



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 6

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the “current new normal” editions.

This week’s reading will be Psalm 81 (ESV), Titled, Oh, That My People Would Listen to Me.

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

81 Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob!

² Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. ³ Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. ⁴ For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob. ⁵ He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: ⁶ “I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket.” ⁷ In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*

⁸ Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! ⁹ There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. ¹⁰ I am the LORD your

God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ¹¹ “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. ¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. ¹³ Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! ¹⁴ I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. ¹⁵ Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. ¹⁶ But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

At the beginning of this weeks reading, following the title, we have the word “Gittith.” I found that the definition found in, “The Hawkers Poor Mans Concordance and Dictionary,” gives the most concise definitions of this word.

This word is found in Scripture only at the head, or title page, of several Psalms; namely, Psa 8:1-9, Psa 81:1-16 and Psa 84:1-12. Various have been the opinions of the learned concerning it, and for the most part different. Some contend, that it means the wine-presses. Others will insist, that it refers to some musical instruments used in the temple-service. Some derive it from

the word Gath; and, therefore, conclude it refers to that city. And another class suppose it means Goliah, the Gittite. But be it what it may, certain it is, that the knowledge of it in the present hour cannot be very important, as God the Holy Ghost hath not thought it essential to be known by the church. The Psalms which bear this name in the title, are not less blessed for our ignorance on this point; though if it be, as it is possible it may have, a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be gratifying to know it.

Our guest speaker this week will be Kurt Pazdra.

Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

+13126266799

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This a follow-up to last weeks challenge on being a radical Christian.

**"If we don't intentionally pass on legacy consistent with our beliefs and values, our culture will pass along its own."
Excerpt by J. Otis Ledbetter, Kurt Bruner (emphasis added)**

Psalm 112:2, His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

I stumbled across the idea of legacy this week and I found that it follows what the previous articles have touched on. As disciples, (defined as a leader of others who *attempts* to pass on this faith to his followers, with the goal of *repeating* this process. (emphasis added)

I urge you, then, be imitators of me.¹⁷ That is why I sent^[a] you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ,^[b] as I teach them everywhere in every church.1 Corinthians 4:16-17

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.2 Timothy 2:2,

**Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.
Shannon L. Adler**

What are we going to leave behind? But before leaving it behind are we laying the foundation today for tomorrow? In recent days we have witnessed the attacks on certain parts of the history of our nation. The attacks have been on people, events, and monuments that represented man rather than God.

Where did we lose our focus? Why did we leave our first love? This idea of first love which characterized the Ephesians was the zeal and ardor with which they embraced their salvation as they

realized they loved Christ because, *We love because he first loved us.1 John 4:19*, and that it was, in fact, His love for them that had made them "alive together with Christ." So overwhelmed were they by the joy that came from understanding their former state— *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.^[b] 4 But^[c] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— Ephesians 2:1-5.* Because of God's great love for the Ephesians, they were "made alive in Christ" and that new life was exhibited in the passion of gratitude. That passion for the Savior spilled over onto one another and out to those in the culture they inhabited, corrupt as it was.

But then they lost their warmth and zeal for Christ, and when that happened, they began to "go through the motions" of good works, motivated not by the love of and for Christ, but by the works themselves. What was once a love relationship cooled into mere religion. Their passion for Him became little more than cold orthodoxy.

Surrounded by paganism and false teachers, the Ephesian church would have had ample opportunity to correct false doctrine and confront heretical teachers. If they did so for any reason other than love for Christ and a passion for His truth, however, they would have lost their way. Instead of pursuing Christ with the devotion they once showed, much like a bride who follows her groom "through the desert"

"Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, "I remember the devotion of your

youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Jeremiah 2:2

The Ephesians were in danger of falling away from Christ completely. This is why He warns those who have "ears to hear" to prove the reality of their salvation by returning to Him and rekindling the love that had begun to cool. No doubt there were among the Ephesians those whose profession was false and whose hearing had become dulled. He warns the rest not to follow them, but to repent and return to Him with the passion they once had for Him.

We face the same challenges in the twenty-first century. We are so fat with our own prosperity that we often make wealth our god and not the true King of heaven. This has also been a recurring theme throughout the entire Bible. People struggle, God blesses them, they become prosperous, and then they depart from God.

