

Fil-Am Community Church

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HOW TO LEAVE A LEGACY

Father's Day 2011

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A young couple took their two-year-old daughter to the home-improvement store. She got tired of walking, so the husband let her ride on his shoulders. As he walked, she began pulling his hair. Although he asked her to stop several times, she kept on. Getting annoyed, he scolded, "Madison! Stop that!" "But, Daddy," she replied, "I'm just trying to get my bubble gum back!

That's one of the challenges of fatherhood. **How to keep your cool.** For sure, there are other challenges. But one of the greatest challenges I think is this: *How to Leave a Legacy.*

At the Epcot Center in Disneyworld, there are these giant slabs of black granite all over – tons and tons of granite – and a big sign that says "Leave Your Legacy". For a certain fee they will take your picture and photo-chemically transfer it onto these granite rocks, so that for all of time your picture will be on this granite stone. And thousands of people have already put their little, tiny picture on these big granite stones.

Why do we do that? Because down deep inside *everybody wants to leave a legacy*. Everybody wants to feel like their life counts, that their life matters, that we've left our mark while we pass through this life.

So since its Fathers Day I thought we'd look at this subject about how to leave a lasting legacy.

The Bible has a lot to say about it. *Proverbs 13:22* says, "A good life gets passed on to the grandchildren." Psalm 112 says, "A righteous man will be remembered forever."

How do you do that? How do you leave a lasting, permanent legacy?

The Bible tells us that there are three qualities you can find in people who are respected and if you want to build a lasting legacy you need to build your life around these three character qualities. Parents, we are responsible to pass on these qualities to our kids so that they too may pass on a legacy from generation to generation.

1. SPEAK WITH INTEGRITY

For the past 64 years, Gallup Poll has done an annual "Most Admired Men" list in America. While presidents and politicians and stars and athletes have come and gone, one man has been on that list almost every year. In fact, he

has 54 appearances in the top 10, the most of anyone. In far second is Ronald Reagan with 31. Why is Billy Graham's name on the list of the most admired men in America for 54 years? Because there are very few people in America who live with rock-ribbed **integrity** – what you see is what you get.

What is integrity? Integrity is composed of three different activities – telling the truth, keeping your word and practicing what you say you believe. If you want to be a person of integrity always tell the truth, always keep your word or your promises and always practice or do what you say you believe.

The Bible has a lot to say about these three qualities. **Proverbs 17:7** says, *“Respected people do not tell lies.”*

All leadership is built on one thing. **It's built on trust.** You don't follow somebody you don't trust. And all trust is built on truth. You don't follow somebody who doesn't tell you the truth. So if you want to be a leader you have to learn to speak the truth. If you don't tell the truth nobody trusts you and if nobody trusts you, nobody's going to follow you.

Why is it that when we look around in our society most leaders or many of our leaders are held in low esteem today? Why is that?

Because they don't tell the truth, because they don't keep their word and because they don't practice what they say they believe. We all have heard

about John Edwards, Anthony Weiner, and even Dominique Strauss-Kahn. People who once held high positions but now are being shunned. Because they lack integrity. If you want to build a lasting legacy, the starting point is a foundation of rock-ribbed integrity.

Proverbs 25:14 *“People who promise things that they never give are like clouds in a wind with no rain.”* **Have you ever failed to keep a promise?** Don't promise something you can't keep.

Just recently, my boss rushed her 9-year-old daughter to the hospital because of an infected appendix. It really hurt so bad. It's good that it didn't explode yet and the girl underwent surgery to have the appendix removed. The next day we overheard our boss talking to her husband, who is in the army and stationed in Afghanistan. In fact, he just arrived in Kandahar the day before. Her husband wanted to come back home to visit the girl who was his step-daughter. Despite my boss's objections, he came back to the US anyway and saw the girl in the hospital.

After a few days, I told my boss, “You're lucky to have a husband like him. He's so thoughtful. Imagine coming back home when he's not even settled yet in Afghanistan to visit your daughter.”

“I told him he didn't have to come home,” she said. He could've just saved the \$4000 for our second honeymoon or something.”

