

# LEAVING A LEGACY

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William James said, "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." That's what it means to leave a legacy: to live your life in such a way that its impact outlives you.

I want my kids and grandkids to know the right things, and say the right things, and choose the right things, and do the right things. Don't you?

Since today is Father's Day, I especially want to address the dads and granddads in the room today. But the women, and singles, and young people are invited to listen in and make your own applications, because the principles I'll speak of today can apply to each of us.

Kids learn far more (we all do, really) by what they observe, than by what they are told. That means, like it or not, your strongest legacy will be the real life you live (not the imagined one you wish you could live).

And we all know that it's far easier to talk about it than to live it!

All children are learners, who will develop at their own rate. Children learn best when they have interesting things to do and interested people to help them. They have many ways to learn, including watching, listening and doing.

## **The Seven Learning Styles**

Technically, an individual's learning style refers to the preferential way in which a student absorbs, processes, comprehends and retains information. Experts in the field of education have identified seven fundamental learning (or teaching) styles:

- Visual (spatial)
- Aural (auditory-musical)
- Verbal (linguistic)
- Physical (kinesthetic)
- Logical (mathematical)
- Social (interpersonal)
- Solitary (intrapersonal)

*Visual:* If you use the visual style, you prefer using images, pictures, colors, and maps to organize information and communicate with others. You can easily visualize objects, plans and outcomes in your mind's eye. You also have a good spatial sense, which gives you a good sense of direction. You can easily find your way around using maps, and you rarely get lost. When you walk out of an elevator, you instinctively know which way to turn.

*Aural:* If you use the aural style, you like to work with sound and music. You have a good sense of pitch and rhythm. You typically can sing, play a musical instrument, or identify the sounds of different instruments. Certain music invokes strong emotions. You notice the music playing in the background of movies, TV shows and other media. You often find yourself humming or tapping a song or jingle, or a theme or jingle pops into your head without prompting.

*Verbal:* The verbal style involves both the written and spoken word. If you use this style, you find it easy to express yourself, both in writing and verbally. You love reading and writing. You like playing on the meaning or sound of words, such as in tongue twisters, rhymes, limericks and the like. You know the meaning of many words, and regularly make an effort to find the meaning of new words. You use these words, as well as phrases you have picked up recently, when talking to others.

*Physical:* If the physical style is more like you, it's likely that you use your body and sense of touch to learn about the world around you. It's likely you like sports and exercise, and other physical activities such as gardening or woodworking. You like to think out issues, ideas and problems while you exercise. You would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering you, rather than sitting at home.

*Logical:* If you use the logical style, you like using your brain for logical and mathematical reasoning. You can recognize patterns easily, as well as connections between seemingly meaningless content. This also leads you to classify and group information to help you learn or understand it.

*Social:* If you have a strong social style, you communicate well with people, both verbally and non-verbally. People listen to you or come to you for advice, and you are sensitive to their motivations, feelings or moods. You listen well and understand other's views. You may enjoy mentoring or counseling others.

*Solitary:* If you have a solitary style, you are more private, introspective and independent. You can concentrate well, focusing your thoughts and feelings on your current topic. You are aware of your own thinking, and you may analyze the different ways you think and feel.

You may feel comfortable with more than one of these styles, but one usually percolates to the top as the primary preference. And, your learning style usually equates to your preferred teaching style as well.

Any person can be a good teacher, if he or she teaches according to their own preferred style, and has students who like to learn in the same way. The problem is—since there are 7 distinct learning styles—that there are up to 6 out of 7 students who prefer another way of learning than yours!

Your learning/teaching style is a natural preference, but it is not a fixed limitation. With careful observation and study, you can learn to communicate in each of the 7 learning styles, and become an effective teacher with most individuals. The Holy Spirit knows them all, and will help you learn, if you want to.

When the Apostle Paul learned of the religious chaos in Corinth, he wrote a letter to admonish the people and encourage their leaders to step up to the challenge. And he sent an emissary to help them get the message.

*1 Corinthians 5:15 For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. <sup>16</sup> So I urge you to imitate me.*

*<sup>17</sup> That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.*

Paul was telling the church, “If you want to be a good Christian... If you want to have significant influence for Christ among your family and friends.. Do what I do.” He didn’t urge them, “Do what I say.” That’s a child’s demand—“*You’re supposed to do what I tell you!*”

Men, effective leadership is earned. It is not a matter of position, or title. Your leadership will never be effective, just because you’re “the dad.” Too many men are too lazy or too ignorant or too absent to win the hearts of their kids. That’s what you need to do: Win their hearts.

## **Winning Their Hearts**

Obedience is not based on communicating information. If you think that, frustration will be your closest friend for the rest of your life.

Obedience comes from devotion. That’s a matter of the heart, not the head.

I don’t mean that explanation and instruction are unnecessary—they are vital. But they are the steering mechanism, not the engine. The horsepower of obedience comes from affection, not information.

Every dad wants his child’s respect. But respect cannot be commanded. It must be won, as your child observes your character in action.