People of abundance often choose recreation over worship. Why go to church if you could be out golfing, boating, camping, or going to movies or sporting events?

Does Satan wants us to be prosperous, because our prosperity and abundance often lure us away from our Creator?

What is at the root of our turning away from God? Is it the in the desire to be successful because of the material rewards it provides? Or is it fear? Apprehension about failing, and attempts to avoid failure, can drive the pursuit of success. People who are successful in their endeavors or careers often respond affirmatively to the idea that a fear of failure motivates them. When you fear failure, you wonder what other people might think of you, or what you might think of yourself.

This self-view occurs when we take our eyes off God and lose direction for our lives and in turn we provide no direction for those behind us and consequently no legacy. Our personal legacy should be

more than something we are going to leave behind. It should be something that enriches your life today and reveals who you really are and what is important to your family, friends and those you come in contact with.

I mentioned “core values” before. Will your “personal legacy” reflect those values, your standards and your deepest beliefs?

When I was interviewing Pastor Vitel as possible pulpit supply at the beginning of 2019 he mentioned that since retiring from full-time pastorate he had the time to reflect on his life and begin to think of a legacy for his children and 10 grandchildren. He began to write and take ideas and excerpts from the many bible messages he delivered over the many years as a Christian and a Pastor. To date he has written 5 volumes, containing 10 chapters each, consisting of 3-11 pages per chapter for a total of 18,879 words.

I would like to share an excerpt of Pastor Vitel’s introduction to Chapter One as a challenge to us.

“In the Old Testament, a legacy/inheritance was the gift of honor and support given by a patriarch to his children, usually money, land or property to make provision or provide status for the future. In the New Testament, it does not speak of a physical inheritance or legacy – but rather a spiritual inheritance.”

What is more important than leaving a material or a financial legacy? *Answer: a rich spiritual heritage!* Nothing is greater than an inheritance of godly teaching and godly examples. *“This is what a good man does!”*

“So, when we speak of leaving a legacy, we’re not talking about wealth or material things. And a legacy is not about living a perfect life. It’s about living an *intentional life* for God.”

What would you say, as parents and grandparents, to complete this statement, *“To my children and grandchildren I leave the following [spiritual] legacy...?”*

“As part of our legacy to our children’s children, Sue and I hope to give testimony that we are children of the one true God, loved and forgiven and restored to God Himself. This changed our life and our family. And the second part of our legacy is the conviction, formed and proven over time, that the basic lifestyle intended for us, ordained by God, can best be summarized as loving the Lord God with all our heart, soul, and mind and strength AND loving our neighbor as yourself.”

“There are two basic ways of leaving a godly legacy for your family. The first is the investment we make in the lives of our kids and grandkids while we’re living – *you do this through your personal actions and words*. The other way is *by records and letters we leave behind* – what we believe to be right and true and put on paper.”

Leaving a legacy is like planting a tree. As the seed grows into a tree, it will provide seeds, so that future generations can then plant their own.
Excerpt from Twelve Pillars by Jim Rohn & Chris Widener

Hopefully you understand the importance of leaving the right type of legacy behind. A legacy containing the building blocks of each stage of your life, that provide wisdom to following generations and that will contribute to their growth, motivation and opportunities in their lives. Your Christianity is not shaped and your legacy not defined at the end of your life rather it’s a compilation of the time you spent with others, the decisions that you made, the actions that you took and even all the mistakes that you amassed.

If you were to evaluate the past ten years of your life what story would it tell? What if those you have rubbed

shoulders with those past ten years told your story, would the stories be the same? Based on these questions what do you want the future years in your life to look like? Would you make any changes so that the two stories sound alike? The legacy we leave should inspire others to live a life of spiritual growth, service and sacrifice.

Let’s begin with 5 simple steps to begin to evaluate our lives in order to leave a sustainable legacy.

1. Identity and Values.

To begin with, you must know who you are and the best way to know this is to take a long hard look in the mirror every morning. Do you like what you see? Does what you see truly represent who you are as a father/mother, grandfather/grandmother, husband/wife, brother/sister, employee/individual and a leader? What are the values and beliefs that influence your leadership, your behavior and your attitude toward others? Do others know the real you and what you represent as a leader for the betterment of a healthier society/world/church?