And I said, “Still, he must love you and your daughter so much / for him to do something like that.”

And my boss said, “Only if my daughter could love her the same way too. I don’t think she really appreciated his gesture.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. I was puzzled.

“When she was five-years-old, my husband told her that he would never leave her. That even if he was called abroad, he wouldn’t go. But he did. He went to Afghanistan. That devastated her. And she never forgot that. She never forgave him for that. So now, my husband has been trying all he can to win her love back.”

Dads, if you want to be a person of lasting legacy, you’ve got to keep your word. Studies have shown that the number one cause of resentment in children is parents who don’t keep their promises. We make promises to our kids and then we break them. You make a promise and then you end up becoming too busy or too tired and you don’t feel like you’ve got the energy to do it and you break your promise. You are modeling a lack of integrity to your children. ***You’ve got to keep your word. You’ve got to tell the truth. You’ve got to practice what you say you believe.***

So, how to leave a lasting legacy? First you must speak with integrity and second....

2. SERVE WITH INTENSITY

Be a servant to other people around you. They've done study after study of children and they ask kids, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Not one child has ever said, "I want to grow up to be a servant." Not one. We don't want to be servants when we grow up. We want to be celebrities, stars, winners, leaders. But Jesus said, "If you want to be great you've got to learn to be the servant of all." Servanthood is the second key to a lasting legacy: serving other people.

Proverbs 14:22 *"You will earn the trust and respect of others if you work for good."* The fact is most people only work for their own good. We work for our dreams, our ambitions, for our goals. We think about what we want. We're not thinking about the good of other people. They may work with intensity but it's all for selfish reasons and for selfish purposes.

Colossians 3:23 *"Whatever you do work at it with all your heart.*
[Circle "all your heart."]

As working for the Lord and not for men." Serve with intensity with all your heart. It says no matter what you do, do it with all your heart. And what's

the motivation behind it? As if you're doing it for the Lord. You can turn any task, even the most menial job – cleaning toilets – you can do it as if you're doing it for God.

You know, there are no great people. They're only ordinary people committed to great causes, great purposes. You don't have to be at the head of your class to leave a lasting legacy; you don't have to be the most brilliant, the most wonderful, the most talented, and the most beautiful person. You're probably not. But you can leave a great legacy. How? By serving with intensity. Serving a great cause, a great purpose. Giving your life away to something greater than yourself / that's what leaves a legacy.

Mother Teresa said, "It's not what we do that matters but how much love we put into it that makes a difference."

The tragedy today is that many people are wasting their lives on things that aren't going to last. The Bible is very clear that some things are going to last forever and some things are just going to burn up, decay, fall away. Too many people are investing their time and their energy and their life and reputation on things that aren't going to last. Jesus warned us about this.

In **John 6** He said, "*Don't work for food that spoils. Instead work for the food that lasts for eternal life.*" He's giving a principle here. He's saying don't waste your time and energy and effort on stuff that's going to rot or spoil.

But use your life; invest your life in things that are going to last over the long haul for eternity. Make a difference.

What's not going to last? One thing that's not going to last is fame. Fame does not last. Today you're the hero tomorrow you're the zero. Don't spend a second of your life trying to become famous. Why? Because the moment you get there you've hit the pinnacle and after that it's downhill. Don't waste a second of your life trying to become famous. Even Pacquiao is not going to be remembered 50 years from now. They will say Pacquiao who? You may know that Dirk Nowitzki is the MVP of the NBA Finals today. But do you know who it was five years ago?

Status is not going to last. Why spend any of your effort, time or energy trying to gain status. Why? You won't keep it. And it doesn't matter anyway.

Pleasure doesn't last. Power doesn't last. Things aren't going to last. Everything you have is not going to last. You didn't bring it into this world. You're not going to take it out of this world. It's not going to last. In fact, it's probably going to be broken before you die. Why would you invest your entire life collecting things, making the goal of your life to get more and more things when none of those are going to last for eternity?

