

## **How do I leave a legacy?**

Selected Passages

Series “RESET”

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This week, we are dealing with this **MUST-ANSWER** question in our *RESET* series. It's the title of the message as well: **How do I leave a legacy?**

Now, for our context, you could format this question in a number of different ways. We could ask it like this:

- Are you making a difference with your life?
- Are you making your life count?
- Are you having an impact?
- Are you making a kingdom difference?

You could put it in the form of a picture – Is there a positive ripple effect to your life?

Now, I stress the word “positive” because whether you like it or not and whether you are even thinking about it or not, you will leave a legacy after you are gone - the question is will it be for good or for bad?

**Illus. Two funerals** – I've been thinking about this an awful lot lately. Last week, I had the privilege of attending two funerals for long-time members of Champion Forest. I use the word, “privilege” purposefully because that is how I felt after leaving the “celebration services” that were given in their honor.

You know, as a Pastor I attend and lead many of these types of services. And it's always interesting to me because they are kind of like Forrest Gump's bag of chocolates – sometimes you never know what you are going to get!

People share...they tell about their loved ones, and it's easy to see in a person's death what they lived for...what was important to them...what they left behind as it relates to legacy.

Last week, I sat in awe listening to the children and grandchildren of Fred Adam as they talked about the impact and influence, he had on their life.

Fred was a long-time deacon here...served in various capacities through the years and I learned through his memorial service that he like short sermons! Ha!

He told his grandkids that no one got saved after the 20<sup>th</sup> minute! I'm going to try to remember that!

Faith was the cornerstone of his life and family was SO important to him. You could visibly see and heard via the testimony of his family that three generations have been affected in a positive way because of the way he lived his life – that’s legacy.

The same was true for Charlotte Jester. She and Bob, were married for 67.5 years – coincidentally, the same amount of time as Fred and Lynnette Adam. Charlotte was on the building committee that helped relocate the church to this property. She was active in mission’s ministry. She and Bob met at Bible Memory Camp when she was 14!

They traveled the world together with Bob’s job and wherever his job took them, they went on mission – if there wasn’t a local church where they were, they helped start one. At her service, it was the same thing as Fred.

She had multiple generations of family sitting there, honoring her life.... five children, seventeen grandchildren, 30 great-grandchildren, and four great, great grandchildren – ALL mourning her passing for sure, but also celebrating the difference she made in each of their lives.

It was beautiful to see and again, it was this picture lived out for all to see – a ripple effect! Fred and Charlotte left a legacy.

THIS is what we’re talking about today. We’re answering this question: **How do I leave a legacy?**

Now, what is MOST important when it comes to legacy is that our faith is passed on. We have here at our church what we call our FOCUS Priorities. We introduced these two years ago and have said that this is what we are going to be about as a church.

I’ll put them on the screen for you and along with them is what we call the “driving question” behind them. We show this in our new members class and refer to it often:

## **FOCUS PRIORITIES**

- 1. Making Disciples (Great Commission) – When I stand before the Lord, will I be happy with what I have to present to him?**
- 2. Loving our Community (Great Commandment) – If Champion Forest disappeared tomorrow, would anyone in the community know, care, or miss us?**
- 3. Strengthening the Church (Great Commitment) – How are we stewarding the gifting, resources, and influence God has graciously given us?**

The first FOCUS Priority is making disciples...that is passing our faith on. And this gets to the heart of legacy. At the end of the day, THIS is what is MOST important!

You can pass your love for cooking or hunting on...you can pass your affection for a sports team or a hobby on, but the legacy that matters is have you passed your faith on!

Turn with me to 2 Timothy. Paul is writing from a Roman prison. This is the last letter he will ever write that we know of...and he pens some words to his “son in the faith”, Timothy who was leading the church in Ephesus.

**Illus. Future series** – Future series alert! When we get out of this *RESET* series in a few weeks, we are going to take 12 weeks (all the way to the summer) to walk through the book of Ephesians.

Paul planted the church in Ephesus and installed Timothy as its pastor.

Now, Paul and Timothy have had quite the background and relationship. They had met some 20 years earlier when Paul was on his second missionary journey visiting the city of Lystra.

