Shayne Clarke

Funeral Talk for J. Richard Clarke July 9, 2022

If a book were written about my Dad, a fitting title would be *Fundamentals*. I remember a placard on his desk that read *Is It Essential?* *Can it be Simplified?*

He reduced life to fundamental operating principles and did his best to live by them. This was true in business, church assignments, and certainly with his family.

He was the best coach many of us ever had. We drilled on the basics--over and over: passing with precision, blocking out, arm in, wrist back, follow-through. We didn’t have trick plays. That’s another fitting book title: *J. Richard Clarke—No Trick Plays.*

Dad was more than my coach; he was my Mentor. Mentors surpass idols or even coaches. Idols are distant, prone to jittery pedestals. Coaches go home after practice. Mentors stay with you even when they are not around. Mentors are worth emulating. My Dad wasn’t perfect, and funerals are generous, but I wanted to be like my Dad in so many ways. And still do. I’ve absorbed more from him that I fully realized.

The lessons I remember best are those he didn’t know he was teaching. I watched how he treated people. He treated prophets and parking attendants with the same respect. I saw what he read: B.H. Roberts, Nibley, and Louis L’Amour. I watched how he served: because he loved the Savior. I watched him laugh until he couldn’t breathe. I heard him pray. I witnessed his commitment to his covenanted companion.

I learned from Dad not just how to work, but the value of work. I did not come by this naturally. I may have been his greatest success in the teaching to work category!

Much of that happened on the beloved Dal Saan Ranch.

In our minds, Dal Saan Ranch was akin to the Ponderosa with Ben Cartwright, Hoss, and Little Joe. In reality, it was more like Green Acres with Eddie Arnold and Eva Gabor. But we didn’t know the difference. The purpose, I learned later, was to teach us to work and learn responsibility. Mission accomplished. Even though I was pretty sure Dad planted thistle seed in the pasture at night so we would have something to dig up weeks later.

And I straighten nails so we could reuse them. Image my surprise when I learned years later what nails actually cost!

We had a Hereford cow, #9, (may she rest in *pieces*). She produced good offspring, but she had anger management issues—and all our cows had horns. She would charge at you with the intent to kill. (Or so it felt!). One day, #9 had a new calf. When Dad asked if it was a bull or heifer, we said we couldn’t get near enough to tell, that she kept charging at us. Dad looked at us with disgust and said something about us being cream puffs or some other dessert and walked out to finish the job.

When Dad got in the corral, #9 charged at him too! Matthew and I cheered, feeling vindicated. Dad just grabbed her horns and slide out of the way like a Spanish matador. She came at him again and this time he grabbed a fence pole laying on the ground. As she came at Dad, he cracked her skull like a Louisville Slugger and she dropped to her knees and groaned. It was the best day of our lives! She was more respectful of Dad after that. And so were we!

I would follow my Dad to war.

My dad had a fundamental and deep understanding of the principles of the gospel. He stuck to the fundamentals. He worked hard at it. He learned by study AND by faith. His scriptures were workbooks that he poured through.

Dad was a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. He studied his life intensely. His relationship with the Savior was real. He earned the right to be a witness of the resurrection and the teachings of Christ. God the Father and the Son were not just doctrines, they were people--his friends.

When he prayed it wasn’t an oration; he didn’t recite practiced prose; it was a divine dialogue--a respectful conversation. Even as he was losing his ability to speak clearly, he would pray, and those prayers are indelibly impressed on my heart.

Like Nephi wanting to know what his father Lehi knew, I wanted to know what my Dad knew. So, I have learned by study and by faith.

The resurrection is a real thing for me. I testify that my Dad is still very alive. The fact that my Dad is a spirt person active in the world of spirits is not just wishful thinking, phycology, or a convenient coping mechanism.

And IF, after I die, I wake up and find out that I was wrong, that there is nothing there but blank space, I will go back to sleep and pray I never wake up again.

And IF I wake to blank space, what will I have wasted on this earth--preparing myself for a next life, believing this life is not the end of my existence? I will have wasted nothing. I will have lived with purpose, believing this life is not the beginning and the end.

But if, after I am dead, I wake up and see my Dad, eager to show me around, and explain what’s next, I will be glad I had the faith to believe the prophets and the plan of happiness in this world.

My witness is that we are here, now, to experience, to progress, and to prepare. Eternal progression is a very real principle. Dad believed that and I believe that.

May we live as Dad lived. Deliberately, committed to sound principle. May we come to know the Jesus that he knew. I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.