

## Leaving A Legacy of Faith

By Mark Jarvinen

We all live with uncertainty every day of our lives. On Thursday morning, a little after 7 a.m., I was saying good-bye to Martha who was leaving for the wedding of my nephew in Chicago, when I received a call from an Eagan police sergeant who said my services as a chaplain were needed at a death scene in Eagan.

A 66 year old retired army veteran had died without warning in his home, leaving behind an ex-wife from Korea, who had undergone a kidney transplant and a stroke several years ago, in addition to caring for the couple's 40 year old special needs son. And so, I found myself ministering to a woman who herself needed care, who was now left alone to care for her needy son.

Think of all the people, who are here one moment and gone the next, their legacies set in stone for better or for worse. In our country, when you walk through a cemetery, you typically see gravestones with the dates of a person's birth and death. In between those dates is usually a hyphen. **It is in the hyphen that legacies are left** – the time between a person's birth and death. Over the next several Sundays, we will consider in various aspects, the topic of **“Leaving a Godly Legacy,”** not only for our immediate families and friends, but also for future of generations of our nation and even the Church.

This morning, I want us to see where a godly legacy, one that impacts generations on into eternity, really begins. We will start in **Joshua 1** to look at his life as he assumes leadership of Israel after the death of Moses and ultimately see the impact of his life on those around him at the close of his life. Let's read **Joshua 1:6-9 (NLT)** –

<sup>6</sup> *“Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. <sup>7</sup> Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. <sup>8</sup> Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. <sup>9</sup> This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

## **I. LEAVING A GODLY LEGACY BEGINS WITH FAITH IN GOD.**

**Verse 9** says, *“... be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged.”* If you heard the Lord speak these words, you might ask yourself, “How is this possible? With a land of promise to possess, with enemies to face and obstacles to overcome, your advice, Lord, is simply to TRUST?” The Lord’s reply is “That’s right!” He emphatically declares, *“... for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”* God is with people who have faith in Him.

People in the Old Testament, although they didn’t yet know the name of Jesus, put their trust in God and in His provision for their salvation. For example, **Exodus 15:2** reads, *“The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”* And, **Isaiah 12:2** says, *“Surely God is my salvation.”* Today, on this

side of the cross of Christ, our ultimate object of faith is still God, but the immediate object of our faith is God in Christ, as we trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, for our salvation. Listen again to the passage read earlier from **Romans 3:23-26 (NLT)** –

*<sup>23</sup> For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. <sup>25</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, <sup>26</sup> for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.*

Notice **v. 25b** – ***“People are made right with God, when they believe (possess the gift of faith) that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.”*** In other words, God regards sinners, (who deserve nothing but condemnation,) as righteous (right with God) when confidence (faith) is placed in Christ's sacrifice (death on the cross) as the payment in full for our sins. Paul goes on to add in **v. 26** that during OT times God was ***“looking ahead and including them (OT people) in what he would do in this present time (the atoning work of Christ on the cross).*** This was God's way of showing himself to be just and fair to His people of promise (OT people of faith). And so, whether we're speaking of people under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant, salvation is by faith in the God who is with His people. **Therefore, as we speak about leaving a**

**Godly legacy that will impact future generations – it all begins with faith in Jesus Christ.**

You might be thinking, well Pastor Mark, that's a no-brainer. That goes without saying. Our faith is an assumed reality. The majority of us are here today as believers. Why take this time to stress this point? My response is ***“From God’s perspective, you are right.”*** After all, most of us here today are baptized Christians. God by His grace, having bestowed upon us in baptism, Christ’s saving work on the cross, and through this sacrament, having received us as His own, in most cases before we were consciously aware of it, has granted us, thereby, the gift of faith -- ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - ...”*** (Ephesians 2:8). However, from our ***human perspective***, it’s appropriate and even important to remind us all that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. **Why?** Because in more conversations than I care to admit, when I’ve asked people on what basis they believe God will invite them into His heaven when this life ends, the vast majority of the time, whether the person is church-ed or unchurch-ed, their answer revolves around a list of the good things they have done, or the hope that they’ve done enough. Friends, salvation is by faith alone in the finished work of Christ and it is God’s free gift to you. Therefore, as we speak of leaving a legacy for future generations, it’s not about how diligent you are in drawing attention to your noteworthy accomplishments, your deeds worthy of recognition and emulation by others. Rather, the legacy we leave as Christians is anchored in glorifying God, thanking

Him for His gracious gift of salvation and the many blessings He bestows upon us each day, which lead us into lives marked by good works. A Godly Legacy Begins With Faith.

