



**VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH**  
**SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS**

# UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World

Leaving a Legacy—Acts 20:17–38

Tim Badal | January 20, 2019



It's a pleasure to have you with us. Please turn in God's Word to the book of Acts as we continue in our "Unstoppable" Series. We've been looking at Luke's account of the early church, seeing how God used people to change their world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and through our own perseverance and faith, we too can effect great changes through the gospel of Jesus Christ, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those around us. We see from their example how an ordinary group of people can do extraordinary things with the help of an extraordinary God.

This morning we'll pick up in Acts 20, where we'll be reading about Paul's third missionary journey. He's been moving from city to city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and into ancient Macedonia (now Greece). In today's passage, Paul was in the city of Miletus, on the coast of Asia Minor near the Aegean Sea, where he met with a group of elders from the church he had started in Ephesus.

Earlier Paul had gone back to many of the churches he had planted, helping them with their problems and encouraging them. But this visit in Miletus was different. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem to carry a gift he had collected from all the Gentile churches to give to the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem. These people were in great need due to a long famine.. Even though he was hurrying to get to them, Paul stopped in Miletus and called for the Ephesian elders to meet him there. He had some important things he needed to tell them. He was aware that this would be the last opportunity he would have to say goodbye to these men, as his next journey would be to Rome which proved to be his last trip as he was eventually martyred there for his faith.

Paul especially loved the church in Ephesus as he had stayed there longer than he stayed in any other city, with the exception of Corinth. We will be reading his farewell address to some elders he was very close to, men he had probably appointed to their position himself.

I want to point out a couple things before we read this passage. Just like the church in Ephesus, Village Bible Church is led by a group of men called elders. The Bible uses three Greek words to refer to elders that give us some information about the role and the men who fill it.

The first word is *presbuteros*, which implies that an elder was spiritually mature, had walked with the Lord and walked around the schemes of the devil for a long time, so as a result he would not be prone to pride. Another word is *episkopos*, which described the elder as an overseer who was to watch over the lives and affairs of the people, leading them into a holy walk before God. Finally, there is the word *poimen*, which is a shepherd. Thus, an elder was to be a mature man whose job was to oversee the affairs of the church through caring for the people as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cared for them.

Also, it is clear in the New Testament that the elder was never to act alone, but always in the company of other shepherds. We see in this Acts text that Paul spoke to a group of men from the same church. It's awesome that now, 2,000 years later, we too are structured under the same leadership as this New Testament church.

Our Scripture this morning is specifically Paul's instructions to these elders, so it will be especially important for myself and the other elders present to listen to his words carefully. These men have been given by God to fill a "foster care" relationship with the people around you. We who are your leaders covet your prayers—for us and for our families—that we would live lives in accordance with the Scriptures so that all of us would be led well.

This passage applies in many ways to all the people of God, not only to the elders, so all of us can gain wisdom from Paul's words. We should also note that because it was Paul's farewell address, he was putting into words the legacy he hoped to leave for them. He described his heart for these people and his deep wish that they would continue to honor God and honor the church. For us as well, it is good when we're saying goodbye to review the things that have been of value in that relationship.

As we come to the Word this morning, you'll see that I'm going to lean heavily into its application for us. I believe Paul wanted not only to express his love for the church, but also to communicate what would come to the church after he was no longer there. Thus, my goal today is to consider what it means to leave a legacy. As we evaluate our own lives, we must ask, "What am I doing today that will leave a legacy for tomorrow?" The word "legacy" is a fascinating word, because it not only speaks about the future but also impacts today. The American philosopher William James said, "The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast you." Let me ask you this morning, "What kind of legacy do you want to leave?"

The first question you need to ask regarding a legacy is, "Who is it for?" Most people say all of us have received a legacy that's about two generations old. Those of us who are parents will leave a legacy for our children. But because we live as long as we do, most of us not only live to see our children, but also our children's children. Sometimes we even see a third generation. Our legacy is normally left to people who are close to us.

