

# First Light

You've likely read about it. It all really started before that very first race.

Good fathers love their sons and their daughters and will do about anything for them. That's how it's supposed to be. For Rick Hoyt, he had it good – and bad. As for fathers, he had the best. Dick, a loving dad, who provided, cared for and nurtured his family. But for Rick, being born with cerebral palsy created a sort of prison from which there was just no escape. But, then again, Rick had this loving, stubborn, tenacious dad, determined to help his son break out of that confining disease anyway possible. So, that's when the race enters the story. In 1977, Rick told his dad he wanted to participate in a benefit run for a paralyzed lacrosse player. After doing some creative engineering to his son's wheelchair, his dad agreed to push him the whole way - and they finished near last place, but you never would have known that. What started out as a simple way to help another suffering student, turned into Rick's jailbreak from the terminal tightness and rigidity cursed from his birth. That race would be the start of a twenty-plus year barrage of nearly 1,000 races, including 32 Boston Marathons, various duathlons, triathlons and even a trek across the U.S. covering 3,735 miles.

So, what possesses a dad to go to these lengths for his son? What kind of father would put himself through such hardship, pain, sweat, cost and difficulty? Luke records a story of a different dad and son. This story started once upon a time, when a little boy helped his dad all around the farm and learned the trade. Years later, he became disillusioned with the idea of being a farmer and decided he would venture out on his own. Problem was, he had to essentially disown his dad to get the family money to start his trek across the country. Being young and impetuous, he approached his father with this preposterous idea. Fathers love their sons and their daughters, so this dad gave in and accepted his son's choice to escape. But he never stopped hoping that his boy would change his mind and come home. Days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months. Seasons change, crops turn, parents get older, and life moves on, but every day, the father peered to the east, straining his eyes to see that lone profile break the horizon's peace. Luke shares the most amazing story of love, of forgiveness and of mercy that Jesus ever told in that one chapter. What started out as a mess morphs into a fiesta. The little boy turned young, lusty adult, becomes a forgiven, submissive servant of the most loving father in the world. "...But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him..."(Luke 15:20).

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In the one story, Dick Hoyt would do anything to help his son enjoy a few moments of normal life. Rick once said, "Dad, when I'm running, it feels like I'm not disabled." So, for two decades, Dick would hoist his son into the special wheelchair, tie up his running shoes, and take off for any of a thousand destinations. In the other story, the father would do anything to get his son back to a father's home. For us, it's our Father in heaven who has a special place in his heart with our names on it and sees us, locked in the jail cell of despair, sin, regret, pain, sorrow, loneliness and fear. He runs to us, longing to move our mountain and give us a robe fit for a king.

So, what possesses a dad to go to this length? Endless, measureless, boundless, fearless, courageous love. Take a minute to read Luke 15 and think about the dad who ran for his son, all in the name of love.

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