlds upside down. Primarily, Derrick taught me the value of **duty**. He promised his mom that he would watch over his sisters. He did; often putting aside many of his needs to make sure that his family remained intact.

In his role, Derrick modeled a spirit of **honor** and **humility** the likes of which I have never witnessed. I marvel at the sacrifices he constantly and consistently makes in effort to provide food and shelter for his family. In truth, my parental skills have been refined by his illustration.

Certainly my dad and my friend have made mistakes along their journey as parents. However, I am proud that their character as men has informed and blessed me in ways that I could not repay except to impart such essential values to my own children.

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