Paul knew he was leaving, and the legacy he was most concerned to leave involved how a church should function, so that when he was gone the people he was speaking with would pass this on to the following generations. When it's done right, a good legacy lasts longer than simply one or two generations, but it can go for a thousand generations as people receive and pass along its model. As I said, the early church left a legacy to generation after generation, so here we are, 2,000 years later, on the other side of the planet, and we're still following their legacy model.

A legacy is not something we decide to come up with just before we die. The spiritual inheritance we give to future generations cannot be made quickly. If you want to leave a legacy for tomorrow, then it requires that you live it today. What then should your priorities be today? Are these things positioning your legacy to bring glory and honor to God and to benefit those who come after you?

Paul lived his legacy and he was able to leave a legacy for years to come because he had done it well. So how was he living in such a way that this good legacy was built? I have six things to give you today that I think answer this question, six ways we should live today so that we might leave a good legacy for tomorrow. I'll walk through our text and apply these principles that I believe are clearly seen in Paul's life and example. I believe these qualities will not only benefit our children, but also in a corporate sense should benefit the church that will meet here in 2088 when we are all long gone. Does the legacy we are leaving mean that when they look back, they will see a life of faithfulness and obedience? Will they see people who sought to serve others instead of themselves? Or are we simply living for the here and now, not thinking of what tomorrow may bring? How we view our legacy tomorrow will determine the steps we take today.

## **We need to live authentically.**

Paul tells us that if we want to leave a legacy that honors God tomorrow, we need to start living authentically today. Let's start reading in Acts 20:17: *"Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him."* One of the commentators says that the reason Paul didn't go to Ephesus is because he knew if he did, he would never leave because he loved them so much.

He got off the boat in Miletus and called for the elders to come to him. He knew he would have to leave when the boat left and that would make it easier. It wasn't a far journey for them—maybe it took one or two days by foot. Verse 18: *"And when they came to him, he said to them: 'You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia.'"* In essence Paul was telling them, "No matter what accolades I have or how awesome people think I am, I did not put myself above you." He could have lived separately or surrounded himself with an entourage of handlers who would not allow common people to reach him—something that many celebrities today will do.

In other words, authentic living requires that we live transparently. Paul reminded them that they knew he had lived among them “*the whole time....*” They saw his comings and goings. They witnessed his struggles and issues. They saw his accomplishments, but also his sorrows and losses. They knew his sins and they held him accountable for them.

Paul also spoke of his transparency to other people. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2, where we realize that transparency was the key to Paul’s ministry. An elder’s transparency is the key to our ministry and Christian transparency is the key to all community.

*<sup>1</sup> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.... <sup>2</sup> As you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.... <sup>5</sup> For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.... <sup>9</sup> For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> For you know how, like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup> we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

He was essentially reminding these believers that he had lived his life authentically and transparently before them. They knew everything about him. Does that mean everyone knew every gross detail of his life? No. There was a measure of decorum to be observed. Even God Himself doesn’t reveal everything about Himself to us. I’m not implying that transparency means complete nakedness about your life, but others need to have a sense that what they’re seeing is the real you.

Paul told the Ephesians and the Thessalonians, “You know the real Paul. I’m not faking anything. You know my real concerns, my dreams, my desires, my temptations. You know me.” But let me ask you this: do the people closest to you know the real you? Your closest friends, the people you attend church with, your close coworkers—do they know the real you or have they bought into a lie you’ve been telling them? Are you transparent and authentic about who you are?

The Christian life cannot be lived without authenticity and transparency, which involves two things. First, we need humility. We have to be able to look at ourselves honestly. Paul said, “I am a servant of the Lord. I’m not a superstar.” Actually, the word servant is also translated slave. Paul considered himself to be a slave to God. He served a Master.

