

Steve's Letter to his Son Jesse as he Approached his Teen Years

By Steve Ray

To My Dear Son Jesse:

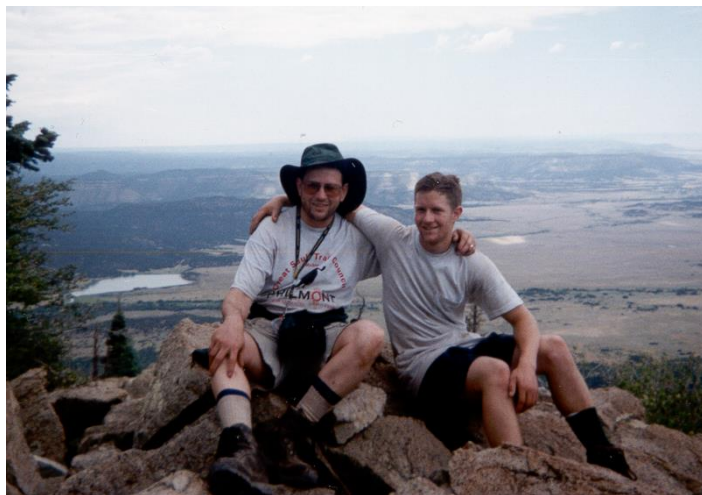
When you a young boy, still running around with curly hair and a little boy air about you, I wrote you a letter. That letter has hung on your wall for many years now and in it I promised my love, support, discipline—and a Father's heart. I predicted a few rough years ahead for us as you went through the teen years and I pledged to stand by your side. Have I been perfect?—no, but I have tried to model our Heavenly Father to the best of my ability and with the best of intentions.

I had the advantage of having a father myself that also imperfectly reflected the love and discipline of God as he raised me. When a child lives with a loving father who disciplines him judiciously and praises him liberally, the child easily relates to the Heavenly Father as he grows into manhood. The earthly father takes the place of God in the young boy's eyes and his qualities are soon projected into heaven as the boy begins to contemplate the person and character of the Heavenly Father. If the earthly father does even a mediocre job, it give the boy a marvelous foundation for establishing a relationship with his Heavenly Father.

After a while the boy is no longer under the authority of the father as he was as a pudgy little guy running around with chubby arms and a silly smile. A boy is to always honor his mother and father for this is the command of the New as well as the Old Covenant and it is the only command with a promise—"that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph 6:3). But at a certain point the obedient child relationship tranfers to a best friend relationship. This is now taking place between you and I and it makes me proud and full of joy.

When I observe the relationship of many fathers with their sons, it grieves me, but it also serves to amplify the joyous and satisfying relationship between us. Proverbs 15:20 says, "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother." You have hit very few of the potholes in the road of adolescence—you have steered your life carefully and it will always be a feather in your cap and a good start in a long and happy life. You have weathered the toughest years and in many ways it only gets easier from this point on. Very few young men grow into adulthood without regrets. You can smile to yourself for you have done well.

I am very proud of you Jesse. I will never forget the two weeks



in the mountains of New Mexico. It was rough on me in some ways but I have the fondest memories of our time together. I have enjoyed being up late at night working on a project and stopping to share time with you as you come in from work. I have been proud of the responsible manner you have handled your work, especially at Briarwood. I will never forget the morning we were all received into the Catholic Church. I was proud of you acquiring your Eagle Scout badge. I am happy with the respect you show your mother and sisters—it is delightful to watch and will serve you well as you find your own bride and grow a family. Your mother and sisters will love you and adore you always.

Even though our relationship is in a transition from the “authority of a father and the obedience of a son” to being “best friends”, I will always be your father and will forever be at your side to love, guide, enjoy, and befriend you. I expect that we will grow into a loving and close family as the kids grow up and have families of their own. I expect to be a content old grandfather. Should our Lord lead you in a different direction and you should decide to be a different kind of father, you will make us proud there as well. Whatever direction your life takes you will find us supportive and proud.

So, I close off this short letter with words of encouragement. Stay the straight course, keep a “covenant with your eyes not to look upon a maid” (Job 31:1), honor and love your mother and sisters, stay close to Jesus in the heart of His Church, choose your friends wisely, have fun, and challenge life with a smile. I am proud of you, I love you, and I am always here for you.

God bless you my son,

Your Loving Father

[Steve’s Update: Since writing this letter a long time ago my son Jesse became part owner of our family business, bought a nice house and car, graduated *summa cum laude* with a degree in Business, got married and the next day turned 21 years old. He now has two beautiful children—my grandkids!]