

Hal Ford Funeral Remarks

By his youngest son Cameron Ford on June 14, 2021

I was completely unprepared for the intensity of emotions that would accompany the passing of my Father. I have felt keenly the words that our current Prophet, Russell M. Nelson once said: “even when the elderly or infirm have been afforded merciful relief, their loved ones are rarely ready to let go. The only length of life that seems to satisfy the longings of the human heart is life everlasting.”

It is a privilege to be the son of Hal Ford. I know that all his posterity feels the same way. He has influenced all of us in profound ways. When I was twenty years old and feeling compelled to determine if the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could possibly be true, I started making changes in my life. After noting in my journal that my mother would say that “I had got religion” I wrote the following about my parent’s influence on me:

“From this you could deduce that my mother does not believe in the church. You would be right. My mother is very skeptical of everything, but in a way this makes her very open to all kinds of ideas. I think that if you could read my mind that you would see her influence very strongly. She is a very deep person, but it is almost impossible to break through her exterior to discover this fact. My father, in many ways, is different from my mother. He is a very simple man that just wants to enjoy his hobbies and his family and leave the mysteries of life to other people. I love him and would not change him at all. Do not take my use of simple meaning he is not smart. In many ways, he is the most brilliant man that I know. He is very consistent in his authority over our family, and this has brought me many times to the idea that he is the rock that makes our family stable, when so many of the families around us in this day and age, are not. I think that many times my mother is hurt by my thinking that my father is the rock of our family. I want her to know that she is the biggest single influence on my way of thinking, because most of the time

my father is just a silent force. In that way I think she has influenced all of our lives. But I think that it is my father's Ford stubbornness to his wife and his children that anchors us and helps the family from floating away as many families do. I love them, and think that it is the interesting combination of both of my parents that creates what I would like to think of as my unique way of thinking and acting."

About 8 months after writing that, I left on my mission to the Dominican Republic, an experience that changed me forever. Even though mom and dad did not believe in the church, they believed in *me* and they supported my decision to serve, paid for the entire cost of my mission, and many years later helped pay for the missions of both my children Ariel and Lance. That is just how they were. The success and happiness of their family meant everything to them.

With dad's passing, our family has lost our rock.

However, because of his example, our family is not adrift. He gave us the tools to learn how to become, create, and find our own rocks, our own anchors in life. Here are a few of the things I learned from my dad's example:

1. Problems and fears are overcome by hard work, consistency, and persistence. Everything was hard for dad. He stuttered as a young boy, which is why he almost always started his sentences with "like I say", which he found was a way to give his mind a moment to figure out what he wanted to say. He struggled in school, but that did not stop him from learning how to run complex rocket motor test systems at Hercules and becoming a respected instrumentation engineer. He almost always did things backwards the first time or two, the most famous being the time he built the wooden gate frame around the deck post, but he always fixed the mistakes and finished the job.
2. Not knowing how to do something should not stop you from doing it. Just study it out, ask others for advice, and figure it out. Dad learned how to build his own water-skiing boat before I was born, and when I was a very young boy built the garage behind their house, figuring out how to pour a

suspended cement floor without hiring a professional contractor. There are not many people that would even attempt that, even back then.

3. He was completely reliable. When he said he would do something, he did it. I never remember a time when my dad did not keep a commitment he had made. Of course, some of us took advantage of that, like the time he said he would take me on a vacation to Hawaii if I got a high school report card with a GPA of 3.5 or better, and I signed up for the easiest classes available and got a 3.7. Even though he knew that he had been played, he still took me to Hawaii.
4. I learned from dad that financial security comes from both hard work, and frugality. Dad could pinch a penny until it begged for mercy. I feel like I'm pretty frugal, but compared to him I am a big spender. At a young age I learned from both him and mom that I don't have to have everything that I see. Because of his financial habits he was able to have plenty of money to do the things he most loved: golf, travel, and helping family when they needed it.
5. I learned that loyalty is the same thing as love, from dad. He was always there, always supporting us. He was devoted to mom even though she would often drive him crazy. From the day they were married, he loved her, bickered with her, and stuck with her through thick and thin. In a day when people turn to divorce when things get hard, his example of family devotion is reflected in the lives of all of his posterity. One of his most powerful legacies is that there has not been one divorce among all of his married children or grandchildren. This does not happen by chance. It happens by hard work, love, compromise, patience, and refusing to give up no matter how hard things get. These are all qualities we have inherited from him.
6. I learned from dad to face problems head on, and accept reality no matter how inconvenient or painful it might be. He was not one to bury his head in the sand when life threw him curve balls. When he was diagnosed with Prostate cancer several years ago, he opted to go through aggressive and unpleasant treatments and surgery to deal with it. He did the same thing last winter when he chose to endure those miserable chemo treatments. However, a few weeks ago when the doctors said the cancer had come back and was now terminal, he accepted that reality with incredible calm and grace.