If we have any thoughts of grandeur, as Christians we should set them aside. Humility realizes that no matter what we earn or can do, at the end of the day we’re bondservants of Christ. It doesn’t matter who’s reading our books or speaking our praise or how many people are in our church. We are all servants, and when we can humbly acknowledge this, it brings us to the second characteristic of authenticity, which is honesty. Humility breeds honesty. When I am humble, I’m willing to share my hurts, concerns, foibles, and struggles with others. But if I’m proud and trying to live a lie, I can’t tell people these things. Instead, I need to protect my image and reputation. So I tell people things that make them think I’m better than I am.

Just think how small groups would be changed if we were all authentic and transparent, if we were honest and humble about who we are. It’s odd that as Christians, we can admit we’re sinners, but we never talk about anything specific. We know salvation requires us to acknowledge our sins, but often they’re nameless sins that no one knows about. To be sure, wisdom requires that we share these things tactfully.

Paul was speaking to a group of people who knew him well. We shouldn’t go into a group of people we don’t know and say, “Hey, let me list all my sins in gross detail.” Ask yourself: “Do the people who are closest to me know the real me?” Some of us should be given Academy Awards for our acting ability as we try to keep up an image that is not authentic. Actually, it’s a very sad existence trying to live a life that’s not real, when the real you is screaming to come out. Paul told the men, “I lived authentically, honestly and humbly before you.”

## **We need to live boldly.**

Move on to Acts 20:19 where Paul said he was “*serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.*” The book of Acts records three times when the Jews came to where he was and tried to kill him. He could have quit because of this, but instead he said:

*<sup>20</sup> I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house <sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.*

Paul had good reasons to back off and take his foot off the gas, but he didn’t. There were three things that caused him anxiety and there are three things that will also keep us from living boldly for Christ.

First, Paul faced trials. Trials also come into our lives and cause us to be gun shy of taking big steps of faith. We're considering taking a step for God, but then we think, "What if this happens? What if this continues? I'd better hedge my bets with God, because this could bring trouble."

The second challenge to living boldly for God comes in giving our testimony. In order to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost and needy world, we must recognize that not everyone is going to be glad to hear it. In fact, some people will become angry or frustrated by our willingness to speak boldly about something that's so countercultural in our day.

Third, we may not want to live boldly because of what tomorrow might bring. There are always unknowns and it's easy for us to give up rather than risk what might come. Paul was very aware of the prophecies that warned him of persecutions that would be coming. Even Jesus Himself told Paul that he would be experiencing great affliction. Paul could easily have assumed that his tomorrows would be a lot like his yesterdays that were filled with pain and sufferings, which might have led him to give up.

But in both verse 20 and verse 27 of Acts 20, Paul assures them he "*did not shrink*" from the things he was called to do. The Greek word for shrink is *hupostello* which means to draw back or retreat. Paul did not retreat from his faith or his calling when he encountered hardships. Rather, he continued to boldly share the gospel regardless of the consequences. And even when his tomorrow was unknown, he never stopped. One way to understand *hupostello* is to think of a turtle. Whenever a turtle is threatened, it protects itself by retreating into its shell. Nobody can see it and it's safely contained under the shell. Yet when it's in there, it also cannot move forward. Some of us are shell-shocked turtles, not moving forward for the cause of Christ. It might be because of trouble, because we're afraid to share the testimony of Jesus Christ, or it could be due to our anxiety about the future.

Paul told the people he had not shrunk back and that should be inspiration to us that we also should never shrink back. Nowhere in the book of Acts is protective Christianity mandated or even endorsed. Rather, what we are encouraged to do is live passionate, bold and confident Christianity that storms the gates of hell, regardless of trouble, whom we need to share the testimony with or what tomorrow may bring.

How did Paul become so bold? He knew and trusted the promises of God. We read this in Romans 8:31, where he wrote, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" He continues in verse 37, "*We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*" God will do good in the lives of those He loves and whom He has called according to His purpose. Paul essentially was saying, "If I have the love of Christ in me and moving through me, then I can do whatever He calls me to do, confident that He will care for the rest of my circumstances. All I need to do is trust and obey."

