

Leaving a Lasting Legacy May 6, 2018

This past week as I was talking with my Dad our conversation naturally transitioned into some discussion about my Mom. She's easy to talk about because she was easy to talk to. She had a sincere faith in Christ that was contagious in which people gravitated to. Just talking with her you knew where her hope was and how much she loved the Lord. No matter how difficult the day, no matter how much she had endured through her several bouts of cancer, the amputation, the associated phantom pain and so on, she had an abiding faith, an abundant joy, and an enduring love for Christ. In all her difficulties Dad said there were only a few times when the trials weighed so heavily her joy seemed to dim a bit and she would cry. He mentioned that one time while my brother was visiting she asked him why the Lord was leaving her here. Without hesitation, he said "so you can pray for my kids." And she did because that's what she did all the time.

Dad and I talked about their faith. There are a lot of things I could say about both my Mom and Dad. They were hard workers giving everything they had whether it was serving in the church, or at camp. I never heard them complain about working long days or extra days. I never heard Dad complain about being out in sub-zero weather on a Sunday morning helping church groups get their busses or vans started because batteries were dead, while everyone else was in chapel where it was warm. They enjoyed what they did because they did it all for the Lord. They walked by faith.

I could talk about their character, the example that they set for both we as their children or to campers and staff or people in the community or with whom they did business.

All of that was fueled by their faith and a desire to please the Lord in everything striving to be godly in character.

They didn't and still don't have much in the way of earthly goods and when someday Dad passes on to his eternal reward we'll sort through things and divide up those few possessions and memories. But what will be of lasting value is the legacy of faith they have left to their five children and their spouses, nine grandchildren and fifteen great grandchildren with three more on the way. Only the very little ones have not yet trusted Christ as Savior. All the adult children and grandchildren and spouses of each know Christ as Savior. They are leaving a lasting legacy.

Dr. James Dobson, a name many recognize as an advocate for the family, once said "Great beginnings are not as important as how one finishes."

From our passage this morning I want to talk about leaving a lasting legacy of faith that gets passed on from one generation to the next.

We find that in our text. Please turn to II Peter 1:12-15. Peter has spoken candidly about how to know you are saved by exhibiting godly character. As we look at verses 12-15 consider with me three reminders as it relates to leaving a lasting legacy.

- A perpetual reminder
- A persuasive reminder
- A powerful reminder

I. A PERPETUAL REMINDER – v. 12

Our text begins with the word "so" (NIV) or "wherefore" (KJV). It's an adverb that means in the way or manner shown, expressed, indicated or understood as stated or described. This word at the beginning of our text points back to the previous verses. Greek scholar A. T. Robertson writes that these believers had a faith that contributed to a "godliness they are diligently practicing". Peter is going to do his part to make sure that their faith continued to remain strong, visible and passed on to others. He wants to see their godly legacy continue.

Verse 13 says they had a clear perspective.

A. They Had A Clear Perspective – v. 12a

“So I always remind you of these things, even though you know them.”

Sometimes reminders can feel like nagging.

Those of you with grown kids still remember constantly telling your kids to wear a jacket when they went outside or to put a hat on because it was cold.

When they would take a bath you reminded them to wash behind their ears, and to use soap this time.

You reminded them to brush their teeth.

We might remind a spouse about going to the bank or stopping by the Post Office.

Don't forget to call the doctor to schedule that appointment or call the insurance company about that premium increase.

Don't forget about that PTA meeting tonight or dinner at the Smith's at 6.

Don't forget to do this...

Remember to do that...

Robyn's grandmother would sit in the passenger seat and tell her husband how to drive.

Slow down

There's a stop sign coming up

Don't forget your turn signal

You need to turn up here

Sometimes the constant reminders can feel like nagging. Take them for what they are intended to be, a reminder of something.

The story has been told that when Vince Lombardi took over the coaching position for the Green Bay Packers they were a terrible team. Their losing ways continued until one day after another dismal loss Lombardi went into the locker room, held up a football, and said “This is a football”. From that day on his practice strategy was to remind them of the fundamentals of football.

When I left for college Mom wrote a letter reminding me that I represented the Wideman family, the Camp Barakel family, and God's family.

Peter was continually reminding them about their relationship with Christ and the need to continue living a godly example because that was an affirmation to them that they were saved and a demonstration to others of the change in their lives because of Christ.

