

Alida's Message – Father's Day 2013

Here's something about me: I tend to break things. It's not so much that I'm clumsy, although, arguably, that's part of it. It's more that there are temporary malfunctions in the area of my brain that controls common sense. Last summer I pretty spectacularly broke the glass top to our patio table -- I had taken it off to clean it -- a 4 foot by 8 slab of glass -- leaned it up against something, Windexed the heck out of it and then picked it up again while it still had Windex all over it. YOu can't get much of a grip on a giant piece of Windexed glass, so what inevitably happened next really wasn't about *clumsy* so much as 'what were you thinking.' When it hit the patio, the glass kinda exploded. It was amazing the amount of little nuggets 32 square feet of safety glass turns into. Looked like a snow storm. I took pictures.

Now see, This is what I did over and over and over as a child. Broke stuff. Toys, lamps, vases, mirrors, windows, my glasses -- all the time -- furniture, doll and real, everything. Just busted stuff. But I gotta tell you, and maybe this is part of the reason why I don't seem to have improved on this, I gotta tell you, I never worried too much when I broke things. And it was 'cause of my dad.

Here's how the conversation always went: I'd show up in his study with whatever item I had recently-shattered, wires dangling, porcelain in pieces, whatever. Dad, I'd say, I'm really sorry. I broke this. Can you fix it? And he'd say one of the following: *Duct tape oughta take care of that.* or *I've got some epoxy that oughta take care of that.* or -- and this was his favorite -- *I think I can solder that back together.* My dad had a soldering gun that he just loved to use, which is why he always seemed to brighten right up when I'd snapped something metal. He fixed EVERYTHING. Everything. Not just what I broke, but the busted drainpipe and the loose brick and the leaky roof and the dented fender -- okay, that was me again too.

And when it was something I had done -- like, for instance, that fender, he never yelled. He just fixed. Got underneath and hammered out the dent and I think soldered something, too, but didn't yell. Never yelled. Just fixed.

Which, when I think about it, pretty much sums up my dad as a dad. Not a hollerer, but a mender. Whenever things in my life seemed broken, he didn't point out how I'd messed up or how I'd steered myself the wrong direction -- he just asked what he could do to make it better, what needed soldering back together, and then he'd do it.

Men get a bad rap for always wanting to fix things. You know the common lament of every woman in a relationship – *stop trying to **fix it**, I just need you to **listen**.*

And it **is** true that duct tape can't fix everything. But what I loved -- and love -- about my Dad is his assumption, always, that there is something he can do that will make it better. It strikes me as the epitome of optimism. And it also strikes me as the hallmark of faith.

What brings us here, after all, week after week? Our belief that with God we can be better, and we can be better to each other, and we can make the world better.

We believe, we *believe*, that God, whom Jesus called his Daddy, wants nothing more than to fix it, fix us, fix what's wrong. God is not a hollerer, either, but a mender, and someone who calls us to be involved in the business of mending, too. Where there is hurt, God wants us to fix it. Where there is need, God wants us to fix it. Where there is injustice, God wants us to fix it.

My Dad believes that too. Along with showing me how to get a busted toilet working with a couple paper clips and a rubber band, he also showed me what it means to be a person of faith, active in this world for good, constantly seeking out what God wants us to mend and doing the work of fixing.

This week hundreds of teens in our town graduate from high school, a bunch of them here this morning. And what I pray for them, for you guys, is that your faith will lead you to be menders and doers, to be fixers. To see what is broken in this world and to put it back together. I pray that you will be the one to whom others turn when they need mending, and that most of all, you will always be open to the God who wants to fix you if you're feeling ever feeling a little bit broken yourself.

As for the rest of it?

A little duct tape oughta take care of it.

Amen.