How boldly are you living today? What's holding you back? Is it a trial you're facing? Are you not bold in your testimony? A lot of you are going to struggle with *hupostello* tomorrow at work or at school, going into your shell instead of proclaiming the love of Christ when an opportunity comes.

## **We need to live intentionally.**

Corresponding to our need to live boldly, we also need to live intentionally. When we live authentically and boldly, we position ourselves for the way Christ calls us to live. Look at Paul's testimony in Acts 20:24–27:

*24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*

As Paul lived authentically and boldly, it moved him to understand the purpose for his life. He clearly identifies the reason for our lives here on earth. In order to live the full measure of what we're created to be, we must live with Christ at the center of all things. For Paul, life had no value apart from his ability to finish the course for which God had created him.

Without Christ, our lives are worthless. You might say, "Wait a minute, Pastor. I find joy in these things in life." That's true. But if you feast on the good things in life, you will never enjoy the greater things God has for you when Christ is at the center. When the good replaces the great, that's called idolatry. It's not that God doesn't want us to enjoy good things, but they cannot be allowed to replace the great things God has ordained us to have.

Young person, please realize that without Christ, your life has no value. Old person, realize that without Christ, your life has no value. Poor or rich, male or female, new to the faith, old to the faith—or still searching for the faith—your life without Christ is worthless. You and I become base animals that go about our habitat eating and drinking and living life, thinking we've enjoyed all

of it, only to die and there's nothing left. But if we know Christ and if He has called us into a relationship with Himself, then He has promised to give us life—and not just ordinary life, but abundant life (John 10:10). Paul was saying, "If I don't have Jesus in my life, I have nothing. So I'm going to live differently and I'm going to take the message of Christ to a lost world that needs it."

In verse 26, Paul said something strange: *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you."* What's he talking about? Why is he talking about innocence and guilt? If we go back to Ezekiel 33:7–8, we can understand what he's alluding to, and it has massive implications for how we are to live our lives intentionally for the gospel. Here's what God told Ezekiel:

*<sup>7</sup> So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.*

In other words, God is telling Ezekiel, "I've made you the watchman for the household you live in. Be aware that there are enemies all around. When I tell you they're coming to destroy everyone in the house, your job is to take that message to everyone in the house. Tell them to prepare for the pending destruction. But it's not up to you to make them believe you. You are only guilty when you don't warn them."

Paul was therefore telling these men, "I did not shrink back, but boldly testified about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as a watchman, I am no longer guilty if you decide not to receive my message and end up in hell." This serves as a challenge to us. When those in our circle whom we spend the most time with—our neighbors, our family members, our coworkers, our classmates, those who work out with us—when they stand before God and are asked, "Did you trust My Son as your Savior?", if they answer no, then it will be their sin that puts them into an eternal hell. But will they be able to say to God, "Nobody warned me. Nobody told me of the coming destruction"? Will they not wonder why the Christian who was sitting next to them in the cubicle for years said nothing, or the classmate who went to school with them year after year? Will your neighbors say, "He shoveled my driveway, but he never showed me the way of salvation"? It's there, my friends, that you and I will have blood on our hands.

It should grip us with great fear and trepidation that we would live around people and never once declare to them the full gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we love them enough to say, "Even if my testimony to the gospel strains our relationship, at least you are now warned of the impending train that's headed down the track to destroy you—and everybody else in its path." We need to warn them, "Get off the track—a train is coming."

What friend or close associate of yours has never heard the gospel? There's blood on your hands, and on mine, because we've not been the watchman God calls us to be. You might say, "Well, I'm not an evangelist." That's fine. You don't need to dedicate your life to public proclamation of God's Word, but if you were to see a friend on a railroad track with a train headed toward them, knowing that when the train and the friend collide, the friend will lose that battle, are you going to say, "That's not my gift to warn them." That's malarkey. You scream and yell and warn, "Get off the track! Hell and damnation are coming your way and I love you too much to let that happen."

