

The Power of a Father's Positive Words

I was 8-years old; my mother had died of cancer in January, leaving Dad with the three children. My older brother was assigned to help Dad prepare the meals in the kitchen. My younger sister was to help by setting the table, and I was given the job of clearing the table after each meal. Each one carried his own plate and silverware to the kitchen sink, but then there were all the other serving dishes and the standard table ware, such as a cruet for vinegar, salt and pepper shakers and finally, the sugar bowl.

I was balancing a number of items in my hands, including the china sugar bowl, when the crash occurred. I dropped the entire load a few paces from the kitchen counter top. The sugar bowl fractured into hundreds of pieces and the fine, white grains of sweetener scattered all over the floor.



Dad was standing at the kitchen sink, a white tea towel tied around his waist as a makeshift apron. Drying his hands on the tea towel, he bent down to examine my most recent act of clumsiness.

“Hummm,” he intoned, pursing his lips and arching his eyebrows, “This shouldn’t take long to clean up. I’ll help you.”

Without the slightest condemnation or lack of patience on his part, he stepped away momentarily and then returned with the dustpan and counter brush.

“We have to be careful to get all these grains of sugar cleaned up,” he said, “or it will become a sticky mass under our feet.”

He showed me how to work carefully and patiently. That’s when he said something to me that I’ve never forgotten—nor ever will.

“John,” he said, “you have a great deal of patience. In fact, I think you are patient enough that you could count each individual grain of sugar that has spilled here on the floor if you wanted to.”

I looked at the mass of sugar near the largest fragments of the shattered sugar bowl and then took in the wider scene of the sugar-coated linoleum floor, the fine grains clearly visible illuminated, as they were, by the setting summer sun which streamed in from the west kitchen window, making them almost sparkle.

“Yes,” he repeated, “I think you have the patience to count each and every one.”

I had never thought of myself as a particularly patient person. But I believed my father. In fact, every time I start to lose patience, even to this day, I think of his evaluation.

“You have a great deal of patience.” By the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, I endeavor to fulfill his kind words of confidence in me.

I wonder if most fathers realize the power of their words. Dads, your children are listening. They will believe most everything you say.