



This Sunday is Father’s Day. And I’m sure there will be several children hugging their fathers just a little closer this week, including the two who belong to U.S. Congressman Steve Scalise, one of the victims of the shooting at the baseball practice in Alexandria, Virginia, this week. Rep. Scalise was shot in the hip, and is currently in critical condition as I write this. Our prayers are with him and his family, as well as with the other victims.

It is a sad fact that we often don’t really notice or appreciate the efforts and gifts of the ones closest to us until after they are gone. Father’s Day, in fact, was begun as a way of remembering fathers who had passed. There are at least two stories about its origin. One was that it was started as a way of remembering all the fathers who were among the 361 men killed in a terrible mining accident in West Virginia in 1908.

Another story is that it was started by the daughter of William Smart. Sonora Smart Dodd wanted to honor the man who served as both mother and father to her and her five siblings for many years. He was a veteran of the Civil War, and he lost his wife during the birth of their sixth child. Sonora wanted fathers like hers to be celebrated, and suggested that the anniversary of her father’s death—June 5—be a day dedicated to fathers. Some planning issues there in Spokane, Washington, then caused the day to be moved to the third Sunday in June—June 19, 1910. However, the day was not recognized as a national holiday until 1972, during the Nixon administration.

We use this day now to remember those fathers who can’t be with us, and to celebrate with those who can. Having a good, solid father as a role model in our lives can make all the difference—fathers can provide a sense of security, strength, and pride for their children. Having the faithful, steady presence of a father can make us feel more sure about the world and less fearful of what is to come. Thankfully, we all can know the love of a father through the presence of our Father God. And we can all be sure that this Father will love us always, through life and death, and for eternity.

*As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:*

**What feelings do you have about Father’s Day and why?**

**What kind of difference do you think it makes to have a strong father in a person’s life? Does it make a difference? What kind of impact does it have when a father dies or otherwise is removed from the family unit?**

**Who is a steadying force in your life? Who can you go to for consistent support?**

**We all have times that challenge our faith—times when life just seems uncertain, and we are so afraid of the unknown. At those times, it helps to have a strong voice in our lives to encourage us and provide hope and safety. Jairus was a faithful father, but he must have been terrified of losing his daughter, so he sought help from the only person he knew had the power to save her. Let’s see how Jesus responded to one father’s faith and fears.**