Charles Spurgeon, one of my favorite preachers, said this—and it burns in my heart: "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees, imploring them to stay. And if hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not one go unwarned and not prayed for." Who do you live life with daily right now who is a sinner on their way to hell? Have you warned them of the calamity that's coming their way? We need to live intentionally by being gospel carriers to the world around us.

## **We need to live carefully.**

Paul then turned his attention to the elders specifically, so this is a message specifically for myself and my fellow elders. He said this, beginning in verse 28:

*<sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

Paul speaks to the elders, as I do right now, saying, "You are leaving a legacy. But your legacy isn't for tomorrow's generation—it's for today's church. So be careful. Pay close attention." The idea is that they should be constantly evaluating their own lives and spiritual state.

Sadly, far too many churches have surrounded pastors who preach great sermons, but who fall to greater sins. I pray that by God's grace that will never be said of me and this ministry. As elders, we need to understand that our lives are important because others will follow after us. Our marriages are important because other marriages will model themselves after ours. Our parenting is important because there are those who look to us for how to parent in a godly manner. Our money management is important because some in our church want to know what it means for a Christian to manage his money wisely.

Richard Baxter wrote a book called *To Elders and Pastors* in which he said this: "Take heed to yourselves, elders, lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing; lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food." What is he saying? While you're in the process of instructing others on how to not perish, be careful that you're not perishing yourself. While you're feeding others, don't let yourself go hungry.

What a terrible thing for those who have been called to be elders in our church to keep watch over others' lives but in the process not care for their own. We need to be careful. Elders, your greatest enemy is not your critic. Your greatest enemy is not the troublemaker in the church. Your greatest enemy is not an unbelieving world or the devil or a wayward congregation. Brothers, listen carefully. Elders of Village Bible Church, your greatest enemy and my greatest enemy is ourselves. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we are right. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we are holy. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we are doing the right work in the right time and the right way, all the while building kingdoms for ourselves.

When I focus too much on pleasing myself, when I make things too much about me, I destroy my own life. And when an elder destroys his own life, he begins to destroy the flock under his care. Elders, we have been given a foster ministry. These people are not our own. The Bible says Jesus bought this flock with His own blood and He has appointed us to foster care for them. We are to be concerned about the needs of the flock under our care. But if we don't take care of ourselves, we are no good to the flock around us. In fact, we are a cancer to their very bones. Elders, we need to pay close attention not only to ourselves, but also to the flock under our care. That means we are not to be spiritual policemen who go around handing demerits to people. "Oh, you blew it there. I'm so glad I'm an elder; elders don't act that way." Baloney!

According to Galatians 6:1, we are a rescue patrol that searches for people who have fallen into sin and we are to help them in love, mercy and grace to pull themselves out of their sin, all the while being careful—holding on to other elders—so we ourselves don't fall into the same pit. Live carefully.

What is good for the leaders of the church is also good for each one of us. Let me tell you, Christian, if you want to leave a legacy for tomorrow, you can't keep getting tripped up today. What sin, what issue, what obstacle is keeping you from leaving a godly legacy for your children and your children's children? We have to live carefully, because as the text says, not everything that glitters is gold. Not everyone around us is a lamb—some are wolves in sheep's clothing. We need to be on guard and not fall for the devil's traps. The more we fall into his traps, the less opportunity we have to leave a legacy for tomorrow.

## **We need to live generously.**

In Acts 20:33–35, Paul says:

<sup>33</sup> *I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.* <sup>34</sup> *You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.* <sup>35</sup> *In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

This may be the most important takeaway, because it encompasses all the others. You and I will never leave a legacy if we consume more than we give. I will not leave an inheritance for my children or for my children's children if I eat up all I have with nothing left over.