Folks, if your kids are grown, continue to remind them of how important it is to live out faith even if they aren't walking with the Lord. Your example is a constant reminder.

For those of us who still have children at home, remind them of how important living faith is.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Why did Moses pass on this command?

He did so because of how important it would be to perpetuate faith in and obedience to God.

Every night Mom and Dad had devotions together. They usually listened to J. Vernon McGee on tape and pray. It didn't matter who you were, family or not, whoever was present everyone gathered for devotions.

It was a reminder that faith was important.

When Apple introduced the iPhone in 2006, Nokia had 50% of the world consumer cell phone market and BlackBerry had 49% of the world business cell phone market. Both companies essentially looked at Apple and said their phone was just a toy, a fad. BlackBerry was so confident in its market dominance that it cut its research and development budget by 50% because, "they were so popular that they did not need to innovate anymore." Within five years, that complacency caused both companies to fall from world dominance to corporate insignificance. Regardless of the enterprise - family, church, business, character, or health - complacency can quickly lead to undesirable results.

Consider that in regard to your faith. If we allow complacency to take root, it sends a message to others that we don't take our faith seriously. When we aren't serious the next generation will be less so. Judges 2:6-13

No wonder Peter was so emphatic about his need to continually remind them of living out their faith, a faith he knew was founded on the Word of God. His reminder was continuous. He was eager to make them stronger in the faith.

There are two reasons.

The first reason goes back to I Peter. These believers were experiencing persecution because of their faith. Strong faith would be able to help them withstand the torrent of persecution flung against them. A weak faith would cause them to cave in under the pressure. It would help them to stand firm against the temptation to become a cultural Christian. By that I mean someone who would rather blend in with the culture out of expediency or complacency rather than stand up for what he or she knows to be biblically true. They don't want to appear to be fanatic about their faith.

The second reason we will discover as we continue in our study of II Peter is because of the pressure of false teachers. A strong Christian will be able to discern Biblical truth from error.

Peter is reminding them about how important it is to hold onto that faith and keep it strong.

Research has shown that within an hour after hearing a spoken message, people forget 90%. Reminders are important for retention. We need constant reminders about the faith, to stay sharp.

Not only did they have a clear perspective, they also had a confident faith.

B. They Had a Confident Faith

What was it that Peter saw in them about their faith? "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you have."

Theirs was a faith that not only was founded on the Word of God, but grounded in the Word of God. They were firmly established in the truth. Paul says we are to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in us (Colossians 3:16).

The word "established" means to have a settled condition. Let me suggest that it implies conviction. A conviction is something you will hold to no matter what. Nothing will change your mind.

The wedge of complacency can widen the gap between desire or devotion and defeat. The team who becomes complacent in their lead is the team who is in danger of losing. The New Testament reminds us time and again how important it is to remain ever vigilant in our faith, to be established in the truth of God's Word. That's why it's so important to be in it regularly applying its truth to daily living.

Paul encouraged Timothy to "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..." (I Timothy 4:16)

In II Timothy 3:14, 16-17 Paul tells Timothy to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" because it is God's Word that is able to change you and keep you from going astray as it equips you for godly living.

Like Paul and Peter I will continue to remind you of your faith and the need, the urgency to stand strong in a culture that is doing all it can to erode it. Make it sure.

It was a perpetual reminder.

It was a persuasive reminder.

II. IT WAS A PERSUASIVE REMINDER -
vs. 13-15

Peter reminds them from His own example that our life is temporary.

A. Our Life Is Temporary – vs. 13-14

We are far removed from the longevity of life experienced by folks in Genesis 5, but at the end of each number it says “and they died”. Some folks today make it past 100. But even with advances in medical technology, it’s still not common.

Every day we age.

Every day we grow closer to our last day on earth. We don’t know when that day will be. Only God has measured them and counted them and determined their length. We cannot live one day longer, one heartbeat longer, one breath longer than God has pre-determined. Nothing we do can alter His eternal plans for the length of our days.

While Peter did not know the exact day or time, he knew his days were drawing to a close. In John 21 Jesus told Peter that he would die when he was old. He even told Peter how he would die. Scholars estimate that he is in his 70’s by the time this letter was written. He died by crucifixion somewhere around AD 68. Tradition has him requesting to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as Christ.

