

A TRUE STORY....

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit, and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service. The pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few minutes to greet the church and share whatever he felt.

With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend were sailing off the Pacific coast," he began, "When a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to the shore. The waves were so high that, even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."

Two teenagers were, first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story.

The aged minister continued with his story. "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: which boy would he throw the other end of the lifeline to. He only had a few seconds to make that decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!', he threw out the lifeline to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in their pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that he should do the same for us. Our heavenly father sacrificed his only- begotten that we could be saved. I urge you to accept his offer to rescue you and take hold of the lifeline he is throwing out to you in this service."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal.

Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the man's side. "That was a nice story," politely stated one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point, there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face as he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here to tell you that that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up his son for me. You see, I was that father, and your pastor is my son's friend."

--Author Unknown