In fact, the Bible says that when a man does that, he's worse than an infidel. He's as low as it gets. How can you consume all you have, taking, taking, taking, but never giving—especially to your family? Paul says, "Let us not forget the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who said it is better to give than to receive."

Let me ask, are you giving more than you're taking? Of course, that question is a financial one. Paul knew these Gentiles had just given a large sum of money to take care of the needs of the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem. This is a reminder for us as well this morning. In your life, in your marriage, are you taking more than you give? If one spouse is taking more than they give, the marriage will grow cold or might even become a combat zone.

Parents, are you giving more than you're taking from your kids? Older kids—junior high, high school, and college—are you giving more than you take from your parents? We have selfish kids around, but I want to remind us as parents, we can be selfish as well. Maybe our TV or our football game or other desires have become more important than spending time with our kids. Maybe you kids think the world revolves around you, but you have no idea what your parents are sacrificing on your behalf. It is better to give than to receive.

Or what about at work? Paul mentions that he works with his hands, and you, too, can work to provide for yourself so no one else has to take care of you. Are you going to work tomorrow with the understanding that it is better to give than to receive? Rather than focusing on what you get in your paycheck, ask yourself, "How can I give to my boss, to my company, so they can see I'm making a difference and be glad I'm there?"

What about in your neighborhood? Or in the church ministry? Is it bad to receive? No. It's good. I've received a lot of great things and there's good that comes from those things, but as has been said by a famous writer, "Good is the enemy of great." Sometimes we enjoy the good so much we never get to the great.

Maybe you've been receiving from God and from others and that's good. But God wants to give you the great and what He's saying is, "Start giving to others." Why does Paul mention Jesus? Jesus was the example of a person who never took but always gave. What did He get from us? Shame, sorrow, anger, and resentment. He was spat on, beaten, abused, and hung on a cross for our sins, not for His own. We gave Him all of that and in return He gives us the indescribable gift of salvation. As Christians, it is far better for us to be like Jesus than to be like sinners—better to give than to be on the receiving end.

## **We need to live affectionately.**

Let's read verses 36–38:

*<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.*

Who is your legacy for? I want you to write down some names of people you love most. I don't want you to just think of the people in the present. I would have names like Amanda, Noah, Joshua and Luke. I'd have my nieces and nephews, my brothers and sisters. I'd have my parents in there. But a legacy is for tomorrow, so now I need to start thinking, "Okay, my boys are going to get married one day and they're going to have kids. I don't know what their names are, but Grandbaby A, Grandbaby B, Grandbaby 357." Who are the people at my workplace I want to leave a legacy for? My employees' names would be there. The staff of this church would be in there. Write down some names on that list. Who are the people closest to you?

These are the people who will be the most impacted by your legacy. Paul said, "I want to leave a legacy for those I love, those I'm embracing and kissing, those who are sorrowful at my words that I'm leaving them for the last time and will never see them again." A legacy is an affectionate way of saying, "I love you. You mean so much to me that I want to leave you with something. Whether I'm with you in person or gone forever, I want to leave an inheritance—something that will guide you closer to Jesus."

Think of those names you've written. How are you living today in a way that best causes these people to grow closer to God as a result? What are you doing now to radiate the love of Christ, so when they stand before God they can say with confidence, "I rebelled against You, Jesus, but it wasn't because this person didn't repeatedly tell me that You were Lord and Savior and I needed to bow my knee to You. They warned me, but I didn't listen?"

But how awesome will it be when we get to heaven and people we've never met before will come and say to us, "You didn't know this, but I came to know Jesus because of you. You didn't know it, but because of your example in someone else's life, I came to know Jesus. I walk with Jesus and talk with Him now because of the legacy you left."

Paul said, "I don't even know who this is going to impact, but I want to leave a legacy that points people to Jesus and heaven." Do you want to leave a legacy? Then commit right now to living one today.