In spite of knowing that his life was drawing to a close he remained undaunted about his task. He wasn’t fixated on his death or even on its nearness, but on his duty of writing to remind and refresh their memory of their commit to remain faithful to Christ, to stand firm. As long as he had breath, he would continue to exhort them in the faith.

Peter shows us how important it is to continue to teach godly living to the end, to take every opportunity to instruct others in the faith that they will continue to pass on that faith to others.

In the brevity of life take the advice of Paul to Timothy when he wrote in “You then, my son, be

strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

II Timothy 2:2

Passing on life skills is important.

Balancing a check book

Not mixing white and dark clothes in the wash

How to cook, change a flat tire and use the DVR

One of the things they teach 6th graders in David’s school is how to use a cordless phone because that’s what’s in the office. One student actually asked how you send a text using that kind of phone.

But these are all passing skills, important, yes, but passing. In five years things you need to know now may not be relevant.

As I said in the beginning my Dad taught us a lot of different things.

How to fish and shoot and change the oil

He taught us about the importance of hard work and commitment and having joy in what you do

But the greatest life lesson is about personal faith in Christ for salvation and an ongoing faith that stands strong when life throws lots of curve balls and bean balls that would otherwise put us back on our heels or try to knock us down.

What are you teaching others that will be of eternal value because our life is transitory?

Don’t wait to the end and wish you had started sooner. But let me add that it’s not too late to begin. Leave a lasting legacy because while this life is temporary, our legacy is timeless.

B. Our Legacy Is Timeless – v. 15

I was reading this last week in the Answers in Genesis magazine an article on *God’s Seed Bank*.

The article described a barren scene where once lush forest had grown. This forest had been

decimated by a fire. Smoldering ash and charred wooden skeletons of what once were stately trees were all that remained. From the naked eye it looked like the barrenness of the land would remain, but underneath the soil there was another story about to unfold. The forest had hidden in the earth seed that was dormant that, in time, would ensure the perpetuation of its landscape. The author stated that “God has designed His creation to experience revival even in the midst of catastrophe. In a fallen world brought down by man’s rebellion, God made His creatures to persist.”

The author wrote about how the environment leaves a legacy in order for plant life to continue. Without getting into the technical side of the article he provided some examples of plants that have survived for years, in some cases decades and even centuries before they sprouted to life.

The seed of a pin cherry found in North America can lay dormant between 50-150 years.

The sacred lotus is a flowering aquatic herb in tropical Asia and Australia. A seed was recovered from a dry lake bed in China that was viable after 1,300 years.

The seed of a date palm from North Africa found in Judea grew after planting and was estimated to be 2,000 years old.

Let me encourage those of you who have children or know of friends who have wandered from the faith. Have hope in what you have taught or in what they saw in you that lying dormant in their lives is the ability for new, spiritual life to rise up.

How important it is to stand strong and remain undaunted in your teaching and living the truth before your family and friends.

What kind of legacy are you leaving? Is it being passed on to succeeding generations? Peter wanted his teaching to continue after he was gone. He didn’t know that his letters would be included in the canon of Scripture. He didn’t know that his life

would be an open book included in the gospels about Christ. He didn’t know that some of his sermons and miracles and evangelistic efforts would be recorded for posterity.

Scholars believe that verse 15 is referring to the gospel of Mark. Peter was a mentor of Mark and helped with some of the details of his gospel and it’s likely that Peter is speaking to what Mark was writing that would be additional instruction.

Peter wanted a lasting legacy, not to perpetuate his name, but to continue the spread of the gospel and encourage them to remain faithful to Christ.

What kind of legacy are you leaving?

Our culture is doing all it can to undermine the value of a traditional family, the sanctity of life and the importance of gender roles as defined by God’s Word. The culture does more than undermine its teaching, it outright objects to and is intolerant of the moral value that creates a semblance of rightness. Without objective or absolute truth man is left to relativism where he or she makes up the rules as they go.

Sports have rules for a reason

Businesses have policies for a reason

Governments have laws for a reason

God has commandments for a reason

We can’t pick and choose what we like and throw out the ones we don’t like.

Our culture is doing everything it can to strip away a lasting godly legacy.