## II. AS FAITH GROWS, SO GROWS A GODLY LEGACY.

Here's an important follow-up question: **Does faith grow?**

Look at **Luke 17:5-6** -

<sup>5</sup> *The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"*

<sup>6</sup> *He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."*

In this exchange, Jesus seems to place the emphasis more on the object of faith (himself) than on the quantity of faith (as small as a mustard seed). Asking Jesus to increase their faith alludes to the disciples' preoccupation with their level of performance rather than their dependence on Christ's power. And yet, it's not incorrect to speak of a growing faith. In **John 15:5**, Jesus refers to himself as "***the vine,***" and his disciples as "***the branches.***" Jesus goes on to say, "***If a man remains in me (abides in me) and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***" As we read on in **John 15**, we learn that the "**fruit**" mentioned by Jesus which is the outgrowth of living in close fellowship with him (abiding in Christ), are qualities such as glorifying the Father, being a disciple, loving Christ, experiencing the joy of Christ, and spiritual maturity (**cf. John 15:8-11**). This developing intimacy with Christ speaks of a growing faith in Him. Therefore, it's not a stretch to state that as faith grows, so grows a Godly legacy. This is what enabled the Apostle Paul, for

example, to state in **I Corinthians 4:16** – ***“Therefore I urge you to imitate me,”*** and for the author of **Hebrews** to write in **13:7** – ***“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”***

Now, getting back to the OT character, **Joshua**, what was his legacy of faith? How did his faith grow?

### **A) Faith is Nourished by God’s Word.**

In **Joshua 1:8a** the Lord said to Joshua, ***“Study this Book of Instruction continually.”*** God, in essence tells Joshua here, ***“I’ve told Moses many things and he’s written them down in the Book of the Law. Get very familiar with what I’ve said to Moses, because my counsel to him will guide you too.”*** In our lives, regular Bible study is an important component of abiding with Christ and growing in faith. Scripture grounds us in the faith, equips us to face trials and overcome obstacles, trains us in righteousness, and leads us into maturity. Part of the legacy of the Church of Berea mentioned in **Acts 17:11** was shaped by their study of Scripture – ***“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”***

### **B) Faith is Demonstrated by Obedience.**

**Joshua 1: 7b** says, ***“Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you.”*** And then, **Joshua 1:8b** says,

***“Meditate on it (God’s Word) ... so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”***

Prosper? Succeed in all I do? Who wouldn’t want to obey God’s Word? The truth is we’re often selective about which parts of God’s Word we’ll obey. We’ll do some, but not all. We’ll do what’s easy, perhaps even the moderately difficult, but everything? C’mon God, get real! Yet, **Abraham** was asked by God to sacrifice his only son Isaac, and proceeded in obedience, right up until God stopped him. After some convincing, **Moses** went to Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go.” **Daniel** kept praying, even though it meant he would be fed to the lions. And **Joshua**? He was willing to conquer and occupy the Promised Land even though it meant facing larger, better equipped armies, when his generals said there was no way to win.

### **C) Faith is Characterized by Courage.**

**Joshua 1:6** says, ***“Be strong and courageous ....”*** **Joshua 1:7** says, ***“Be strong and very courageous.”*** **Joshua 1:9** says, ***“This is my command – be strong and courageous!”***

Conquer the city of Jericho by having the priests blow their trumpets? You’ve got to be kidding, Lord! Yet, Joshua was courageous, risking ridicule, and guess what? We’re still talking about his faith today. As Joshua grew in courageous faith, his legacy grew.

Where is it that we risk looking foolish? Will we take a stand on something that cuts against the grain of society? Hold to a standard that is clear in God's Word yet the world no longer takes seriously? Maybe God is calling us to be more public about our faith and we're afraid to rock the boat. There are plenty of areas where we're called to swim upstream in a downstream world and it requires courageous faith. Our legacy grows as we take courageous steps of faith.

## **CONCLUSION**

How did things turn out for Joshua in terms of his legacy?  
Listen to **Joshua 24:28-31** -

*<sup>29</sup> After this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. <sup>30</sup> They buried him in the land he had been allocated, at Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. <sup>31</sup> The people of Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him—those who had personally experienced all that the LORD had done for Israel.*

Joshua's impact on his contemporaries was significant – the people of Israel served the Lord throughout his lifetime. But most importantly, Joshua's life had opened a portal for them to "personally experience" all that the Lord had done for Israel. A Godly legacy begins with faith and grows by faith, all the while pointing others to what the Lord has done. May what was true for Joshua be true for us as we seek to leave behind a legacy of faith. **A-men.**