I have chosen eight Christocentric values demonstrated by our Savior.

Grace – one of the most radical and subversive principles of life. It means giving people more than they deserve irrespective of the cause of their need and without regard to national, cultural or religious boundaries. Those who live by grace know themselves as forgiven and act out of the humility that comes from that knowledge. Grace is far more than the vague notion of tolerance. It means living joyfully according to a possibility rather than a demand or an obligation. When the Christian concept of grace is applied to the way a society lives it becomes one of the most radical and subversive principles of life. It is the idea that we are prepared to give to others what they really do not deserve. It means you care for those in need irrespective of the cause of their

distress and that you don't just love your family and friends but your enemies as well! Taken seriously - personally, socially and politically - grace is radical! Grace is not stopped by national, cultural or religious boundaries. It will change the way we relate to people and the way we live in our society. Because grace is, by definition, an undeserved gift offered to someone who is in need. It means that in social relationships there is going to be a bias towards those in need. The Gospels present Jesus as one who brought good news to all who would listen (the crowds) but especially to those who lived on the periphery of society: lepers, slaves, the demon-possessed, a paralytic, a tax collector, a young girl, and the blind. A life of grace means a life lived with those usually ignored or rejected by others.

Hope – not a guarantee of immunity from harm but a conviction that God is always present. Hope is not a guarantee that bad things will not happen nor is it simply positive thinking or looking on the bright side of life. Hope is the conviction that God has gone into the future before us and will always be present with his people. Hope is an encouragement not to overlook the many good and positive aspects of life and to be prepared to take risks, not presumptuously, but in humility and prayer, confident that God is still at work. What does it mean for an individual or a society to have hope? It means that people are able to look beyond immediate problems and threatening scenarios and have confidence in God as the ultimate reality. There are many aspects of our world that can cause people to despair. People worry about the threat of war, poverty, terrorism, environmental disaster, the spread of viruses. Because of hope Christians can persevere through problems and wait expectantly. Christians will not simply view the world negatively but will see the hand of God at work, will believe that positive change can take place and will be enthusiastic about the world in which God has placed us. *'May the God*

of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.' (Rom. 15:13)

Faith - the means to real depth in relationships of all kinds. Faith is an attitude of trust in someone you can rely on which mirrors the commitment that God has for his people. It involves commitment, fidelity and trust and thus stands in contrast to many common attitudes to relationships as short-term, conditional and uncommitted. Faith deepens relationships and enables people to explore more fully the meaning of their own life and the beauty of the lives of others. It is an important element of all kinds of familial and other social relationships. God is faithful, first of all, to his own nature in the sense that He does not alter in terms of his commitment to love, mercy, justice and compassion. God is also faithful in terms of His relationship to people. God's love is constant and lasts forever and through it, people are called to a response of faith. What does it mean for people to be faithful? Unfortunately, some think of faith as being opposed to reason as though faith means believing what you know isn't true or, perhaps optimistically, hoping (without any real justification) that something might just turn out to be so. But faith is not like that at all. It is an attitude of trust in something that you know, or more precisely, in someone you can rely on. The focus of Christian faith is Jesus Christ, he is the one in whom Christians trust and this really defines having faith. Faithfulness within the church means that Christians will regard other Christians as brothers and sisters in the faith.

Love – means to love the unlovely. The meaning of life is to be found in God's unconditional love known in Jesus Christ. Without love nothing else really makes sense. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it seeks the good of the other. It is contrary to all selfish, self-centered attitudes. Love is more than an emotion, and it is not merely 'liking'. It involves choosing to love the unlovely, including one's enemy. Hinduism has karma, Islam has law,

Buddhism has the eight-fold path and secularism has self-improvement. But Christianity dares to say that salvation and the meaning of life is to be found in God's unconditional love known in Jesus Christ. Love is the answer to the most fundamental questions of human existence. Without love nothing else really makes sense. God's love is shown in the sending of Jesus to share our humanity and to suffer the consequences of human sin and die in order to overcome. But love is only properly understood by reference to God and Scripture. Above all, the love of God is revealed and defined in the self-sacrifice of God in his Son. The opposite of the love, security and confidence involved in belonging to God is fear. Perfect love drives out fear. Defensiveness, distrust and fearfulness in life's experiences can mean that God is seen as a judge and not a savior, as angry rather than loving, as demanding rather than forgiving, as a law-maker rather than an a source of strength. Love conquers fear and the emphasis in Christian living must be on God's invitation for individuals and society to be positively transformed. The use of fear as a means of bringing about change runs contrary to the principle of love.

