



“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.” (James 1:17, NIV)

How difficult is it to get a national holiday started? If one were to look at the history behind Father’s Day, the conclusion would be – quite difficult.

It seems as far back as the Middle Ages; Catholic Europe held a Father’s Day of sorts on the Feast of St. Joseph. However, the practice just didn’t seem to catch on. Several cities in the U.S. attempted to get something going with parades and speeches in the early 1900’s, but still—nothing doing. Most attempts to get a Father’s Day going were seen as collusion between the promoters and manufacturers of ties, tobacco pipes and other traditional father-type gifts. But if the truth be known Father’s Day began in the United States when a young woman wanted to honor her dad.

In May of 1909, Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington, sat in church listening to a Mother’s Day sermon. She decided she wanted to designate a day for her dad, William Jackson Smart. Dodd’s mother had died in childbirth, and Dodd’s father, a Civil War veteran, had taken the responsibility of singlehandedly raising the newborn and his other five children.

The following year, Dodd wanted to celebrate Father’s Day on June 5th, her father’s birthday, and petitioned for the holiday to be recognized in her city. Needing more time to arrange the festivities, Spokane’s mayor pushed the date back by two weeks, and the first Father’s Day was celebrated on June 19, 1910, according to the Spokane Regional Convention and Visitor Bureau.

At the first Father’s Day celebration, young women handed out red roses to their fathers during a church service, and large baskets full of roses were passed around, with attendees encouraged to pin on a rose in honor of their fathers – red for the living and white in memory of the deceased. Dodd then brought her infant son along on a horse-drawn carriage ride through the city, bringing roses and gifts to home-bound fathers.

While Congress was quick to officially declare the second Sunday in May as Mother’s Day in 1914, after it was first celebrated on May 10, 1908, it took much longer for Father’s Day to be legally recognized. But thanks to Dodd’s celebration, Father’s Day steadily gained popularity.

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge said that he supported it, in order to establish closer relationships between fathers and their children and to impress upon fathers the full measure of their obligations, according to the Library of Congress.

And the holiday gained more traction in 1938 when a trade organization, the National Council for the Promotion of Father’s Day, which was formed by men’s clothing retailers in New York City, decided to take up the cause, according to *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton University Press, 1995).

President Lyndon Johnson issued the first presidential proclamation honoring fathers in 1966, but it wasn’t until 1972 that President Richard Nixon signed the public law that made it a permanent holiday. Since then, Father’s Day has become a time to recognize the many different father figures in our lives.

And so, on this Father’s Day I want to encourage you to take the time to give thanks for that person in your life. Take time to consider the vast array of blessings that you have come to know as a result of your Dad, or that person (or persons) in your life who have blessed your life in such a “fatherly” way.

For me I will be thinking of...

- His ability to accept and love me which he continuously demonstrated in his ongoing and unending encouragement.
- The loving discipline and teaching moments he shared when I made those wrong choices and decisions.
- The application of forgiveness in my life; which served as that example of how I too was to forgive.
- The Christian values and ethics that were taught to me. Those items that continue to service as a guide in my life even today.
- The time and dedication he put in at a job(s) so that our family would have food to eat and clothes to wear.

But what is it that you think about? What is it that has left its mark – its memory – its life lesson in your day to day life? What has made that person(s) so important and vital to who you are right here and right now?

I hope this Father's Day is an opportunity for you to think of that person (or persons) in your life. To give thanks to your Lord for the blessing that they were, or for the blessing that they continue to be.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the fathers in our lives.

Fatherhood does not come with a manual, and reality teaches us that some fathers excel while others fail. We ask for Your blessings for them all and forgiveness where it is needed.

This Father's Day we remember the many sacrifices fathers make for their children and families, and the ways--both big and small--they lift children to achieve dreams thought beyond reach.

So too, we remember all those who have helped fill the void when fathers pass early or are absent; grandfathers and uncles, brothers and cousins, teachers, pastors and coaches and the women of our families.

For those who are fathers, we ask for wisdom and humility in the face of the task of parenting. Give them the strength to do well by their children and by You.

In Your name, O God, we pray.

Amen