

GIFTS FROM MY DAUGHTERS

*Dr. Gary Bates, Director
UT Beef and Forage Center*

A couple of years ago I wrote an article about things I wanted to teach my son. I got a lot of comments about how much people liked that article. I had always intended to write a companion article about what I want to teach my daughters. Over the last couple of years I have realized a very important fact – I have no idea what I am supposed to teach daughters. Most every idea I come up with revolves around staying away from boys. But specifics have been hard to come by. That is why I depend so heavily on my wife for help in this area.

Then I started thinking that I may not have taught my two daughters nearly as much as they have taught me. They are a blessing from God that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world. My mind goes over all the things that my daughters have given me over the years. Here is just a partial list.

The gift of being call Dad. The title of “Dad” is a very precious one. My daughters calling me by that name brings warmth to my heart. It is the best job I have ever had. They may call a lot of people Joe or John, but they only call one person Dad.

The gift of better understanding God. I protect my daughters, give guidance, provide for them, sometimes give them things and sometimes say no. Having kids gave me a better perspective on how much God loves me, and how He does the same things, only perfectly. This is a very valuable gift.

The gift of ponytails and painted fingernails. Prior to daughters, I had never painted fingernails, and I had never put hair up into a ponytail. I learned that both of these are harder than they look. I got pretty good at getting the ponytail straight. I never got good at painting fingernails. But it was fun painting them on Saturday night for church the next day.

The gift of being the first man in their lives. I remember giving them flowers after their first dance recital. Each got a bouquet of roses. Their eyes lit up when they got them, and I knew how much it meant for me to give this to them. I try to be an example of what they should look for in a husband. Except they should do better.

The gift of boyfriends. For me, boyfriends are like beets. First serving, you want to throw them to the dogs. Second serving, you sit at the table staring at them, hoping they go away. Third serving, you eat them, but they make you gag. The best you can get is to tolerate them. I don't think I am ever going to like beets. Time will tell, however.

The gift of shirts, ties, and belts. People joke about the gifts that dads get for Father's Day and Christmas. But I can think of a shirt and tie from one daughter, and a specific brown belt from the other. Every time I put those on, I think of much I love my daughters, and how much they love me.

The gift of the sweetest hugs in the world. I have one daughter heading soon to college, and

one still in high school. Even though they aren't little girls any more, they still give the sweetest hugs in the world. There are very few things that are as sweet and soft as a loving hug from a daughter. And I know every time I am with them, they have plenty to give me. Even if they are mad at me, they still share hugs.

I could go on and on about how much my daughters have changed my life. But there is no way to put into words how much I love my daughters, how beautiful I think they are, or how much their smiles light up my world. I am a better husband, father, and man because of them.