

The Power of Story: Kevin Clasen & His Grandfather

My grandfather is the father figure in my life. My parents were divorced when I was six months old and I did not see my biological father at all for the next 39 years. Thankfully, my grandfather became my defacto-dad. He was an awesome man and helped mold me into the person I am.

He taught me how to make ice cream, mow the yard, work hard, and most importantly to do what was right. He always seemed to be there to support my mom, my brother, and me – especially when we needed it the most. In other words we had a relationship. Over the years somehow his respect for me matured as well. He never really told me that until the last few years. He always told me he was proud of me and how successful I was with work and with my family. But as most men of his generation, showing affection was not part of the equation. Hugs, yes. Emotional words, no.

I grew up with a strong sense of faith and have been told by many people that I am a miracle ... from a childhood which included government housing and food stamps ... to a life I enjoy today of financial and family success. I know it was hard work on my mom's and my part ... and I have also known God was looking out for me.

You see my mom had my brother and me at church whenever possible, unfortunately my grandfather was not a part of that. Over the years I've always wondered where he stood with God... but he's my hero... so how can I ask my hero about where he stands with God? I tried several times but the conversations were typically short and never really seemed to get anywhere.

In December my wise wife, Shelly, rearranged our Christmas plans just so we could go and see my grandpa – thinking this may be the final time I'd ever get to see him. Fortunately, he was still hanging-on and on June 6th we celebrated grandpa's 90th birthday. It was great – I joined my mother and my brother in Kansas City to sing happy birthday and celebrate with grandpa.

In our final exchange, we each told Grandpa how much we love him. Saying good-bye was difficult for each of us. My brother and I left the room to let our mom say her final goodbye. We went to the car. As we sat together in the car we talked about life and death and heaven and grandpa. We both knew he was a good man but also did not know where he stood with God and his acceptance of Jesus Christ.

We saw mom come out and drove the car up to meet her when everything changed. She said, "Boys, grandpa wants you to come pray with him." I have to tell you ... I had never heard those words before in my life!

We walked into his room and he was still sitting in his chair. We asked him about wanting to pray and in his frail voice he said, "I've done so many wrong things" and he began to cry. Here is my hero, a man who defended our country, a man who has seen the horrors of war and never cried, and here was my grandfather crying.

And he said again and again, in that frail little-old-man voice, "I've done so many wrong things, I've done so many wrong things." I asked, "Do you know God loves you?"

Things kind of go blurry for me at this point and in an effort to not sensationalize this I will share with you what the Holy Spirit has reminded me of because at this point HE was working through me.

I said to my grandpa, "Only you can make the decision to pray to accept Jesus but I'm asking if we can pray that prayer together?"

He said, "Yes, but I don't know what to say."

I said, "Grandpa, can you shake your head yes?" ... and he did.

I said, "I will say the words and you just shake your head" ...& he agreed ... then I prayed, "God, you know I have done many wrong things and right now I ask you for your forgiveness." ... and I saw my grandpa's head go up & down

Then I prayed, "I ask that you send your son Jesus Christ into my heart." Again my grandpa's head goes up & down.

Then I said, "Amen" ... and again my grandpa's head goes up & down ...

No theological words were needed. When he opened his eyes and I looked at his face I saw a different person. It was amazing in the blink of an eye he was changed forever.

He knew where he was going and we – my mom, my brother, & me – we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we will see our grandfather, our hero, in eternity.

I can't tell you how excited I am to know the most important person on earth to us is ready for Heaven. God has given me a gift that will never ever be taken away.

I now see more clearly than ever that God has me in my family to be His instrument to reach my grandfather. If I accomplish nothing else in life, I'm ok with that, because I'm seeing God's plan for my life and the relationships he has put me in. Imagine ... me ... used by God ... to reach my 90 year old grandfather ... signed, Kevin Clasen.