Dr. Charles Stanley writes about the value of a godly legacy, leaving a spiritual inheritance. He says “Unlike an earthly inheritance that is passed on after death, a spiritual one is imparted over the course of a lifetime through godly words and actions. From the moment a child is born, parents have the opportunity to pour themselves into that young life. But remember, you cannot give what you don’t have. This is why parents and grandparents should develop their own spiritual

lives first so they can invest in the lives of their children.”

If you are fairly new to following Christ, or if you are getting back on track after some time away from the Lord, don't be discouraged thinking it's too late. Start now in helping pass on a legacy.

A teacher wrote about an excuse a student gave for failing to turn in his homework. When asked where his paper was, the young man replied that it was still in his pencil.

Let's not leave our legacy in the tip of the pencil. God wants to bring it out so you can pass it on.

What can you do? Dr. Stanley offers some advice.

1. Have a desire to follow Jesus

You can't save someone, but you can teach your family that they need to make their own decision to trust Christ as Savior. Set an example of faith.

Shortly after we had moved up to Camp, my folks were getting to know some of the towns' people who attended one of the churches. They were discussing something about salvation and teaching the kids about needed to make that personal decision. The couple commented that they didn't know it was their responsibility to teach them about salvation.

You must demonstrate a desire to follow Christ. When they see and hear you talk about the joy of being a Jesus follower, they will be drawn to Christ as well because they see your example. As Deuteronomy 6 instructs, take every opportunity to talk with your family about God and His Word.

2. Have an interest in God's Word

I can honestly say that my interest for God's Word came because of the importance both Mom and Dad had in reading, studying and living Scripture.

Make sure your children and grandchildren and

greatgrandchildren have a Bible of their own. And let them see you bring it to church with you.

When they come to you with a problem, search the Scripture together to find an answer. Teach them the value of looking to Scripture to help guide them in all of life's decisions.

3. Have an understanding of how to listen to the Lord

In other words, spend time in prayer. That goes hand in glove with reading God's Word. Sometimes a person will say that God never speaks to them. Oftentimes God speaks to us by His Spirit through His Word, so if we don't pick up His letter to us how can we know what He is saying.

Pray together and write down the things you are praying about and then record God's answers.

4. Have a pattern of obedience to God's Word
Living by the adage "do as I say, not as I do" won't cut it when it comes to leaving a legacy. Others must see that we take seriously obedience to God's Word. Jesus says that obedience is a way that we demonstrate that we love Him (John 14:21). Others need to see not only our successes but also our failures so that we can teach through them on how to be restored.

5. Have a faith that perseveres in trials
Mom and Dad both taught invaluable lessons about sustaining faith in trials that God's grace truly is sufficient in all things. Were they always perfect? No. Is my faith stronger than theirs because I watched them? No. But they taught me about a faith that keeps going and a faith that picks again up when it is weak or when it fails.

The remaining steps for a lasting legacy are self-explanatory so I only mention them in passing.

6. Have a spirit that forgives others

7. Have a heart that serves others

8. Have a love that is sincere toward others

Peter wanted to have a lasting legacy through a perpetual reminder about standing firm in the faith they were already established in.

He gave a persuasive reminder about the urgency because his own life was drawing to a close. Our life is temporary, but our legacy is timeless. It can lie dormant in someone for years and then all of a sudden something will cause the seed of faith to germinate and bring forth a desire for eternal life in someone. So don't give up hope. Until your last breath keep reminding them about God's love. Scripture itself is a legacy with a powerful reminder.

III. A POWERFUL REMINDER

A. We See It In The Crucified Savior

I Corinthians 15:1-4 "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Paul says he was passing on what he learned. Why? It's so we don't forget.

When the Israelites crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land they gathered 12 stones and piled them up as a perpetual reminder of the covenant God made with them.

Never forget the crucified Christ and pass on what you learn about Him.

B. We See It In The Christian's Sanctification

I Timothy 4:9-17 "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and

strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

How we live is an example to others. What kind of example are you leaving? That is your legacy. And let me remind you that it's never too late to begin living a sanctified life, living a godly character.

C. We See It In The Communion Supper

I Corinthians 11:23-26 "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Taking communion is a reminder of the legacy Christ left through His death and we are to do this until He returns. As we gather to take communion we are leaving a legacy to each other about the Lord and about our personal relationship with the Lord.

Are you leaving a lasting legacy? It doesn't matter how you started, how are you finishing?

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." III John 4