If you want to manage your home well, first manage yourself.

How do you handle stressful circumstances? How do you deal with interruptions? Is there margin in your life for flexibility? How do you operate when challenged? Do you control your temper, or does your temper control you?

We've all been there. We've all failed miserably. But that's not a reason to give in, or give up. The Holy Spirit is here to help you! You can ask Him in the heat of the moment, if you think of it. But I advise you to start asking Him in advance.

When you know the emotional buttons that are so easily pushed, don't wait for a disastrous situation to pray for help. Knowing your weaknesses, pray in advance. Pray about them when you get up in the morning. Pray about them before anything else. Suit up! Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand in the face of difficulty. A champion, not a casualty.

I don't know where men get the idea that they have to be men WITHOUT God's help! He made you. He knows how you're wired. And He knows how you come unglued.

Real men worship God.

Real men repent of their sins.

Real men apologize to people.

Real men lean on the Holy Spirit.

Real men pay their dues.

Real men believe they can do better.

Real men are real people.

Real men serve Jesus Christ.

As a result, real men leave a real legacy.

## **The Pathway of Legacy**

Paul called Timothy, *"my beloved and faithful child in the Lord."* He mentored Timothy in the work of the ministry. Timothy knew how Paul lived and how he ministered, and became a channel for Paul's legacy. Here is how Paul wrote to Timothy, years later:

*<sup>2</sup> Timothy 2:1 Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>2</sup> You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*

This is the pathway of legacy: *"Teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others."*

Paul showed amazing faithfulness to Jesus Christ. His apprentice, Timothy, had also demonstrated trustworthiness. His character was dependable. Writing to another church, Paul said this about him:

*Philippians 2:20 I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. <sup>21</sup> All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News.*

How had God built such values into Timothy's soul? Returning to Paul's second letter to Timothy, we find clues about the learning curve involved.

*<sup>2</sup> Timothy 2:3 Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. <sup>5</sup> And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. <sup>6</sup> And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. <sup>7</sup> Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.*

## **Legacy 101 – Our Objective**

Legacy 101 is a class on how to suffer well.

*“Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”*

Paul urges Timothy to endure suffering “*along with me.*” He doesn't take a pass on it for himself. He led the way, suffering out loud, in plain sight, demonstrating how a real man suffers. He wrote:

*<sup>2</sup> Corinthians 6:3 We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. <sup>4</sup> In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. <sup>5</sup> We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. <sup>6</sup> We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. <sup>7</sup> We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us.*

Paul learned it from Christ, about whom Isaiah (53:3) said, “*He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.*”

God knows suffering. God our Father suffered the loss of His only begotten Son. God the Son suffered a vicious and agonizing death for us. God the Holy Spirit has suffered immeasurable indignity, as people have persistently resisted Him, grieved Him, rejected Him, disobeyed Him, mocked Him, and despised Him. God knows suffering—unjust, undeserved, and unmitigated suffering—at the hands of those to whom He has given the most.

We need to learn from God how to suffer well. We can graduate to everlasting peace, but not without first taking the class and passing the exams.

I know, in our individualistic culture of entitlement, we bend every effort to avoid and alleviate suffering—especially our own. We have so convinced ourselves that suffering is simply ungodly (embracing the untruth that God wants us to be happy), that we are becoming whiners and complainers, instead of overcomers. That won't pass the class.

So, how does one “endure suffering” well? There are three stages. Now that you have been introduced to the goal, learn the lessons.

### **Legacy 201 – Our Attitude**

Legacy 201 is a class on how to respect and please those in authority over you.

*“Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.”*

You will all suffer at the hands of those in authority over you. No one, more than soldiers. Sometimes because leaders make mistakes, like anyone else. Sometimes because they are poor leaders. But sometimes just because they are leaders. Leadership demands followers. But most people have problems with following, at least some of the time.

Soldiers are the prime example here, because, by the nature of their duty, they are expendable. When they go to war, no matter how fit, they are at risk of not returning.

They will be expected to endure hardship, willingly. They will be expected to obey orders, sacrificially. They will be expected to bear wounds and injury—both psychological and physical—and keep serving.

Their ability to do so largely rests upon their respect for their leaders and their commitment to please (obey) them.

Your kids are watching you. They are listening to you. How do you speak about those in authority over you—your spouse, your boss, the police, the president? I ask, because you are teaching your kids by your example how they should respect and please you.

You will respect those in authority over you, when you realize that life is bigger than just you, and your purpose in living is bigger than your personal happiness. Without that perspective, you will become *“tied up in the affairs of civilian life.”* In other words, you’ll be distracted by and entangled in the temporal affairs and aims of this world.

You cannot serve both God and mammon (worldly objects of worship and devotion). Jesus said you will love this one and hate that one, or you will hate this one and love that one. You can’t serve both. You must choose. You will choose. In fact, you have already chosen. And your kids can tell what you’ve chosen.

