

3. Sample Roof Crasher Lesson: Relationships Matter Part 2

Last week we talked about how relationships mattered to Jesus and how they matter to us, and I challenged you to create deep, meaningful relationships that result in the six people you would want to be your pallbearers.

This week I want to read you a story and talk about a specific and important relationship in your life. Here's an excerpt from Dennis Rainey's book, *Stepping Up*, a call to courageous manhood:

They were high in the Absaroka mountain range of northwestern Wyoming in an area accessible only by horseback. It was gorgeous country—one of the true remote wilderness areas of America. Pine trees, meadows, lakes, and craggy, towering mountains. Plenty of elk and plenty of grizzlies.

The two men—father and son—loved to hunt in this area. Just the two of them—far from civilization. Ron Leming Sr. had learned to hunt from his father, and he in turn taught his son, Ron Jr. They returned to the area year after year to bow-hunt for elk. “We’re very close,” Ron Sr. said. “These trips mean everything to me.”

But on all their trips, Ron Jr., thirty-seven, was the only one who had harvested an elk with an arrow. “My dad has never had the experience of getting a big bull elk with a bow,” observed Ron Jr., who had a few trophy elk to his name. “I really wanted him to have that.”

On previous days, Ron Sr. had missed a couple of opportunities to take a shot when an elk was in range. That morning he prayed, “God, guide my arrow today.”

Determined to give his father an opportunity to bag an elk, Ron Jr. hid uphill. He doused his camouflage with elk scent to cover up his human smell. For thirty minutes, he imitated the bugling call of an elk. Finally, a big bull elk answered and was making his way to confront the competition.

Ron Jr. needed to lure the elk within forty yards of his father, and hid in the brush below to ensure a good shot. “Everything looked good: The wind was right in our faces. The elk had no idea we were there. I was sure Dad was going to get a shot.” The elk moved closer and closer...and then suddenly bolted into the forest.

Puzzled, Ron Jr. stood up, turned around, and discovered that something else had been stalking that elk—a five-hundred-pound grizzly bear. Perhaps mistaking Ron Jr. for the elk it had been following, the beast attacked.

Ron Sr. heard his son yell and looked up to see the giant grizzly giving chase. His first thought was, “That bear’s going to maul my son.” His next thought was a fleeting picture of his son as a baby, lying in his arms.

Instantly he stood up, aimed, and shot. Then the bear pounced on Ron Jr. The grizzly took Ron's arm in its mouth, crushing his elbow, and shook him violently. Somehow Ron Jr. broke free and began running for safety, but the bear caught him again. He punched at the bear, trying to keep the jaws away from his head. "He definitely fought for all he was worth," Ron Sr. recalled. "That kid's Ford tough."

Meanwhile, Ron Sr. was trying to string another arrow, but then he saw that the bear was covering his son. With nothing else to try, he charged at the bear and began hitting the animal on the back and head with his bow.

To his surprise, the bear released Ron Jr. and shuffled away. Then Ron Sr. noticed that the bear was limping. "Ronnie yelled for me to shoot him again, but I didn't want to make him madder than he already was, so I just watched him," he said. "From the way he was stumbling, I knew I'd hit him pretty well with the first shot."

After eighty yards, the bear fell dead. Ron Sr.'s arrow had barely missed his son and had, miraculously, torn the grizzly's aorta.

God had certainly guided his arrow.

"My dad pretty much saved my life there," Ron Jr. said. "That's the thing I cannot believe in this whole story. He stood there with a bow and made that shot at a charging grizzly bear. That's amazing. You could take that shot a thousand more times and never do it."

Ron Jr. had some deep bites, but no major injuries. Still, that didn't stop him from going into shock. They couldn't call for help—their cell phones didn't work that far into the wilderness. And they were fifteen miles from home, which was another thirty miles from a hospital.

Somehow Ron Sr. got his son onto a horse, and they began descending the mountain trail. Ron Jr. ended up spending just one night at the hospital—he was a fortunate man to be in the jaws of a bear and escape with so few injuries. Ironically, at one point during their long packhorse trip, the two men heard another bugling elk. Ron Jr. urged his father to go shoot it—he still wanted to help his dad bag an elk.

Naturally, Ron Sr. would have none of it. "I probably couldn't hit it anyway," he remarked.

"If I got off and made it chase me," Ron Jr. said with a chuckle, "I'll bet you could hit him."

What would you do in that situation?

Is there a time where you were in danger that your dad stepped in? Any good stories to share?

I have some observations from this story:

- This father and son had a great relationship and shared life together.
- They sacrificed for each other (the son wanted the dad to get an elk).
- The father's love had no limit in protecting his son—even when his son is thirty-two years old.

Explain that your dads all want to be courageous fathers who have strong relationships with you, our sons, so that we can go on great adventures like this. We also want to be courageous protectors (although not typically fighting off bears) of you from the things in this world that can harm you. Some are physical dangers, but most are spiritual and the result of the battle in which we are engaged.

Unfortunately the enemy is not as easy to spot as a five-hundred-pound grizzly bear! That threat would be easy. Spiritual threats are much more subtle, attractive, and appealing—appealing to our nature.

So as you mature, get your driver's license, and gain more and more freedom, Don't get the idea that our relationship is over. On the contrary, we are there *for you*—even in great peril.