Justice – for all (not 'just-me'). A concept biased in favor of the disadvantaged. Biblical justice is not even defined by abstract notions of fairness or equality (often interpreted in terms of oneself - 'we demand justice'). It is a biased notion in that it refers to very practical, down-to-earth actions which ensure that the weak, the poor and the socially disadvantaged are cared for, whether they 'deserve' it or not. God always acts justly and he calls on people to do the same. While there may be some generally agreed principles of justice (e.g. that slavery and starvation are wrong) the biblical concept of justice is not defined by concepts determined by the beliefs of modern, western societies in which values are considered to be basically private matters. In that context justice tends to be reduced to the attempt to

allow everyone to do whatever they think is right as long as it does not hurt anyone else. Justice is thus interpreted subjectively as something like 'equal rights' for everyone and so injustice is largely any attempt to stop someone doing what they want. Biblical justice, however, is a more robust notion. The kind of justice that the Scriptures present is not even defined primarily in either selfish terms or by abstract notions of fairness or equality.

Joy – impossible to establish but an essential social value. Joy is a quality of being, rather than just an emotion and so although it is related to being happy it is more fundamental and can be sustained when happiness is (hopefully temporarily) diminished. Joy also comes from participating in God's ministry in the world and from seeing lives being positively changed and relationships enhanced. It will never be the subject of legislation. Joy is characteristic of the life of faith. Joy comes from knowing God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. Joyfulness should mark the life of the Christian community and all relationships between Christians as they live and work together for the Lord. It is important too that joy be a feature of the life of the wider community. Joy is an essential social value.

Service – meaning is found in service rather than self-centeredness. Properly understood, service is a revolutionary concept. The call to serve one another in love stands in stark contrast to the normal human desire for position and preference and all notions of 'freedom' where that is understood as the ability to do what suits me, or my family or group best. It calls individuals and the Christian community to lay these aside for the sake of Christ and the needs of others. The notion of service calls individuals to lay these things aside for the needs of others. The idea of Christian service has no better starting point than Jesus' willingness to serve humanity by giving up his life in order that others might be saved. As he said

of himself, he *'did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'* In this and in many other ways, including washing the feet of his disciples he set an example for Christians to follow. Greatness, according to his scale of measurement, involves being the servant of others. Jesus intended the community of faith to be radically distinct in this regard. Indeed, selfless service and a concern for the weak and the powerless became the distinguishing mark of the early Christian community.

Peace – not just the absence of fighting but positive well-being. The biblical concept of peace is different in many ways from modern descriptions of it. Peace understood as the absence of war is only one part of a much broader concept that includes peace with God, positive harmony and healthy functioning between people and spiritual as well as material security. Peace is a wholeness, a state of well-being. Peace is not merely the absence of dissension, it is a positive gift, a state of being which comes from the God of peace who has taken the initiative to bring it to the world through Jesus Christ. God cannot give us joy or peace apart from himself, because there is no such thing. The peace which Jesus gives is nothing less than his own presence in our lives. Consequently, his peace can permeate our lives and he calls his people not to worry or be concerned about material things for God knows our needs. Anxiety is a denial of peace. Jesus' gospel of peace is a peace that the world cannot give and it is wrong to see peace where it does not exist. True peace is salvation, the presence of the kingdom and it is something achieved by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. But the church must not narrow down the message of the gospel of peace to purely inner, personal, private peace. Christians look for opportunities to bring peace wherever possible as it is a social good which indicates that a community is functioning well and in harmony. Christ's peace has many effects on the corporate life of a community, a nation and the world are

