

The Story of *On Golden Pond*

Father figures are often the subjects of Oscar-nominated movies, according to Paul Asay, senior associate editor at *Plugged In*, a ministry that reaches more than 6 million people with movie reviews that help people understand popular cultural trends and how they intersect with spiritual issues.

“Fathers matter, these movies tell us,” Asay said. “How dads do their jobs has a huge impact on their children – for good or ill. And very often, dads don’t do their jobs very well. And yet, the need for Dad – the desire for his love and approval – rarely goes away.”

Father’s Day is straight ahead, and it is an excellent opportunity to consider the role of the father.

Asay gave *On Golden Pond* as an example. That film is the story of a father and his daughter who spend dedicated time on the waters of Golden Pond, forcing them to work through their strained, unhappy relationships. The movie was up for a bunch of awards, including Best Picture, Best Actor for Henry Fonda, and Best Supporting Actress for Henry’s daughter, Jane.



Henry won, and Jane bounded to the stage to accept the award for her absent father.

“Oh, Dad,” she said, overwhelmed. “I’m so happy, and so proud of you.” There was quite a backstory behind those 10 words.

Henry Fonda had been one of Hollywood’s leading men for five decades, but he had never won an Oscar. By 1982, meanwhile, daughter Jane had already won two.

The two famous Fondas never had a warm relationship. Henry was not an outwardly affectionate man, Jane said, and Jane’s political activism, infamous for her support of the communist regime during the Vietnam War, strained their affections almost to the breaking point. In many ways, their relationship resembled what audiences saw onscreen.



(more)

Jane bought the rights to *On Golden Pond* as a star vehicle for her father. Henry Fonda died just five months after receiving his Oscar. Giving it to him, Jane said, was “one of the happiest moments of my life.”

“Dads matter,” Asay said. “Henry Fonda mattered so much to Jane that she bought a movie for him and cast herself beside him, just so she could say the things she was desperate to say. They tried to heal wounds through scripted words, finding real-world solace behind the safety of fiction.”

Dads, don't frustrate your children. Don't make them hide “behind the safety of fiction” or “scripted words.”

Be the kind of father who really invites honest, transparent communication with your children. After all, they may not have the luxury of fame and fortune to be able to buy the rights to a movie in order to vicariously work through their issues with you.

Find your own “Golden Pond.” Go there with your child and intently listen ... really listen ... to their hearts. You won't win an Oscar for Best Actor, but you just might win Best Father in a reality series!



Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter