

Leaving A Godly Legacy III – A Family Legacy

Jokes: An elderly gentleman was having a great time at a senior citizen's seminar when a young woman asked him what kind of plans he had for the future. The 75 year old man said, "Honey, at my age, I don't even buy green bananas."

George Burns, an expert on growing old, said you know your getting old when:

- The gleam in your eyes is from the sun hitting your bifocals
- You get winded playing chess
- Your children start to look middle-aged
- you sit in a rocking chair but you can't get it going
- dialing long distance wears you out
- the little gray-haired woman you help across the street is your wife
- your knees buckle but your belt won't

1. Introduction

- a. We have been talking about leaving something behind for eternity, something that will last, more than just a memory, an etched gravestone, or a few treasured family photos.
 - i. We call that which we leave behind a legacy.
 - ii. One of the most important responsibilities as your pastor is to help you leave a legacy that lasts; to make your life count for something more than the possessions you accumulate; to live in such a way that this world is changed because you touched someone's life.
 1. It is my hope and prayer that each of us would leave multiple legacies in the lives we touch.
 2. This week we will learn how we can leave a lasting family legacy.

2. Blessings and Curses

- a. As I was looking through the bible to understand family legacies, I came back to Abraham and to his sons and his grandsons.
- b. Abraham had two sons: One by Hagar (Ishmael) and one by Sarai (Isaac).
- c. Abraham cared about both of them.
 - i. Genesis 17:17-22 *Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will*

bear to you by this time next year." When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him."

- ii. Both of them received legacies, Ishmael became a great nation, but God chose Isaac for an everlasting covenant.
 1. Muslims believe that Ishmael is the chosen son of Abraham and that they are his descendants.
 2. But the Jews and the bible (which predates the Koran and Mohammed by well over 1500 years) makes it clear that Isaac is clearly the chosen son.

3. Isaac has his own legacy to pass on:

- a. Genesis 27:1-4 *"When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons- your quiver and bow-and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."*
 - i. Isaac prepares to pass on the family legacy to his oldest son Esau. (eldest by a few minutes).
 1. This legacy or blessing was a very important part of their lives, it was where they found out what they were getting in dad's will as well as they believed in the power of the words spoken over them.
 2. The Hebrew word for Blessing is "berakah" which meant to "transmit or endow the power of God's goodness and favor" through the spoken word with the laying on of hands."(Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family*, Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970).
 3. These words were often prophetic in their nature and result in their fulfillment in the child's life. In Heb 11:20a (Amplified) *With eyes of faith Isaac, looking far into the future, invoked blessings upon Jacob and Esau.*
 4. A blessing from the parent essentially asks for God's favor upon the child.
 - ii. I don't need to tell you the rest of the story because if you know your bibles, Rebecca, Jacob and Esau's mother overhears Isaac's instructions. She favors her younger son and they conspire to trick Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob.
 - iii. To make a long story short, Jacob and Rebecca succeeded and Jacob got the blessing intended for his brother. Listen to Isaac's words:
- b. Genesis 27:28-29 *"Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness- an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."*
 - i. Isaac gives the blessing he intended for Esau to Jacob. (keep in mind this isn't simple subterfuge, years ago Esau had so lightly regarded his father's legacy that he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew.

- ii. Listen to what happens when Esau finds out:
- c. Genesis 27:30-40 *After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."*
 - i. *His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau." Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him-and indeed he will be blessed!" When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me-me too, my father!" But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"*
 - ii. *Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?" Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.*
 - iii. *His father Isaac answered him, "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck."*
- d. There is a valuable principle illustrated here. **A blessing (or a curse) is irrevocable.**
 - i. In other words, you cannot take back the words that you speak, nor can you undo the damage or good that they do.
 - ii. When we as parents speak words upon our children, "You are worthless" or "You are the joy of my life" and the words that we speak have powerful effects.
 - 1. I cannot tell you how many people I have counseled who are still reeling from words that their mother or father spoke to them carelessly or in anger.
 - iii. In fact, in our study on Sunday nights "Search for Significance" we talk about the lies that we have to disarm that we have believed about ourselves.
 - iv. The truth is that God has given each one of us a brand new legacy as a part of our becoming a new creation that has completely disarmed and freed us from the curses of our past.
- e. The Bible teaches that parental influence shapes our lives' legacies.
 - i. In everyday life, we see a high percentage of drug users have parents who abuse drugs, and a high percentage of dishonest children have dishonest parents.
 - ii. Abuse, promiscuity, dishonesty, favoritism and selfishness are examples of sinful patterns that influence several generations, until someone succeeds in breaking the pattern. The ministry of Prison Fellowship, for instance, has a mentoring program for children of prisoners, in hope of breaking the generational pattern of the criminal lifestyle.

- iii. More than that, God promised in 1 John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*"
- iv. If we want to be forgiven and changed, we need to confess our sins and trust God to restore us to a right relationship with Himself.
- v. If we want to break sinful generational patterns, we need to confess our sins to God and to those we've wronged.
- vi. Denial, rationalization or acceptance of sinful generational patterns will only cause our children and their children to repeat the same patterns and leave a negative legacy.

4. What will you pass on?

- a. The legacy we leave our family is found in four "C's:"
 - i. (**Character, Conduct, Convictions, and Chaff.**)
- b. **CHARACTER** - is core to the legacy we leave. What we are is what remains. If you are a phony on the outside it will eventually become evident. The sad thing is that it may become evident at your funeral, when it is too late to change it.
 - i. You can be a great accountant and still cheat on your taxes.
 - ii. You can be a successful politician and not tell the truth.
 - iii. You can be a great surgeon with the scalpel, but you can be a drunk at night.
 - 1. Maybe you have watched the acclaimed drama series "House" in which a brilliant physician is addicted to Vicodin and is in danger of being prosecuted. He is helped by his coworkers and subordinates as well as by his supervisors because of his brilliance, despite their being conflicted over the ethics of his addiction.
 - iv. People in the church think that you can do "whatever you want" and still be a "good Christian."
 - 1. Can I be a "good pastor" regardless of how I live in my "personal life?"
 - v. You can't live like the devil Monday through Saturday and expect to have God's blessing on Sunday.
 - 1. How we live our lives, the things we say and do, matters to God.
 - 2. It should matter to us also.
 - vi. **God isn't interested in you just having a good reputation, He is interested in building your character!** Let me tell you why:
 - 1. Reputation is what you try to live up to; Character is what you are.
 - 2. Reputation is what precedes you; Character is what remains after you have gone.
 - 3. Reputation is made in a moment; Character is built in a lifetime.
 - 4. Reputation is what men say about you at your funeral; Character is what is said about you before the throne of God.
 - 5. Reputation is what men think you are. Character is what God knows you to be.
 - a. Which would you prefer to be known for?
 - b. Character is the only legacy we will leave.
 - vii. What does God know you to be? What legacy will you choose, superficial or lasting?

1. Many years ago a small Jewish boy asked his father, "Why must we surrender our Jewish faith and start to attend Lutheran services here in Germany?" The father replied, "Son, we must abandon our faith so that people will accept us and support our business adventures!"
 - a. The young lad never got over his disappointment and bitterness. His faith in his father and in his religion were crushed. When the lad left Germany he went to England to study at the British Museum where he formed his philosophies for life. From those intensive investigations he wrote a book that changed the world called, "The Communist Manifesto. From that book one-third of the world fell under the spell of Marxist-Lenist ideology. The name of that little boy was Karl Marx. His father's hypocritical legacy impacted billions of people.
- c. **CONDUCT** – How you live affects your legacy
 - i. Illustration: In Simi Valley, California, June 11, 2004, at the casket side of former president Ronald Reagan, Michael Reagan recounted that on a flight from Washington to California in 1988, his father told him "about his love of God, his love of Christ as his Savior." "I did not know then what it all meant, but I certainly, certainly know now," Michael Reagan said. "I can't think of a better gift for a father to give a son, and I hope to honor my father by giving my son Cameron and my daughter Ashley that very same gift he gave to me" (Baptist Press, June 15, 2004), making reference to the Gospel of Christ.
 - ii. Our kids learn not from what we say but what we do. Values are caught not taught. We can say we believe things but unless we live them, our children will live just like us:
 1. You might have heard the cliché, "He is a chip off the old block," usually referring to how the son is like his father. A less often heard statement is about how a daughter is like her mother, "She is a thread off the old bag."
 2. The truth remain, our kids will be just like us.
 3. **Change yourself and you will change your children's destiny!**
- d. **CONVICTIONS** – what is it that you hold dear? Do your children really know what is important to you?
 - i. Often, when wills are shared while parents are still alive, children are surprised to learn some of the things that are important to their parents, and parents are surprised that their children didn't know how strongly they felt about these things.
 1. I have found out that sometimes it is only during a meeting about a eulogy that children learn how their parents met or what they cared about the most.
 - ii. There is more to the challenge of mortality than the giving away of goods. And there is more to the challenge of facing death than what happens to our bodies.
 - iii. We have another kind of gift we can give.
 1. It is a spiritual inheritance, not a physical one.
 2. It is the legacy of our life stories, of the things we learned and want to pass on.