Timothy had a mother and grandmother that had invested their faith in him...talk about leaving a legacy. Listen to what Paul writes in:

**2 Tim. 1:5** – “**I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.**”

Paul and Timothy ultimately traveled together. Worked together. He mentored Timothy...trained Timothy...and in this, his final letter, he gives Timothy his heart!

Listen both to the affection and the challenge that Paul gives Timothy in some of these last words he would ever write to him.

**2 Tim. 2:1-2** – “**You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,<sup>2</sup> and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.**”

Paul is about to step off the world’s stage. It won’t be long until he is led out under the reign of Nero and beheaded for his faith in Christ.

Now, just put yourself in Timothy’s sandals. You’ve always had Paul to look up to...he always had someone in Paul that had his back!

If questions came up or there were concerns...or there was a church dispute or argument ensuing, Timothy ALWAYS had Paul to lean on to write to and get his questions answered.

He gets this letter, begins to read it and as he is reading it, there is a sense that this is it. Neither Paul nor Timothy is certain this is the case, but there is FOR SURE a feeling these may be the last words I’m ever going to hear from my mentor...my sensei...my father in the faith.

And what is a portion of what Paul tells him? Be strong “IN Christ” AND pass on the faith to others – (v. 2) – “what you have heard from me ENTRUST to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

The word “entrust” here means to deposit for safekeeping. And in this, you see four generations Paul list out.

He said, “the gospel and all its implications” – we could just say the teaching of scripture – this is was entrusted to Paul...he entrusted it to Timothy, who is to entrust it to “faithful men”, who will entrust it to others.

You see the ripple effect? Another image we could show would be a chain link.

THIS is what a legacy is all about! It’s making sure we live in such a way that there is a positive ripple effect into the future...that we understand we are one link in a bigger chain!

Faithfulness to Christ multiplies (at least it should!) What we receive we are to release.

How about another picture that will help show us what this look like? Our life is a relay race and legacy is all about passing the baton of faith and making sure that it never gets dropped!

Now, in the context of 2 Timothy, Paul knows that Timothy has his hands full in leading the church in Ephesus. There were false teachers rising from within the church...there was the constant threat of persecution coming from outside the church.

This is a letter of encouragement to Timothy to stay strong, to stay faithful, and to stay focused.

In the midst of challenges...and in the midst of uncertainties, Paul was telling “Timothy, keep the main thing, the main thing – pass the faith on! What’s been entrusted to you, entrust to others, so that they can entrust it others.”

THIS is what is legacy is all about? It’s about passing our faith on! Legacy is NOT about our name living on, but the name of Christ going forward!

Our driving question behind the first FOCUS Priority – “When you stand before God, will you be happy with what you have to present to him?”

Listen...if there are NOT people that you have passed your faith onto...if there are NOT people that will be in heaven because of your life and investment in the Kingdom, I question whether or not you will be happy with what you have to present to him?

The kingdom of heaven and our eternal future is about WAY more than just showing up for it! We probably need to do a series on heaven, and what it really is – may change the way we think about things as it relates to what we are living for AND leaving behind!

So, let’s answer our question, “How do I leave a legacy?” How do we make sure that our faith is passed on...that we entrust to others what has been entrusted to us?

I want to give you three observations I have made through the years of people I know that have left a legacy of faith. I've seen this in the lives of people like Fred Adam and Charlotte Jester and I've experienced personally in people who have invested in me.

As I make these observations, we'll talk more about HOW we can ensure we're leaving a legacy.

Observation #1 of people who have left a legacy...we can learn from them:

### **1. They give their time**

You can't pass your faith onto someone else if you don't spend time with them. At the heart of discipleship is time. Paul had 20 years with Timothy. Jesus spent three years intentionally investing in his disciples.

Think about all the disciples shared in! They traveled with him...they listened to him teach. They experienced his miracles – ALL as a result of him inviting them to a relationship to spend time together.

I thought about one of these observations that I'm giving you be about showing love, but the reality is TIME shared is love! It's been said that you spell LOVE, T.I.M.E.

