



## WHY MY DAD IS MY HERO, EVEN THOUGH HE IS REALLY MY STEP-DAD



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Today, I want to take a moment to honor a man that I consider my hero. I think that in this day and age, all too often, kids are growing up with athletes and entertainers as their heroes, rather than a stalwart person in their personal life. As I have mentioned in earlier posts, my parents were divorced when I was very young, which is why my grandfather was a very important person in my life, but a few years later, my mother re-married a man named Michael Peterson. Michael was not perfect and quite frankly even at a very young age, I was protective of my mother and I wasn't convinced he was good enough for my mom, even, but thank goodness my mother knew better than a 5 or 6 year old little boy and married him anyway.

What most of you don't know is that I was born with a different last name than the one you know me by now. When my mom re-married, my father had not been in the picture much since the divorce for myself or my younger brother. In fact, he was willing to give up his parental rights, clearing the way for Michael to adopt us. This was not even a hesitation for Michael. Even though, he was not perfect, as I mentioned, and was making decisions in his life that were not great, at the time, and that would take their toll for many years to come, he knew what it meant to be a man and a father. My brother and I decided to let him adopt us and we took his last name and he has treated us like his biological children ever since. I would submit to you that conception does not a

father make. Raising children to be responsible adults and showing them unconditional love is what being a father entails.

A couple of years later, when he was not able to participate in a religious ceremony that I had chosen to participate in, due to some of his life choices, he vowed then and there to change his life. One year later, when my younger brother was participating in the same ceremony, Michael was able to participate and has lived that way ever since. We did not always get along in the teenage years (who does?), but he taught me very valuable lessons throughout those years that I try to live as an adult, each day.

The first important lesson that I learned from him is the importance of hard work. Nobody gives you anything in this world. It is up to each of us to put in the work to make things happen for ourselves. Michael doesn't have the education that I have and has not been blessed with financial abundance in his life, but I have the education that I have, because of him, and the lessons that he taught me to work hard and to go after whatever you want in life.

The second lesson that I learned from him and probably the most important lesson of all, is that as a father, you do whatever it takes to take care of your family and to make sure that they have what they need, even if that means that you go without something that you need or want in life. Michael loves hunting and camping and I know that he would have loved to buy new guns, new binoculars, 4 wheelers, a camp trailer, coats, boots, gloves, pants, etc., but finances did not allow for all of that, in addition to the needs of our family, so he did not get those things.

I am so grateful to have had such a wonderful example to me in my life of what it means to be a man and a father. I know my wife is grateful, too, even though, I am not the perfect husband or father, either. I try to live up to his example every day, as well as the following that was spoken by one of my church leaders decades ago:

"No other success can compensate for failure in the home." David O. McKay

I work hard to build a business that I can be proud of and I have been building towards that for 18 years now, but I have been married almost 20 years and a father for almost 18 years now, too, and those two things are what drive me to be the financial advisor that my clients can rely on to do what is right for them, always, and to help them toward achieving the goals that they have in life and in their businesses. Growing up the son of a small business owner is what drives me to serve the true backbone of our American economy, the small businesses, business owners and their executives.

If you want to work with a financial advisor who always puts his clients' needs first and understands what it means to be a small business owner, because I lived it as a kid and I am one today, then give me a call at 480-824-4100 or e-mail me at [austin.peterson@lfg.com](mailto:austin.peterson@lfg.com).

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