- iv. In Joshua 4:6, Joshua built a memorial to commemorate an important event, God parting the waters of the Jordan so that the entire nation could cross on dry land.
 1. Joshua 4:6-7“... *In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.*”
 - a. You notice it says, “when your children ask you.”
 - b. It assumes that if there wasn't a memorial, the parents would forget to tell their children and deprive their children of an incredible legacy.
 - c. We take the God events in our lives for granted, but our children will lose the blessing of seeing the Hand of God through our stories unless we choose to pass them down.
 2. Has God ever healed your body?
 - a. Tell the stories to your children!
 3. Has God ever delivered you from a habit, an addiction or a destructive lifestyle?
 - a. Tell the stories to your children!
 4. Has God pulled you out of the pit?
 - a. Tell the stories to your children!
 5. Has God ever met a financial need for you?
 - a. Tell the stories to your children!
 6. Think about leaving a legacy by passing on THE STORIES of how God met your needs!
 - a. **BUILD A MEMORIAL! (written or on video)**
 - b. We interviewed my dad on video several years before he died. He have done the same for my wife's dad – our children and their children deserve to share in this legacy.
 - c. Our kids may not be interested when they are younger, they may not even see the value in it, but when they have children of their own, they want to know...and then it is too late.
 7. Make it possible for your children and their children to know what made you tick.
- v. Too often, we really don't get to know our parents or grandparents until it is too late. We only have fading memories of their lives but no solid statements of what made them the way they were.
 1. I urge you to try something this week. The end of the year is closing in, Christmas is coming up. Why not give a gift of a “family blessing” to your family this year.
 2. Jews have been doing this for centuries. The way they do it is to take stock of their lives and look at what is really important to them and write it in the form of a letter.
 3. They list stuff like:

- a. Dreams, aspirations, and goals they held dear in life.
- b. The things they have treasured or valued
- c. The memories that they hold dear of their lives and loves.
- d. Their hopes for their children and their children's children.
 - i. Focus on events or mistakes, people or places, causes you care about, the world from which you came, the world you would like to see. Let not the journey of your life be lost in the veil of time.
 - ii. Share the stories of God's work in your life, His protection, provision and miracles!
- vi. At one of the concentration camps liberators found letters from the dead and dying to their relatives and children that contained these things that I have been talking about.
 - 1. Most of us don't even think about doing something like that until we are in our advanced years, but those who wrote these letters were in their 20's and 30's. They faced the end of their days and wanted their descendants to receive a blessing from their lives. They didn't want their lives to fade away into the fog of the past.
 - 2. Video clip of Virginia Thompson.
- e. **CHAFF** - The Psalmist tells us what will become of those who don't intentionally live so as to have a legacy to pass on.
 - i. Psalm 1:1-6 (NIV) [1] *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. [2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. [4] Not so the wicked! **They are like chaff that the wind blows away.** [5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. [6] For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
 - ii. The contrast between the righteous and the wicked is as noticeable as the difference between night and day. The legacy of the righteous will remain while the legacy of the wicked will vanish and come to nothing.
 - iii. The legacy of the wicked is the chaff; it blows away in the wind. The chaff is destroyed in the fire. The legacy of the wicked will be lost forever.
 - 1. Everyone leaves a legacy of one kind or another. You see the question is more than just, "How do you want to be remembered?" but "How do you want to be remembered by God?" You don't have to be a bad person to be classified as among the wicked.
 - iv. The "wicked" refers to anyone outside of God's promises or relationship.
 - v. It is anyone who rejects God's love and rule in their life.
 - 1. If you want to be god of your own life, the bible places you among the wicked.

2. You can believe God exists, but if you live on your own terms, with yourself at the center of the universe, then you are called “wicked.”
 3. There remains only judgment for you.
- vi. But I have good news for you. God sent His Son, one long ago Christmas day, to be born into this world, for the expressed purpose of taking your sins and the punishment that they deserve, so that you could be forgiven and have everlasting life solely by placing your faith in Jesus Christ. When you do that you receive the forgiveness God offers. He will take the weight off of your shoulders.
 - f. This week my wife Jennifer got a letter from one of her sisters. Jennifer was the first in her family to come to know Jesus Christ as her Savior. When she came to know Christ, she claimed a promise in the bible that said, “If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, you and your whole household.” She believed that if she was faithful and shared God’s love with her family, that her entire family would come to know Christ. Her sister wrote, “Take care and pray for Michelle and Bruce and their families. Thank you for all you did when we were younger-without the watering and planting-I would of never found my true Savior.”
5. How will your life end? Our invitation song will be in the form of a moving video, that chronicles a life that begins in joy and ends in grief. Think about the legacy you will leave and decide today to leave one that lasts.
 - a. Let’s pray.