

LEAVE A LEGACY

Proverbs 7:20

I would like for us to image for a moment that you have just walked into a church to attend a funeral service

- Loved ones are standing in front of the casket as friends pass by for the last time.
- Some of the people who have already taken their seats are wiping tears from their eyes. It is a very somber moment.

The funeral service begins and the minister steps to the podium to begin his eulogy. As he does ... you look over at the family and realize it is your family. **This is your funeral.**

The minister begins by expressing his feeling of appreciation of your life. But you recognize that the minister's words are pretty generic and impersonal. The same words could be said for just about anyone. **BUT THEN** he asks if any of the family would like to say something ...

- Your spouse gets up to speak ... what does he or she say?
- Your children are next ... what do they say?

All you can do is sit and listen. And you hang on every word that comes out of their mouths.

These are the most important sentences that your ears will ever hear anyone speak about you. Your lasting success as a spouse and parent is measured by what they say.

- What kind of husband, wife, father or mother would you like their words to reflect?
- What character would you like them to have seen in you?
- What difference would you like to have made in their lives?

What will your family say when you are no longer here? What will you leave behind? What will be your legacy?

Listen friends ... the greatest legacy that you could ever leave your family ... or anyone as far as that matters ... is a good, solid, spiritual legacy!

Solomon puts it this way in **PROVERBS 20:7 ...** ⁷ **The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them**

What kind of legacy are you going to leave?

Did you know that when you pass away that there are only four things that you are going to leave behind? ...

1 ... You Will Leave Memories

They usually start out like this ... “Remember when ...”

- Remember when Don Smalley would bring his pork rinds to church dinners?
- Remember when Ron Brown would talk to his golf ball when it was not going where he wanted it to?
- Remember when Sue Niquette and Mike would get up here and sing a special to Gaither tapes?

Good memories are a great thing to leave behind ... it is a way that we can relive moments we have had with those who have passed on. But memories are not the greatest things we can leave.

2 ... You Will Leave Souvenirs

- This head of Christ carved out of wood ... and this wooden Calvary piece here on the communion table are souvenirs left behind by Dan Pierce.
- Letters, postcards, pictures, mementos—all are left to remind our family that we lived on this earth.

We have a shelf that runs clear across one wall in our back room. Almost everything on that shelf is connected to family. Something that reminds us of them ... some kind of souvenir.

BUT ... as great as souvenirs are ... they still are not the greatest things we can leave behind.

3 ... You Will Leave Trophies!

Things that you have accomplished while you were living ...

- Maybe it's a business that you created
- Maybe it's awards you received for baked goods at the State Fair.
- Maybe it's an estate worth thousands of dollars.

Trophies are great ... BUT still not the greatest thing you can leave behind.

4 ... You Will Leave A Legacy

Listen friends ... eventually memories will fade and souvenirs and trophies will be lost, stolen or sold at garage sales ... or spent. **The only thing that you leave behind that will live on is your legacy!**

Your legacy is something handed down from one generation to the next. It might include money and property ... but it is far bigger than that ... It includes traits, habits, talents, attitudes, and character.

I like the way that Paul Meyer's defines legacy in his book Unlocking Your Legacy: *Everything you are and possess today, whether good or bad, is your legacy.*

So what do you want to leave your spouse, children, grandchildren? What will be your legacy?

Let me give you a few suggestions that would make your legacy worth leaving for those who follow ...

1. LEAVE A VITAL RELATIONSHIP

I know that this seems obvious—but it needs to be said.

You see when it's all said and done-- Amber and Brandon will not remember my sermons, but my connection with them. They will remember if I valued them ... if they were important to dad. Parents/ G-parents, your children and g-children need to know that they matter to you. And one of the ways of doing that is spending time with them!

I've seen a lot of fathers put off their day to day involvement with their children thinking that they'll make up for it later with some nice gesture. So they buy their kids expensive presents on big days--like birthdays, graduation, even marriage. They think these things will make up for their

lack of day to day involvement. I want to tell you something ... it doesn't work that way. Real parenting is expressed in day to day activities.