So, I ask you today who are you spending time with on a consistent basis...investing in them and helping them to be more like Jesus?

This is what discipleship is. I've given this definition of discipleship over the years...let's not complicate things!

**Discipleship – a developmental process whereby believers intentionally pass on to others what they know, have experienced, and are learning so that others become more like Jesus.**

Spiritual growth is a process, it's not an event. And when we disciple someone, we are simply passing on to them what we know, have experienced, or learned.

I put the word "intentional" in my definition because it denotes this is something we are purposefully thinking about...it's a marked decision...a volitional choice we are making to invest in others!

It should start in your home with your children and grandchildren. Listen to the words of the psalmist:

**Psalm 78:4, 6-7 – “We will not hide them (the commands/deeds of the Lord) from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done...that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,<sup>7</sup>so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”**

When I'm talking about leaving a legacy, I'm talking mainly about being famous in your home! Legacy is NOT about your name being remembered – most of us in here don't know the name of our great-great grandfather!

In 100 years, chances are, our name will be forgotten, but our legacy can live on AND this is where making disciples starts – in the home! This is Deut. 6!

Deut. 6:1-9 – the focus is on the nuclear family...family was the glue that held societies together. And what held families together - the faith they passed on!

**Deut. 6:1-9 – “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules - that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, <sup>2</sup> that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, (see the generational impact...the ripple effect...the chain...the passing of the baton) by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. <sup>3</sup> Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”**

It starts in the home, but discipleship is of course not limited to it.

Jesus said in his Great Commission – these were his parting words – and it wasn't to the religious professionals of the day...it was to his disciples...those he invested time in!

**Matt. 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

We ought to be going after people...our head ought to be a swivel at who God brings in our path that we can spend time with and intentionally lead to Jesus or teach and show them the way of Jesus!

So, who is it that God may have in your life right now? It may be someone in your life group or people in your office...or it's that student that's a few years younger than you that you just need to say, “When can we start meeting? How about for an hour every other week?”

**Illus. High School students** – invest in a junior high kid, sing up and serve at VBS – give your faith away (1 Tim. 4)

You can see in our definition of discipleship that how long you have been following Jesus does not matter! Sometimes we make the excuse and think that “I don’t know enough...or I’m not ready...I wouldn’t know where to begin” when it comes to discipleship.

Well, you start with what you are learning currently...what you’ve experienced as a follower of Jesus. One of the fundamental ways we grow and mature as a Christian is bringing others with us.

If you trusted Jesus last week, you know enough to share with someone else...pass on to someone else:

- that you realized you were a sinner...
- that Jesus can save you by placing your trust in him...
- You know enough about his love that you can share with someone about his forgiveness and his grace.

If you are spending time alone with Jesus, intentionally passing on what you learned to someone else in the context of a friendship...a relationship – that is discipleship!

If we are believers in Christ, we are a product of someone investing their time in us...and what we receive, we need to release and pass onto someone else.

**Pic #1** – Joyce Shoebridge

**Pic #2** – Jeff Luce

**Pic #3** – Mike Fechner

It’s life on life – it’s giving people your time – that’s the greatest gift you could ever give and this leads to a second observation that I’ve made in people who have left a legacy is:

## **2. They lead by example**

In other words, they didn’t just talk a big game, they lived out what they said they believed! You know, discipleship is both “caught and taught”.

Let me explain it this way:

Jesus’s way of discipleship was life on life. He combined the Greek model of discipleship which appealed to the mind – think Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. It was more enlightenment and education. – this idea that you sit still, while I instill – it was asking questions to make one think and wrestle with issues before coming to a conclusion.

Jesus certainly used this form of discipleship – we see it in places like the Sermon on the Mount or when he gives the Olivet discourse...it’s a “come gather around and let me teach you.”

**Illus. Life group teachers (three services)** – this is what you do...and as a result we need more disciplers!

But Jesus didn't just teach and use this Greek model of discipleship, he combined it with the Hebrew model which was life on life. It was more of an apprenticeship if you will, and you received on the job training (carpenter).

