

FATHER'S DAY IS EVERY DAY
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Sonara S. Dodd conceived of Father's Day in Spokane, Wash., in 1909. She wanted to honor her father, who had raised her single-handedly after the death of her mother. Wanting him to know how much she appreciated the effort, sacrifices, care and love he had showed her, she held the first Father's Day in June, the month of his birth.

A joint resolution of Congress recognized Father's Day in 1956, and in 1972 President Nixon established the third Sunday in June as the permanent national observance of Father's Day.

These facts tell us the history of Father's Day, but wondering what Father's Day really means to us today, I decided to ask my family. Tracy, my 8-year-old daughter, replied, "Do I have to give presents?" My 10-year-old son, Tom, similarly said, "It's a day to give a present to Father." Tricia, my wife, answered, "It's nice to have a father."

I think these replies reflect both the superficial and the deep-down meanings of Father's Day. The superficial meaning is obvious: We buy presents for one another on certain days of the year — Mother's Day, birthdays and so forth — mostly because we are expected to.

The deep-down meaning is not so obvious for some. My wife's response means that she is happy her father is still living. She loves him (and her mother, too) dearly and feels that every day is Father's Day and Mother's Day, too — Parents' Day, in other words.

Tricia feels this way because her parents are wonderful people. The fact is, Tricia's dad has been sort of a role model for me for almost 25 years now. He's a man who always chooses the high road. He never yells, criticizes or complains; he always extends his help and support.

While he lost his eldest child, his only son, who died of leukemia at 14, he never became maudlin or bitter over it. He's remained positive and confident throughout his life. It's plain to see why he's been a kind of role model for me, and why Tricia is happy to have him around to honor and respect come Father's Day.

So what does Father's Day really mean to me? It means that I'd like my own children to think as well of me as I do of my wife's father. And so it means that I have to remember always to choose the high road, to always think about the consequences of my words and actions. It means that I have to live my life as an example for my children to follow. Not an easy task, but I've come to realize that nothing of value comes easily.

Almost any man can become a father; it's not that hard. What is hard, is to try to be the best father you can be by showing your children what it means to take the high road as an SGI member. In essence, this means practicing what I preach.

To put it another way, this means that I can't just talk about how great my religion is and then not demonstrate it in my daily life.

For example, I should show my children that I just never give in to my angry or stupid nature — yelling, criticizing or complaining whenever things don't suit my purposes. I thus need to remember to chant to replace my anger with compassion and my stupidity with wisdom, to take the responsibility for creating unity with my wife and my children, so that I can always walk the high road of the Middle Way.

Only then will I feel I deserve the presents my children will inevitably give me on Father's Day.

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