

# My Father's Lesson

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I picture him standing in the church superintendent's office, the grim man threatening to fire my father from his pastorate in the small town of Live Oak if he continued to attend the interdenominational prayer group that *spoke in tongues*. With two small children and a third on the way, my father must have had balls to look that man straight in the eye and tell him to go to hell, that he'd rather resign than resist his own heart. So he gathered my pregnant mother, my brother, and me, put us all in the car, and headed south, not knowing where to go, with no job, no home, and only a few dollars in his pocket. Somewhere along the Pacific Coast Highway he woke in a cheap motel at 4 AM and heard a small voice say, *Go east*, so he obeyed, eventually pulling into the beaten town of Turlock in the dusty San Joaquin Valley, where he went to see an old Navy buddy named Carl and said, *I need a job and a house*. Carl said he'd hook him up with the school superintendent the next morning, because they were hiring teachers. And my father walked outside to see Carl's neighbors loading furniture into a truck and asked, *Is this house for rent?* And the landlady said, *Why yes it is. These tenants are moving out.* And just like that I had my first lesson as a young boy that sometimes all you've got is balls and faith. That a voice will speak to you in the dark of morning with your one cup of coffee, your single tank of gas, and say, *Go east*. And that you follow.