

Cautionary Principles about Your Legacy

As our nation's leaders and citizens honored the memory of President Gerald R. Ford last month, I wish I had a dollar for every time a reporter or pundit used the word "legacy." The irony is that our 38th president was not fixated on his legacy. That's why all of us admired him.

"One of the greatest things about Gerald Ford as a former president was that he didn't say much," wrote Peggy Noonan in *The Wall Street Journal*. "He had no need for the spotlight. He was modest in the old-fashioned way of stepping aside and not getting in the way of the new guy."

"He kept a lot to himself," she added. "This was in part because he had a self to leave it to." Wow. Chew on that thought for a while! Noonan continued her weekly column with this quotable insight: "The legacy of a man who spends his time worrying about his legacy is always: He worried about his legacy."

So what does the idea of legacy have to do with your real world this month? In the midst of board meetings, budget battles, marketing, guest group management, summer staff recruitment, and the other 17 must-do-this-week priorities, why should you take a breath and think about your legacy?

On one hand, your legacy should be the furthest thing from your mind. On the other hand, you must think intentionally about your behavior and what motivates you. Take time to ponder at least four cautionary principles.

Legacy Caution No. 1: Your calling is more important than your legacy. Jesus didn't say, "Go into all the world and leave a legacy." Far from it. In 1 Chronicles 28:10, King David passes the baton to Solomon with this caution, "Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work." If there is to be a legacy, it will be the Lord's legacy—not yours. You just need to show up with the right heart. Caution! Don't try to steal the spotlight from the Holy God.

Legacy Caution No. 2: Your faithfulness and fruitfulness are more important than your legacy. David encourages Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:20: "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished."

Legacies (the Gerald Ford kind, the God-honoring kind) are built with daily faithfulness, blessed by our Father's closeness. It's the stuff of brick by brick, staff meeting by staff meeting, donor contact by donor contact, and teachable moment by teachable moment. It's one life transformation after another. It's not a sprint toward memorial celebrity.

Instead, it's "a long obedience in the same direction," Eugene Peterson's label for the path to becoming a disciple.

Legacy Caution No. 3: Your work is not routine or insignificant; it is God's work, and it is God's legacy. But remember that it's not about you. As David gives Solomon the blueprints to the temple, he tells the assembly, "this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God" (1 Chron. 29:1).



Listen to Bob discuss this month's issue.

actions

- * Study 1 Chronicles 28 and 29 with your team. (The Living Bible's phrasing is especially memorable.) Apply it to your heart first but note the powerful themes for your next talk or fund-raising event.
- * Schedule lunch with an older mentor (the President Ford kind), and talk about legacy.
- * At your next board meeting, divide into small groups and discuss, "How could we more intentionally honor God and His legacy here?"

As you lead and inspire your team (staff, board, donors, volunteers, vendors, guests, and others), model a holy intentionality. Appropriate those “mercies new every morning” and let them fuel a contagious spirit of freedom and joy in your workplace. Most of us are being paid to use the best hours of our day for God Himself. What a privilege!

Legacy Caution No. 4: Your work for God—your legacy—will be defined by your obedience in the details. In David’s final prayer at the fund-raising event for the temple, he asked God this: “And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided” (1 Chron. 29:19).

In the midst of this monster building project, David prays for Solomon’s attention to the details. Don’t delude yourself into thinking that big plans and big ideas are ingredients for big legacies. The conventional wisdom is that “the devil is in the details.” Wrong. Almighty God is in the details. Educator and theologian Elton Trueblood once said, “Pious shoddy is still shoddy.”

Finally, notice David’s heart in all of this. He didn’t exit with a board recommendation that the sign read, “King David’s Memorial Temple.” He thoughtfully and carefully prepared the stage for this spectacular kingdom handoff and asked the Father that Solomon would focus on the details.

Let’s live our lives in a way that honors God, not self.

perspectives

Honoring God

In the hustle-bustle of operations, programs, and other aspects of ministry, it can be easy to get distracted from our primary focus: honoring God. Dr. Calvin Wittman, a Baptist pastor in Colorado, offers suggestions for placing the Almighty first in our personal and professional lives.

- * **At home:** Jesus sometimes found welcoming rest in the homes of friends. It can be helpful to ask: If Jesus visited my home, would He be comfortable, or feel like an outsider as he observed my media choices, words, attitudes, relationships, and possessions?
- * **From the heart:** Honoring God may take various forms, depending on our gifts, spiritual walk, and other unique qualities. However, while the expressions may be different, the effort should be sincere, with a commitment to give the best we have to offer, and a humble spirit.
- * **At any time:** It may be easier to find time to glorify God during a chapel service than during a plumbing disaster. But we can indeed look for—and ask God for—opportunities to genuinely honor Him in the everyday things and to show His love to others.
- * **Unseen guest:** Knowing that Jesus is always with us and remembering that in each moment of the day can be two different things. You might even consider leaving a chair empty at a staff meeting, for example, as a physical reminder.
- * **Focused mind:** Regularly reading and meditating on Scripture, and encouraging our staff to do the same, provides for a greater emphasis in our lives on His presence and His glory.
- * **Spreading the word:** As we talk about Jesus with others, it reminds us of the importance of Him in our lives and honors God in the process.

Source: LifeWay.com



Executive Briefing is published monthly by Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA), 405 West Rockrimmon Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO 80919-1781. *Executive Briefing* is sent free to the executive directors of CCCA member camps and conferences as a benefit of membership. ©2007, CCCA. Material may be reprinted if credit is given. President, Bob Kobielush; Editor, Alison Phillips; Designer, Steve Learned.

events

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Northwest Sectional

26–28

Southern Atlantic Sectional

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Rocky Mountain Sectional

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Alaska Sectional

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Sierra Pacific Sectional

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Northern Plains
and Northern Rockies
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Carolinas/Virginias
Sectional

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Illinois Sectional

12–14

Indiana Sectional

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New York Sectional

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New England Sectional