7. Dad was very curious when it came to technology. He told me that when he was younger, he always had to take things apart to figure out how they worked before he could be satisfied. I believe I have inherited dad's drive and curiosity in amplified form, and it has extended well beyond just the technical. I believe it is the combination of dad's curiosity, acceptance of truth regardless of how inconvenient it might be, and stubborn unwillingness to rest until things are understood, that explain much of who I am. I believe these things are a large part of why I served a mission and have spent my life studying both faith supporting evidences surrounding the restored church as well faith challenging aspects of church doctrine and history, a small part of which I have shared with many of you on my website.

I know that it has always been a mystery to both mom and dad as to how all the children of two un-religious parents could end up being active and faithful members of the church. But I feel that it is the characteristics we have all inherited from them, and the powerful examples of good that they gave us, that made all of our hearts fertile ground for gospel truths.

Which brings me to my final series of thoughts. I know many of us have worried that mom and dad have never fully embraced the gospel during their lifetimes. I wanted to share with you some perspectives that I have gained from gospel truths that have sunk deep into my heart over the years.

The ancient truths restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith teach us that mortality is a test and an opportunity for us to learn how to return to God's presence and live the kind of life that He lives. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ opens the way to make this transformation possible, if we will strive to keep His commandments and follow His teachings. This most certainly is not an easy path to follow, but our Heavenly Father and Savior have promised that it will be more than worth it. Statements from the Prophet Joseph Smith and other early leaders, the vicarious work

for the dead in temples, and the associated missionary work that we know goes on in the spirit world, all lead me to believe that our testing and proving extends even after death. The God that I have come to know over the last 30 years is a devoted and loving Heavenly Father that wants to give His children every possible opportunity to receive as much as they are willing to receive.

Given what we know about dad, his goodness, his love and devotion to family, his willingness to deal with hard realities, and his ability to do hard things, I am very hopeful that when he eventually comes to a full knowledge of the truths of the gospel, the doctrine of eternal families, and all that is waiting for him, that he will gladly accept those remaining challenges His loving Savior will ask him to overcome.

I also have an even more powerful reason that provides me hope. Several years ago in 2011, I had an incredible experience in the Bountiful Temple. I wrote the following about that experience:

“I went to the Temple this morning. As I was praying in the celestial room I received the following:

[I prayed]: ‘Heavenly Father please bless that my parents will come to know thee and come to trust in thee and thy Son.’

[The Lord said to me]: ‘Thy prayer shall be answered.’

[I responded]: ‘Is it true?’

[The Lord responded]: ‘In the due time of the Lord and when your parents are ready. Have patience. I have great things in store for your parents.’”

[After recording this exchange with the Lord, I wrote the following in my journal]: “This was a very powerful experience and has been followed by many tears of gratitude, joy and sorrow. It was very similar to the time when I was strongly instructed to ask my wife to marry me before I

had planned to. The voice or words inside my head felt the same. I recognized it. It was the voice of God as He manifests himself to me. This kind of communication has been rare in my life up to this point, and since it has been rare it gives me great confidence that it is true. Especially since I have prayed on this subject many many times before. Maybe the Lord has always been answering me in the same way, but I have not been listening. I now have confidence that God will reveal himself to my parents when they are ready; whether that be in this life, or the next.”

In closing, I want to share with my family the sure knowledge that I have received. This is more than belief. This is knowledge, and it has come to me through significant effort, study, fasting, and prayer over many years. I know it more surely than I know any other truths, scientific or otherwise.

I know that God lives. He is real. He is there. He is our Heavenly Father and He loves us. He sent His son Jesus Christ to show us the way back to Him. The life of Jesus Christ shows us how to drink the bitter cup of life, without becoming bitter. His teachings and His atoning sacrifice enable our joys to be sweeter and our sorrows to be more bearable. All who come to truly know Him will gladly kneel before him and bathe His feet with their loving tears. His Church and Gospel truths have once again been restored to the earth. Because of Him, we can all rise again in every sense of the word. He lives. He is the truth, the way and the life. He deserves our love, our devotion, and our loyalty.

I know this all to be true, and because of this, I know we will see dad again.

We love you dad.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.