

Down Home: Best. Father's Day. Present. Ever.

June 5, 2015

Joanna, of all people, knows I rarely shut up. So, when my 2015 Father's Day present left me speechless, she may have been happier than I was.

(OK, if you're tracking the calendar at home, you know Father's Day is about two weeks away. But my 2015 Father's Day present was so epic, my wife couldn't wait to give it to me. So there.)

Back in February, I told you about [the passing of two old friends](#). One Sunday morning, I lost two of my all-time favorite books, *Peculiar Treasures* and *Wishful Thinking*, both by my all-time favorite writer, Frederick Buechner.



Best. Father's Day. Present. Ever. I carried the books to church to supplement that week's Bible study lesson.

Buechner's acute-angle approach to Abraham's and Sarah's shock at learning they would give birth to a son in the delivery ward of the nursing home made a hit. Buechner always makes a hit.

In worship service, I placed the books on the floor to make room on our pew. After church, ever the creature of habit, I grabbed my Bible and headed for lunch. Later that afternoon, I remembered my books. The next day, one of my minister friends, Buzz, looked for them at church. Later that week, I looked myself.

No books. Not in the worship center. Not in lost and found. Not in our classroom. Nothing.

I was disconsolate. Jo and our daughters, Lindsay and Molly, gave me those books when the girls were tiny. They had been part of my life almost three decades. I'd read them both over and over, and they had supplied material for countless Bible study lessons and sermons. I felt like I'd lost two great friends.

Several weeks ago, I arrived home from work, and Jo was grinning so brightly I practically needed sunglasses in the kitchen.

The surprise

"Don't turn this over, but look at what's inside," she told me, handing me a large padded envelope, upside-down.

I reached into the envelope and pulled out aged, worn copies of *Peculiar Treasures* and *Wishful Thinking*.

"How did you find my books?" I asked. "Where"

"Now look inside," she instructed, cutting my questions short.

On the front page of both books, I found cream-colored nameplates with

elaborately engraved initials “F.B.” They both included the same message, “With many blessings,” and both were signed by Frederick Buechner.

“They’re not your original books,” Jo explained. “I found these on Amazon. Then I tracked down one of Frederick Buechner’s staff, who took the books to him so he could sign them. ... Happy Father’s Day.”

Then, all of a sudden, Jo started to melt.

OK, maybe she didn’t melt. But through my tears, she looked sort of melty.

Speechless

And then the truly inexplicable happened. I stood there, holding my lovely new/old/Buechner-signed books. Completely speechless.

Jo took her usual form as my eyes cleared. And then it was my turn to smile like the face of the sun.

All at once, I couldn’t figure out which made me happiest:

A. Once again, I owned vintage copies of *Peculiar Treasures* and *Wishful Thinking*, lovingly handled across decades so they looked like the ones I read all those years.

B. Now I owned copies of *Peculiar Treasures* and *Wishful Thinking*, signed for me by Frederick Buechner—Frederick Buechner!—himself.

C. My splendidly amazing, clever and resourceful wife loves me enough to find those vintage copies of *Peculiar Treasures* and *Wishful Thinking*, track down Mr. Buechner and ask him to sign them for me, and then smile sweetly as she hands me the best Father’s Day present in the history of paternity.

Of course, my quandary lasted only a nanosecond, because I knew the

correct answer is C. As much as I appreciate those books and am grateful for Mr. Buechner's generosity, I'm astounded and awed, not to mention humbled and honored, by the creative and sacrificial love of my wife.