He taught, but he also wanted his disciples to follow and watch him so that how he lived was caught as well.

It wasn't just information that Jesus was passionate about infusing into the life of his disciples, it was information for the purpose of transformation.

He was not just TELLING them how to live, he was SHOWING them how to live! (residency program)

Certainly, this is true for the apostle, Paul. He could challenge Timothy to work and serve as unto the Lord like a "good soldier" who suffers well and doesn't get entangled in civilian affairs (2 Tim. 2:3-4) because he had modeled it before him.

Paul could challenge Timothy to be like an "athlete that competes according to the rules (2 Tim. 2:5) and like a "hardworking farmer" who is up early and toiling late because he had lived that way before Timothy.

Listen to this: What he was calling Timothy to...he was speaking out of his own integrity! There is power in that!

When you are living by example, you can challenge those you are investing in and they will or more apt to listen and take in what you are saying because they SEE the way you live!

So, I want you to think about this - Who is following you...shaping their life after you? Who are you saying to, like Paul said to the church in Corinth, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ?" (1 Cor. 11:1)

Who are you intentionally passing on what you know, have experienced, and learned so that that a person/persons becomes more like Jesus. I'll show the definition of discipleship again:

**Discipleship – a developmental process** (that's important! Discipleship doesn't happen overnight! It's a process and when we work with and serve and disciple often times it will be three steps forward and two back because Satan is alive and well and this is what he doesn't want - us taking Jesus's command serious! He knows when we do, lives are changed...he does not want this firecracker being lit in your life!) **whereby believers intentionally pass on to others what they know, have experienced, and are learning so that others become more like Jesus.**

This is how you leave a legacy. What kind of example are you setting? For your family?

- Do they see that worship is a priority?
- Do they know that God's Word is important to you (funerals)



- Do they see you investing in the Kingdom?

**Illus. CF Foundation** – We received an unexpected phone call last year regarding one of our members that had passed away. (tell story – David Grasshoff) ...that will be seed money in starting a Champion Forest Foundation.

Do you realize if we receive 5% off of a million-dollar endowment, that's 50,000 dollars a year until Jesus comes to be used for ministry!

We're going to begin this foundation and ask you to consider tithing part of your estate or will to the Kingdom...and on your way into eternity you can lay up even more treasure in heaven, because in giving to this foundation your gift will continue to spin off resources to make a difference in people's lives long after you are gone. That's exciting!

- Are you leading by example in the way you serve?
- Are you walking the walk or just talking the talk?
- At your office or school, or business you are in, do you live your life in such a way that people would want to follow you?

Those that I know that have made a major impact in others and left a legacy, they led by example. In fact, it wasn't so much what the person said, as the actions of their life that created a ripple effect that is remembered forever.

Those that leave a legacy. Just my observation. They give their time. They lead by example. And then thirdly:

### 3. **They finish well**

Again, Paul models this. He even writes in **2 Tim. 4:6-7** – **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering (he sees his impending death is a sacrifice to God), and the time of my departure has come.** (That word “departure” there it's a picture of breaking camp and going home...of pulling up the anchor – Paul knows there is a transition for him coming. And look at what he tells Timothy) **<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”**

The gospel that was entrusted to him...he safeguarded it. He preserved and he has passed it onto Timothy. Paul finished...and he finished well.

Listen, it's not how you start that matters...NONE of us are perfect and listen, if you've messed things up along the way, you by God's grace can get back on track.

How you finish matters, and typically people who leave a legacy finish well.

I've showed you images, but better than that, let me show you this in real life.

If you are Christ-follower in the room today, it's because someone impacted your life...you are one of the ripples of their life...you are one of the links on the chain...someone passed the baton of faith onto you.

Outside of my parents giving me their love and instilling in me their faith (now, it's a personal faith), I'm a product of discipleship, and I want to close sharing with you a personal story of some people who discipled me...I'm a ripple effect of their life and I hope in sharing these stories it inspires you to start the ripple effect in others.

How do I leave a legacy? You're leaving one. The question is, "Is it a good one? Is your life pointing others to Jesus and making others more like him?"

Let's pray.

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Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.