What's going to last? The things you did for other people. Especially your family. Charity begins at home, the saying goes. Before serving others, learn to serve your family first. Start with your wife, then your children. Then your relatives and then other people. Serving them with intensity means investing your time, energy, and money in them.

When was the last time you dated your wife? When was the last time you opened the door of the car for her? When was the last time you served her breakfast in bed? When was the last time you treated her like a queen? You know how to become a king? Treat her like a queen and you automatically become a king.

And your children, do you think that toys and games and stuff will make them remember you? Yes, they will for a time.

A friend of ours in New York said that when she comes home, her children rush to her looking like they miss her. Then they ask, "Mom, can I borrow your iPhone?" BTW, that's happening to me too. I guess to some of you too.

Do you know what is the lasting remembrance of you? **Love**. Give them all the love you can give. Serve them with love. Nothing wrong with gifts and things, but if you're not there when they need you, if you're too busy at work or even in church to attend to their needs, then you're not leaving them a lasting legacy.

People who make the greatest difference, who leave a legacy in your life are not the most famous, the wealthiest, most talented. The people who have left a legacy in your life are the people who have served you in love.

Since it's Fathers Day, let me say something to you parents. We often give our kids the wrong things. I've discovered that many parents today are giving their kids activities instead of attention.

What kids really need is not more activities. What they need is attention.

I have noticed that in the last generation, the definition of successful parenting has changed from spending times personally with your kids (**hanging out with your kids**) to being an activities director for your kids. You've become both a chauffeur and a spectator. We take kids to Little League then we watch them at Little League. We're not interacting with them; we're taking them and watching them. We take kids to Kung Fu training and then we watch them at Kung Fu training. We take them to ballet and then we watch them at ballet. We take them to band or ceramics class or art or whatever and then we watch them. And parenting has been redefined as simply giving your kids enriching activities. Wrong answer!

There's nothing wrong with those things but that's not what parenting is all about. You can do those things but that's not what parenting is all about. Parenting is about personal time with your kids, not taking them somewhere else where someone else spends time with them and you watch them. ***They need your attention far more than they need any enrichment.*** Far more!

The key is this. The time to be generous with your time, with your attention, with your love, with your money is now. ***Proverbs 3:27*** “*Whenever you are able do good to people who need help. Don't say, 'Come back later. I'll give it to you tomorrow.'*” Dads, how many times have we said to our kids, “Later, son. We can do it this weekend. I'm busy right now. We'll do it tomorrow. We'll do it later.” We put them off.

Don't do that. You only have your kids for a season. They're not going to be home forever. They're going to grow up, they're going to move out, get married. They're going to be off on their own and then it will be too late. Serve with intensity while you have the opportunity. Lead your wife and your family with serving hands, with strong hands.

VIDEO OF “The Story Behind Lead Me”

And the third key to leaving a legacy is to

3. SUCCEED WITH HUMILITY.

The Bible says in **Proverbs 29:23** “*Arrogance will bring your downfall but if you are humble you will be respected.*” You’ll leave a legacy.

You need to stay humble or you’ll stumble.

God uses a couple of things to test your humility. One of them is praise. The Bible says, “*Praise is the test of character.*” Every time you’re complimented, this is a test. Are you going to get egotistical about it? Are you going to get stuck up? Are you going to get prideful? Treat praise like you treat criticism. It’s like bubble gum; you chew on it but you don’t swallow it. Ultimately it doesn’t matter what other people think about you and me. What matters is what God thinks about you and me. So God uses praise to test your character.

The other thing God uses is mistakes. “*Someone who will not learn will be poor and disgraced. Anyone who listens to correction is respected.*” You don’t have to know it all to be respected; you just have to admit that you don’t know it all. Nobody knows it all. Humility is being honest about your weaknesses, being honest about what you don’t know, being able to laugh at your own faults and weaknesses. The word “humor” and “humility” come from the same root word. A humble person has the ability to laugh at himself or herself. Nobody’s perfect.