important and are a focus of God's concern. Peace between people is part of the gospel and yet it will not be completed until the kingdom comes in its fullness. It was known as the *pax romana* – the Roman peace – and was a 'peace' established and maintained by force. But this is not peace. To believe that peace can be established by force is an illusion, a scandal. Stability is not peace. Nor is peace complacency and it is a mistake for anyone to claim that peace exists where there is injustice. To do so is reminiscent of the Lord's condemnation (in Jeremiah) of the greedy and the unjust who proclaimed 'peace, peace' while injustice, greed and dissension abounded. True peace requires justice and so no Christian can live complacently with injustice. There is a significant truth in the statement made on January 1, 1972, by Pope Paul VI in his Message for the Celebration of the Day of Peace, "if you want peace then work for justice". Reconciliation between groups who have not been at peace is an essential dimension of peace-making.

2. Guiding Foundational Principles

Now that you have taken that long and honest look in the mirror and you like or dislike what you see, what changes do you have to make before walking away? See yourself honestly so that you can exemplify and solidify your identity and the set of values that fellow believers have come to accept as true you then take those values and translate them into a set of guiding principles that others can begin to expect from you? These principles should represent your most enduring ideas and ideals and set the tone for you.

During our current mass-media storm involving religious and social freedom, many are charging Christians as the worst of cultural offenders because of their refusal to obey the one rule of our post-modern society: tolerance. Here are some simple, helpful biblical truths that we can return to in the midst of this cultural storm. For the Christian, I hope you find them encouraging. For

those who reject Christ, I pray that God would use this to help you better understand Christianity, and most importantly, that you would come to a true knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

- True Christianity teaches that God is King of the universe and Creator of the universe and is sovereign over it (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 47:7; Ps. 145:1; Rom. 14:17). Therefore all people are ultimately accountable to God (Acts 17:31).
- True Christianity teaches that God's Word is truth, because God is the one, who has established truth (Jn. 17:17). This truth is found in his special revelation to men, the Bible, which is breathed out by God and therefore without error (2 Tim. 3:16). By this Word we understand God's sovereign rule as king, our need of redemption, and God's provision in Christ as our Savior.
- True Christianity teaches that since God, as sovereign ruler, has ultimate authority, he alone is the final arbiter of justice. Therefore, all creatures, Christians and non-Christians, have a moral obligation to obey his laws (Rom. 2:12-16), even if they contradict man's laws (Acts 5:29)— Using the example of a photographer opting out of shooting a "gay wedding," they are choosing to honor the highest authority rather than compromise his conscience before God. The laws referenced here are the moral laws set out in the Old Testament and the New Testament (Ex. 20; Gal. 6:2). The national laws of the OT only applied to the nation of Israel, and the sacrificial laws of the OT are fulfilled in Christ.
- True Christianity teaches that every person, male and female, of every race and nationality is an image bearer of God and is equal before God (Gen. 1:26-28). This means primarily that humans are made by God to take dominion over the earth reflecting the rule of God on the earth. Christians are therefore moral creatures, consciously

knowing God's moral law, in ways that animals do not (Rom. 1:18-23).

- True Christianity teaches that every person without exception has sinned and broken God's moral law (Rom. 3:23) and is therefore deserving of spiritual death in hell (Rom. 6:23). The moral law includes numerous sins including stealing, coveting, idolatry, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality among others (1 Tim. 1:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21). It can be summed up in the love of God and the love of neighbor (Matt. 22:40). Homosexuality and other sexual orientations that are contrary to God's law are therefore not on the same ground as race or sex (as created as good by God)—they in fact are a violation of God's law.
- True Christianity teaches that every person is in desperate need of rescue from God's wrath. Every person is a wretched sinner, whose heart beats for the gratification of self, and there is no amount of "willing" or "running" a person could do in trying to obey the law that would change the fact that we are all law-breakers without exception (Rom. 9:16).
- True Christianity teaches that Christ in his love and mercy has absorbed the penalty we deserved by dying for our sins on the cross (Rom. 5:6-11). His resurrection is proof that those who seek refuge in him will also escape the penalty of death (2 Cor. 4:13-15) and inherit his righteous deeds so they can stand before God (2 Cor. 5:21).
- True Christianity teaches that every person must repent of their sin and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Only Jesus Christ, the perfect law-keeper and atonement-maker, is a legitimate refuge from God's wrath and punishment for sin (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Furthermore, the Christian life is one of continual repentance towards Christ and faith in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 2:12-13). Therefore when a Christian calls for another's repentance before God, it is not a hypocritical "we" verses "them" statement, but rather a call

to walk the path of repentance that each of us is already on—and it's a path of the most love and grace and mercy than one could possibly imagine.

