

From Generation to Generation – A Legacy for Eternity

Values Over Valuables

My sister just completed the first half of a massive family project. She searched through boxes long ago forgotten in the corner of the attic of my parents' house. She rummaged through cedar chests and dresser drawers. She was tracing the lineage of my mother's side of the family, tracking some relatives back to the late 1700's. She documented birthdates and the country of origin for some distant relatives and matched representative photos with their biographies. Her research provided specifics about their family, occupation and interests. You can see how some passions, such as music, run in our family history. What a gift this project is for us and generations to come! My guess is that few families have this much detail about their ancestry.



When looking at family lineage the words often used are legacy, heritage and heirlooms. What is passed down from generation to generation? While we may initially think of heirloom items stashed away in cedar chests, what is really important are the values, character, reputation and integrity of previous generations of our family. The gold watch, jewelry, class rings and other heirlooms may have some monetary and/or sentimental value but, chances are they will remain stashed away wherever we hide such items. What is visible to others is the kind of people that we are. Are we compassionate? Are we caring? Are we a person of faith? Is our home an extension of the worship community? Chances are the values we live by are the values taught to us by our parents. And, our parents learned their values from their parents. As I read the biographies of my ancestors listed in the lineage notebook, I see hard-working people of faith. I am fortunate to have married a wonderful woman who also came from a family of hard-working people of faith.

When you think about the word legacy, the first thought may be something that is left behind after a person has passed. Webster's dictionary refers to the legacy of a person as "more about sharing what you have learned, not just what you have earned, and bequeathing values over valuables, as material wealth is only a small fraction of your legacy."

Mankind inherited a legacy of sin, but thankfully, people of the faith inherit the forgiveness of sin. Franklin Graham said, "The human heart is a type of cedar chest, storing valuable lessons, special memories, and the important pieces of one's life that live on throughout generations." The Bible says, "*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).*"

In your family, pass on the message of the Gospel to your children. Give them that inheritance. You can enhance your own understanding of God's Word through study and reflection, so that the gift you pass on to your children will be even richer. And, if your household didn't emphasize faith it is not too late to make that part of your gift to your family. Reading the bios of my ancestors I can see how God has blessed each one of them. We can pass on more than monetary blessings to our children. A culture of faith is far more valuable than a gold watch that doesn't work anymore and will probably remain in a dresser drawer for your children to wonder what to do with when you pass on to the next world. A reverence for God will be a gift that will sustain the next generation for eternity. As an act of love, share the faith with future generations.

Question: What legacy do you want to leave behind for future generations?