Learn to laugh at yourself. If you learn to laugh at yourself you'll have plenty of material the rest of your life. The problem is we take ourselves far too seriously and we don't take God seriously enough. That's the cause of a lot of stress in your life. You need to reverse that. You need to take God far more seriously than you do and not take yourself and your work so seriously. Learn to be humble.

The enemy of humility is image. Our society is image-obsessed. You can even hire image coordinators, image consultants who will teach you how to dress right, walk right, talk right, eat right, act right, say the right things and how to wear just the right clothes.

The Bible says "*Clothe yourselves with humility.*" That's the best dress for success.

We think that the way to be respected is to build up this phony image of perfection and having it all together. Everyone knows you don't have it all together but we try to build this up and we think if we show people that we're perfect, that we've got it all together then people will love us. "Aren't they perfect?" The truth is nobody likes being around people who think they have it all together because we all know they don't.

Don't worry about your image. Worry about your character. Image is what other people say you are. Character is what you really are. Character is what

God says you are. Character is what you are when you're alone in the dark. Image vanishes in a puff. Character lasts for eternity. You're not taking your image with you. God couldn't care less about your image. You are taking your character into heaven. If you want to have a great legacy then you're going to have to build great character. You're going to have to speak with integrity, serve with intensity, and succeed with humility. ***Great character leaves a great legacy.***

The greatest legacy of all is helping somebody come to know Christ. Helping somebody get out of hell and into heaven. The greatest thing you can do for someone, the greatest mark you can do on this earth is you actually help somebody determine their eternal destiny. Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you? Because you took the time to tell them? That's the greatest legacy you can leave.

That's exactly what Laura did a few weeks back. She went to Hawaii to see her dad and while there shared with him the good news of Jesus. He didn't become a Christian yet, but the important thing is that he heard the gospel. The seed was planted and it's her prayer that in time that little seed she planted in her dad's heart will grow.

Who do you need to speak to today? Do you love anybody enough to share with them the good news of Jesus? Sometimes it's hard for us to talk to others about our faith. Especially with members of our family. Then write

them a letter or shoot an email. It's Father's Day. Maybe your father doesn't know Christ. Or mother or brother or sister or child or friend or relative. Here's your homework. Go home today and compose a letter or email. Just a simple message. Eight or ten sentences. Just say, "Dad or whoever, I am a follower of Christ and I'm going to heaven. I want you to be in heaven when I'm there."

If you don't know how to explain how to become a Christian, go to our table in the back, just outside that door and pick up one of the little booklets and stick it in the letter or copy it in your email. It has a prayer and tells them how to pray and believe. It may be the greatest legacy you leave. Whatever you do, you need to do it now because you're not guaranteed a tomorrow.

Prayer:

What do you want to be remembered for? When you die wouldn't it be great if people would say about you, "I was so blessed to know him/her. I thank God for their influence on my life." Men, wouldn't you want your wife to say, "My husband was an incredible spiritual leader." Women wouldn't you like your husband to say, "My wife enriched my life spiritually more than anybody else." It's your choice. Character is always a matter of the choices we make. You're as close to God as you choose to be. Image fades away but character lasts forever. You may be thinking, "I've blown it. It's too late." Have you ever watched a marathon? It doesn't matter how you start but how you finish. The Bible says *"Humility and reverence for the Lord will make you both wise and honored."* Ladies and gentlemen what our world needs more than anything else is men and women of character. Men and women who cannot be swayed by convenience or culture or compromise but who do the right thing

whether anybody else does it or not, who speak with integrity, serve with intensity, and succeed with humility. My question to you is will you be that kind of person? Will you? Fathers Day 2011 could be the turning point of your life.

Would you pray this in your mind? “Father, I want to leave a lasting legacy. I want to be a person of great character especially in my home. But I can’t do it on my own. I need your help, Jesus Christ. Help me to live with integrity, to always tell the truth, to always keep my word and to practice what I say I believe. I want to serve with intensity. I don’t want to live a selfish, self-centered life. I want to serve you by serving and loving others. Help me to be humble and put others before me. Jesus Christ, I need you to be the center and the manager of my life. Please use me to make a difference in this world. In Your name I pray. Amen.”