- True Christianity teaches Christians to not "hate" anyone, but rather teaches us to be compelled by the love of Jesus Christ to love God and neighbor (Lk. 10:25-37; Gal. 5:14). Jesus even loved and forgave those who killed him (Lk. 23:34). Following his example Christians strive to walk in a manner of love towards all (1 Jn. 4:7).
- True Christianity teaches that the most loving thing a Christian can do for another person is to point them to the only hope they have, the only Savior of souls in the universe, Jesus Christ. Like a lone rescue boat in a vast ocean, he is the only hope for humanity (Acts 4:12). Therefore, calling someone to turn from their sin, whether it is drunkenness or thievery or homosexuality, and then pointing them towards Christ is not a "bigoted" action, but an act of love (Acts 3:19).
- True Christianity teaches that darkness always attempts to overtake the light (Jn. 1:5), and Satan always attempts to distort truth (Jn. 8:44). Those that do not know Christ are blind to the moral implications of God's law and remain in darkness under the control of Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-6). We all once resided in this darkness, but for the Christian, Christ has called us out of darkness into his light (Col. 1:13). Therefore the Christian's battle is now not against the liberal media, or Muslims, or post-moderns, but against Satan and the principalities and forces of darkness who oppose the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 6:10-12).
- True Christianity teaches that Christians will be persecuted and hated by these forces of darkness and by people under the spell of darkness (Mark 13:13). After all, if Christ was hated for announcing God's kingdom rule in himself, why should we expect to be treated

better for identifying with him (Jn. 15:20)?

- True Christianity teaches that the most hardened sinner, specifically those who hate and abhor God and God's laws, are not outside the reach of the grace of God (Matt. 9:12). Saul, a persecutor of the church and a murderer of Christians, was radically converted by an act of the grace and mercy of God, even while he was uttering threats against Christians (Acts 9).
- True Christianity teaches that there is hope in Christ that He will one day return, judge everyone, set all wrongs right, and make all things new (1 Cor. 15). In the end, every person, Christ follower and Christ hater will bow before Jesus Christ in worship, some in eternal heaven, others in eternal hell (Philippians 2:10-11).
- True Christianity teaches that today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). If you are reading this and you hate the laws of God and have rejected Christ, it is not too late to turn to Christ in repentance and faith. If you do, you will find more rest for your soul than you could possibly imagine and pleasures in a deep, intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Pray that God would open your eyes to the darkness of your sin and the beauty and righteousness of Jesus Christ, who died for sinners like you and like me.

3. Courage and Risk Taking

This could be the toughest one to succeed at as it involves dying to the flesh. In order to retain a strong Christian testimony and be true to your testimony and "core values," you must be courageous enough to take calculated risks. At times, this requires you to trust yourself enough to challenge the status quo and push the envelope of conventional wisdom – even if this means putting your reputation and friendships on the line. John Piper says it best, "Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing

regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ. An act takes courage if it will likely be painful. The pain may be physical, as in war and rescue operations. Or the pain may be mental as in confrontation and controversy. Courage is indispensable for both spreading and preserving the truth of Christ."

Courage and risk taking will sometimes lead to confrontation. We need courage to confront difficult situations in our jobs, our families, our communities and even in our churches. Confrontation requires that we overcome the fear, and cultivate a Godly courage in us. Yes, confrontation is uncomfortable. But when we know something must be confronted, and we shirk our responsibility to do so, we give into cowardice. We need to have the courage to step into a difficult situation to confront with grace and truth. Courage grows in us.

Christians judge one another by what is right and wrong and how each one lives. The righteousness of others offends the consciences of many people while evil offends the consciences of others. It is widely believed that a "true" Christian will not cause waves. By that I mean that they will go along with the existing state of affairs even if they are in opposition to what the Bible teaches. Christians are not immune from following the general consensus, giving into peer pressure, and conceding decisions based on insecurity. Christian peer pressure can be the vilest form of pressure and at its base it is a lack of Biblical knowledge. We need to have the courage to stand up for what we believe is right even at the cost of alienating others or taking harsh criticism.