COLOSSIANS 3:21 ... Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

One of the quickest ways to make your children bitter is to put them on the back burner. Mom and Dad ... they want a relationship with you and ... not only do they want a relationship with you ... they need a relationship with you! You cannot pass on a good legacy unless you invest in those kids on a day-to-day basis.

Let your family know that you are committed to them by spending time with them.

- Share stories with them about your own childhood ... let them see you as a real person with hurts and disappointments.
- Let your family know that you are always approachable ... that they have access to you at any time.
- Have fun with your family ... do the things they like to do. It may not be the things that you really want to do ... but do them anyway!

I will guarantee you that the end result ... the legacy ... will make that little bit of a sacrifice worth it all!

Build the kind of relationship with your kids that they feel free to come to you with problems they face. The kind of relationship that they are not afraid to ask you the tough questions.

You are choosing right now what you are going to leave your kids ... even if they are already out of the nest ... you are still their parent.

- Will it be a listening ear they will get from you ... or a judgmental mouth?
- Will they know you love them because you are there for them ... or will they be left wondering?

2 ... LEAVE A GODLY EXAMPLE

TITUS 2:7-8a ... ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned

Paul instructed Titus, a leader in the early church, to always set the example himself. He couldn't ask his people to be what he was not willing to be. Parents ... as Christians ... we are called to set a Godly example for all those who follow us. Just as Titus was to lead by example the churches in Crete ... friends we are to lead by example the family God has blessed us with.

Parents/G-parents, we are walking object lessons of Who God is to our children ... our children are watching us. One of the greatest things you can pass on to your children is your modeling Christ. Few things will damage your children more than observing you not practice what you preach.

- Parents, if you tell your kids that it is important to worship God on Sunday and go to church and yet keep finding excuses not to go yourself ... by your actions you are teaching your kids that's it really not all that important.
- Parents, if you teach your children to respect other people and yet by example don't respect your own spouse--you are sending out mixed messages.) Back up your words with your actions. Be a godly example of truth and honesty and fairness--you are to be the teacher and model of those virtues to your children.
- We need to convey to our children that our time with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ is important. They need to see us open up our Bible, they need to see us bow our head in prayer, they need to see us write out a tithe check. They need to see us in church on Sunday morning.

Do you realize that what you say and think about the church is what your kids and grandkids will say and think about the church? (Are you going to pass down to your kids a critical spirit about ministers and the church or are you going to pass down a positive spirit ... full of faith in Christ and in His church?)

3 ... LEAVE A CONNECTION TO CHRIST

1 CORINTHIANS 3:6-7 ... I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

- I want all of us to pass down to our children a connection to Christ. But I realize just like Paul did in **1 CORINTHIANS** that I can't control that. I can plant Godly seeds in their lives and that's what we are all called to do ... but I cannot control whether that seed takes root and grows.

It's scary to be a parent ... we have no guarantee that our children /g-children will turn out the way we want them to. They will make their own choices. Sometimes they will disappoint us and sometimes they will surprise us with things they accomplish. I pray that they will see in our life a connection to Christ and desire it in their own life. That life that is in them is something we can influence and shape but something we can never control. But the odds are against them if we do not plant godly seeds into their lives.

CONCLUSION

Memories, souvenirs and trophies ... those are all descent things to leave our family ... But the most important thing ... the lasting thing ... will be our legacy! It that will continue for generations.

We are leaving a legacy—whether it is intentional or not. Those who are intentional about it usually leave a better legacy behind.

So ... we come again to the question we asked earlier ... what will you leave behind? What will your legacy be?

When your casket is closed and the service is over and the cars leave the graveside ... what will you leave behind? What will your spouse ... or your kids or grandkids be left with? My prayer is that you will leave a good, solid , spiritual legacy that leads those who follow you to the gates of heaven itself!