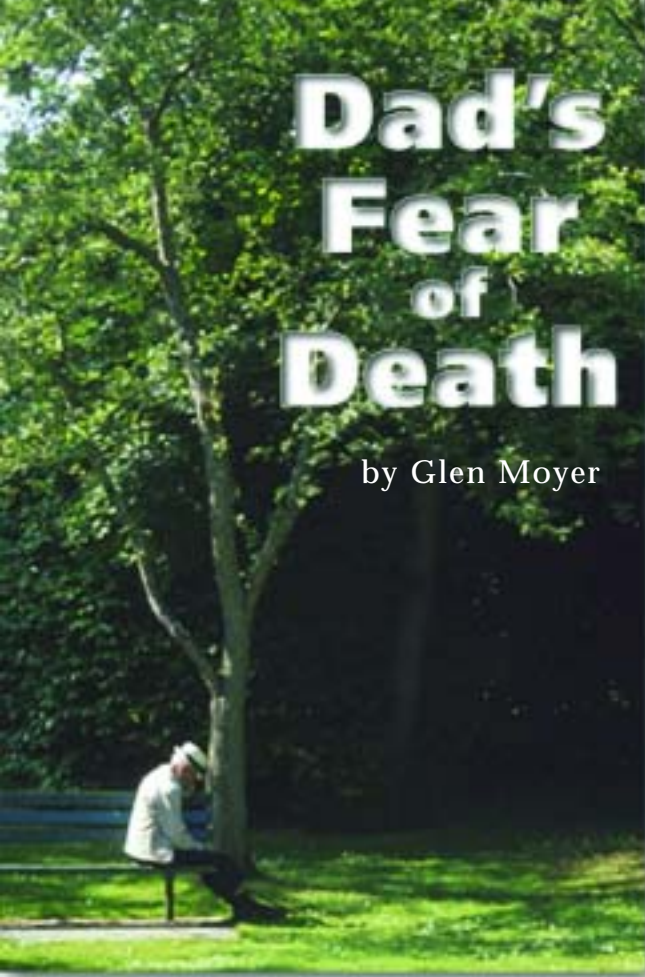


# Dad's Fear of Death

by Glen Moyer



**D**ad wasn't afraid of anything physical. From combat in the Philippines during WWII, to climbing 150 foot sparring poles in the Alaskan rain forests, he never backed down from a challenge.

I remember when the counter weight on our lumber mill's fork lift broke off. Dad, who weighed only 165 pounds, single-handedly lifted the round, three feet in diameter, 300-pound weight back into place—over five feet off the ground.

My older brother tells of the day when he saw Dad confront a hired logger for drinking during a lunch break, endangering those around him. Buck Daniels, a bulldozer-sized, bar room brawler didn't appreciate Dad's scolding and came after him. Buck threw one punch at Dad. Dad threw one punch at Buck. A minute later, Buck was still trying to figure out why he was dizzily lying flat on his back in the pine needles—fired.

But for all his physical exploits, Dad had one paralyzing dread—

terrible fear of death. Note, I said death, not dying. Dying is physical. Dying never scared him, even as he was dying.

I remember when one of the tumors of his terminal cancer began constricting his throat. It became increasingly difficult for him to swallow food.

He would nibble for an hour on a dry, darkly toasted piece of white bread and still have half of it left. The tumor grew until one day Dad's life with food ended.

Without food, Dad knew there was no turning away, no distractions, no hiding from his greatest fear. This was it. It must have been his impending, unbreakable appointment with death that caused Dad to finally

talk to me about his greatest fear.

"Of course, I believe in God," Dad said, "I always have." For those keeping score with church attendance records, this never would have been obvious.

"Then why are you so afraid to die and be with God?" I asked.

"Because I've done so damn many stupid things that I don't think God will want to have me around. Sure, I know about Jesus dying for my sins and all, but I also know the person I am and the failure I've been. I wish I would have done better down here, but I didn't. I just don't think he'll take me."

No wonder Dad was scared. I would be, too. Perhaps you are, too.

"Dad," I replied, hating to bring this up, "remember when I got busted by Sheriff Hamilton for drinking in high school—for the second time? Why did you let me come back into your house?"

"Because you are my son."

"Well, you're God's son. If you

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could forgive me and let me into your house, how much more will God forgive you and let you into his house?"

I then read John 14:1-3, where Jesus addressed this very issue. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

Dad had heard that passage before, but it was like the first time for him that day. The light came on. Suddenly, he understood God's love and forgiveness. I kid you not, an incredible, visible peace came over him like a bright ray of warm sunshine. I only regret that Dad couldn't have understood this years before and avoided the torment and fear death had held over him.

Over the next two months Dad's ability to swallow fluids ebbed away like the pounds on his once chiseled frame. Tiny swallows turned into tiny sips which turned into holding water in his mouth hoping some might somehow trickle down his throat. Then one day, life with fluids ended.

For an incredible 16 more days Dad lived, dying. Never complaining. Never fearing. In fact, those two and a half months when Dad literally starved to death, were far and away the best days of his life. And when he met death, and God, face-to-face on that March 12th morning, he was very much at peace—and he still is. □

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