4. Genuine Care to Advance Others

Understanding what inspires happiness in those who support your leadership as a disciple is critically important. Throughout your leadership journey you must continue to learn how to better serve others and genuinely

support their spiritual advancement and overall engagement at work.

The process of serving and advancing other spiritually requires us to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine our thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us and to disciple others to walk in His way.

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect," 1 Peter 3:15

According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth characterized by the following:

1. Putting Jesus first in all things.

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34-38). The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.

2. Following Jesus' teachings

"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you

will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32). We must be obedient children and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God

“Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day.” (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death.

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8).

3. Fruitfulness

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5-8). Our job is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be new conduct (thoughts, words and actions) representative of that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

4. Love for other disciples

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35). We are told that love of other

believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family

“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,^[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^[b]⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part,¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

These verses show us that love is not an emotion; it is action. We must be doing something and involved in the process. Furthermore, we are told to think more highly of others than of ourselves and to look out for their interests. *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-*

4). The next verse in Philippians (verse 5) really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything in life: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. What a perfect example He is to us for everything we are to do in our Christian walk.

5. Evangelism

Making disciples of others, *“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers about the wonderful changes Jesus Christ has made in our lives. No matter what our maturity level in the Christian life, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we don't really know enough or haven't been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God. They may not know a lot of Bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God, and that is exactly what we are to share.*

6. Responsibility and Accountability

Legacy building is about being mindful of the opportunity and the responsibility you have to serve your own advancement by serving others. Only you can set the tone and define the performance standards that you expect for yourself and from others. As such, you must be incredibly self-disciplined to hold yourself accountable to consistently deliver to those standards every day, every step of the way. It is now up to you to create this “living legacy” based upon your personal Christian walk. John C. Maxwell sums it up best, “Your talk

talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.” Or your words, (what you say), and your actions, (what you do), need to match. In fact, the reality is that people will judge you more by your actions than by your words and your family will be your toughest critics because they see you when the lights are out.

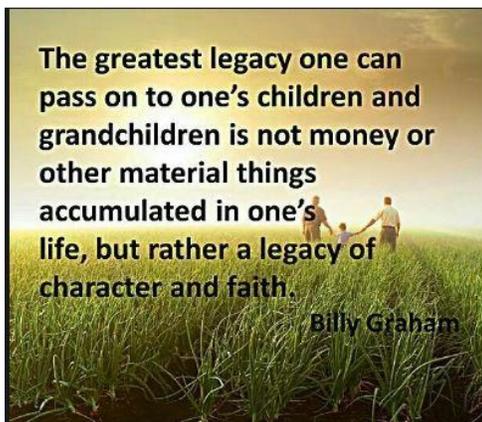
The legacy that you leave behind will only survive if its genuine. Consistency in what you do is one of the most important factors in your credibility as a disciple. It gives you trust, makes you believable. I’ve heard it said that, “Consistency begins with what you say, is demonstrated by what you do, but is validated in who you are. It is actually at this deeper level that you will find the strength and courage to resist the pressure to compromise in ways that make you inconsistent, especially when circumstances are difficult.” Your life needs to mirror your values.

Leaving a legacy is an important part of your life's work. A legacy develops from a life dedicated to self-reflection and purpose. What will be revealed and what will endure is a truthful and value driven body of living.

Joan Moran

The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.

Billy Graham





PRAYER LIST

- ✓ Continuing Prayers for loss: All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19.
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs: Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs: The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries: BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy, Vitel
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs: Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman, George Bizadellis

- ✓ Continuing Prayers for: The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect. Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic especially Mylin and Errol Lardizabal and Liza Mitchell.

NEW

- ✓ Erwin Lickmann is requesting prayer for decisions to be made regarding the future living arrangements for himself and Elizabeth. A decision needs to be made soon. Also the sale of his condominium.
- ✓ Alex Figueroa, (relative of Al Nuzikowski) Final year medical student coming to Chicago for a second opinion regarding necessary eye surgery.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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