You can pretend, or imagine that you have mastered the impossible balancing act, but that would appear to make Jesus a fool (and He’s no fool). In the end, you will discover who the real fool has been. No, John had it right:

*1 John 2:15 Don’t love the world’s ways. Don’t love the world’s goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. <sup>16</sup> Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from Him. (MSG)*

You want your kids to respect and please you. It begins with how you yourself do that. What you really need to notice here is that this class is not given in a lecture hall. Paul chose the verb *to please*, rather than *obey*, because this taps our affections, before our intellect. You will gain your children’s respect and their desire to please you by your love, not by your command.

Perhaps it seems counter-intuitive, but the more you demand their respect, the less you will have. On the other hand, the more you show them love and win their hearts, the more they will respect what you want from them and try to please you.

We all learn to endure suffering well, as we learn to please (from the heart) those who are in charge.

But wait, there’s more!

### **Legacy 301 – Our Integrity**

Legacy 301 is a class on how to win the prize.

*“And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules.”*

Most of us have experience at winning—somewhere, sometime. But all of us are well-versed in losing. It’s inevitable. And it’s the grace of God that picks us up and gets us moving again.

We all *want* to win, but many are unconvinced of their ability to do so. Today, I'm telling you that you *can* win... if you're willing to suffer along the way.

Every athlete who competes well wins the prize. It's simple really, if you follow the rules you will win a prize. Not just the "rules of the game," but the rules of athleticism—what it takes to become an athlete. And not the same prize, of course, for each wins at his or her own level.

If a bantamweight boxer fights a heavyweight, he's going to lose. He's out of his league.

If a sprinter races a marathon runner in a marathon, he's likely to lose. But if they race in a sprint, he's likely to win. Each in his own sport; each at his own level.

What are the rules of athleticism? Diet, rest, training, coaching, and practice, practice, practice. And that's not easy. Even for a natural athlete, the demands are great. And suffering is inescapable.

Every athlete is familiar with suffering. No pain, no gain. If you flee from pain, you will not experience winning the prize. If you avoid difficulty, you will not win the prize. If you cheat by taking a shortcut, you won't win the prize.

You will endure the pain of athletic rigor, if your goal is bigger than your own comfort, and your purpose in training is bigger than just having fun. Without that perspective, you won't keep up the necessary discipline, you'll become careless and make costly mistakes. So, run to win!

The only way to win the prize is to endure suffering, while following the rules. This is what it means to "compete well."

### **Legacy 401 – Our Ethic**

Legacy 401 is a class on how to enjoy the fruit of your own labor.

*"And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor."*

There is nothing like the pride and pleasure of enjoying what your own mind or hands have made. Two principles of Scripture that Paul expressed elsewhere to Timothy are these: *"Do not muzzle the ox that grinds the grain"* and *"The worker deserves his wages"* (1 Timothy 5:18).

Enjoying the fruit of your own labor is the highest incentive for hard work!



And that is the subject of our text, and of this final class on suffering well: the hard work that is necessary for fruitfulness.

I know very little about farming, but I know this: it is HARD work. From sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, twelve months of each year, in all kinds of weather.

There's plowing and sowing, irrigating and weeding, tending and pruning, protecting and testing, harvesting, sorting, storing, selling, and then starting all over again. And in the meantime, there are tools to be sharpened and machinery to be tuned and repaired. It's hard work!

Many American families have given up on farming. It's no longer economically feasible for many, for a variety of reasons. But the desire to see or taste or enjoy the fruit of one's own labors is still very much alive—whether in the heart of the computer programmer, or the artist or musician, or the nurse or doctor, or the teacher or builder.

It's that visionary "taste" of the as-yet-unseen future that helps people endure the years of required education, the long hours of internship or apprenticeship, and then the red tape and bureaucracy of business ownership. It takes hard work. Persistent hard work.

You will endure the hard work of creativity or service, if your goal is bigger than your own ease, and your purpose in persisting is bigger than just having a job or bringing home a paycheck. Lacking that perspective, you'll choose any easier road—and it's sure to be a less productive and less satisfying road.

## **Who Are You?**

Here's what we've learned today about Leaving a Legacy...

The Christian life is like military service. And athletic training. And farming.

It demands submission to please others. It demands practice at following the rules. It demands persistent hard work.

All of those things will cost you. They will produce suffering, by their very nature. But if you embrace that, and learn to endure it, you will be pleasing, win the prize, and be productive.

Paul concludes his lesson with these thoughts:

*2 Timothy 2:11 This is a trustworthy saying:*

*If we die with Him, we will also live with Him.*

*<sup>12</sup> If we endure hardship, we will reign with Him.*

*If we deny Him, He will deny us.*

*<sup>13</sup> If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful,  
for He cannot deny who He is.*

My prayer for you is, as God is your Father and Jesus is your Lord and the Holy Spirit is the breath in your lungs, that you will not deny who you are: a child of God, born for fruitfulness and reward and the pleasure of God.

Endure hardship for the glory of Jesus Christ, who loved you, and gave Himself for you, and remain faithful. If you do, your legacy will be great.