

Leaving a Legacy

For anyone who wants to make a difference
for the next generation



Gayla M. Baughman

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I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

2 Timothy 1:5 NIV



Introduction

Allow me to start by addressing those readers who have never had children or do not plan to marry. A fair question would be, “Why should I worry about leaving a legacy when I don’t have anyone to leave it to?” Whether someone has had children or not, the potential to impact another person’s life is evident. Many teach Sunday School or care for children every week. Others have precious nieces and nephews that spend hours with them. Those who feel they have no one to leave a legacy to must reconsider based on the fact that they are already making lasting impressions on someone else. There is a large community of people who, for whatever reason have not birthed children of their own, but who have made an impact on someone else’s child. **Relevant Magazine** quotes Christine Cain, founder of Propel Women “. . . today more than 70 percent of mothers in North America work, and 53 percent of women are single; 48 percent will never birth biological children . . . and yet, 80 percent of all Christian books are written to women and read by women, but those books are written to the stay-at-home mother, which is awesome for about 20 percent of American

women . . . A lot of us are talking to an audience that is no longer there.”²

It is not my intention to overlook anyone who can have a lasting influence on a child, a friend, or a younger relative. We all have the opportunity to invest in the future of the next generation. If we don't have biological children of our own playing around our feet, we may have to search more intently for those with whom we can make an impact. When I refer to our children and grandchildren, please know that this does not restrict our influence to just the biological family.

The word “legacy” means a gift left by a will, especially of money or other personal property; something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor. So, anything we leave our children or grandchildren can be called a legacy. Yes, an inheritance is usually money or personal property; but can it be more than that? I believe that we can leave an eternal legacy to those who follow us. It is not our usual thinking to be concerned about the generations to come, but when we consider the value of leaving a spiritual legacy, its importance becomes paramount, especially to our own children and grandchildren.

² Tyler Huckabee. “Yes we Cain.” Relevant Magazine, Issue 77, September-October 2015. 85-87.

Some people say the most important thing we can leave behind is a good name. I agree that a good name is very important. It is pivotal to live in such a way that when people say our name, they remember that we lived a life of integrity and honesty. That is a good thing to leave when we are gone. Others feel we should leave our children financial security, which is not a bad goal to work toward. It would be nice if our children didn't have to work as hard as we did to secure a home, live comfortably, and have retirement security. This would be ideal, but many of us don't have estates, large bank accounts or financial stocks and bonds to leave our children. Though we may not have a million-dollar inheritance to leave them, working for what they have is healthy. People seem to appreciate what they have more when they have invested work and sweat in it.

Sam Walton was the founder of the well-known Walmart discount stores. Andy Serwer gives us some insight into the richest family in America in an article he wrote for **Fortune Magazine**. He stated that Sam was born in 1918 and bought his first store in 1945. By 1982 he was the richest man in the United States. Even after he dispersed his fortune among his four children, Rob, John, Jim and Alice, the fortune kept growing. Several years later, the family owned about 39% of Walmart stock. This drove their net worth to over \$90 billion, by far the richest family in America. "Family members didn't grow up rich. They were

small-town kids whose dad happened to own a handful of successful stores. The big money didn't come into their lives until they were adults . . .”³ As of December, 2014, **Forbes Magazine** states that the Waltons are now worth \$165 billion, the largest family fortune in the world.⁴ The Walton family is a great example of the American dream, but the reality is that this happens to very few families. The average legacy or inheritance is significantly smaller in comparison.

If someone were to ask, “Don’t you want your children to have the best?” Of course we do. We want our children and grandchildren to have a good education. We want them to be well-dressed and have lots of friends. We want them to be able to live their lives without poverty or money concerns. However, the lasting legacy we leave them is not temporal things like money, land, or a thriving business. Our legacy is spiritual and eternal. The values God has placed in our hearts through His Word will transcend the grave and we will establish an eternal heritage for the next generation.

³ Andy Serwer. “The Waltons, Inside America’s Richest Family.” *Fortune Magazine*, November 15, 2004. <http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2004/11/15/8191093/index.htm>.

⁴ Luisa Kroll. “Sam Walton’s Granddaughter Has Plans to Fix Public Education In America.” *Forbes Magazine*. December 1, 2014. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/luisakroll/2014/12/01/sam-waltons-granddaughter-has-plans-to-fix-public-education-in-america>>.

So many wonderful things come to mind as we think about the eternal legacy we can leave our loved ones. Can we “pass down” a love for God’s Word to our children? Is it possible to pass down intercessory prayer to our grandchildren? Can we bequeath righteousness? What are some other values we can leave our loved ones? We can leave a legacy of modesty, integrity, honesty, unconditional love, and many other biblical truths to our children, but we must be intentional in doing so. We cannot just live life and hope they “get it”. We “live to leave,” so that when we die, our values live on.



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