

## One Month to Live #3 – Leave a Legacy.

We are in the middle of a series called "One Month to Live". We're asking ourselves how would our lives be different if we recognized just how brief life really is.

Our key passage for this series is Psalm 39:4-5, *"Lord remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, that my life is fleeing away. My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you. Human existence is but a breath."*

Because our lives are so brief, I'd like to talk to you today about the importance of leaving a godly **legacy**. What would future generations say about you based on the way you're living your life. Would they be proud or would your life be so common that your life wouldn't be remembered at all?

Take your parents for example. Chances are, your parents made some sort of a difference in your life. For many of you, it was incredibly positive. For others, not so much.

**If I were to ask you about your dad.** What did your dad pass on to you that was valuable? Some of you would light up immediately and say my dad was amazing and you start telling me story after story and you'd be laughing and you'd go on and on about how awesome your dad was.

Others of you might be polite but not have a lot to say. You might say something like, uuuh, he was **hard worker**. If I said *"tell me about your dad,"* you might **cringe** and say my dad left us when I was a baby and I never really knew him or my dad got drunk and beat us.

**Legacy**, I'm talking about leaving a legacy today. Barbara and I have a boy and two girls. I wanted to leave a legacy so I invited my three grown children to go to India with me and I would pay their way. My oldest daughter told me, *"Dad, you have already left a legacy, you don't need to take us to India to do that."*

My son couldn't go but my two daughters did and it was great. Then finally this year my son was able to get the time off to go with me. I wasn't going to go again but the chance to take my son caused me to change my mind. The plans were all set up with John Gabriel in India and then the cancer was discovered and changed everything.

You know, Barb has always been the one with health problems. You might not know it because of her sunny and outgoing personality but when you see her Sunday, smiling, talking to you, giving you a hug, she is almost always in pain.

Anyway, because of her health problems I always thought she would be the first to go but then suddenly they discovered I had cancer and it looked like I might be the first to go. This happened with the couple on the video we are going to see in a second.

The husband in the video is **diabetic** and is fighting **cancer**. On top of that he has had two **strokes**. His wife on the other hand has been completely healthy and has been working and caring for him.

But all of a sudden she ended up in the emergency room with the doctor telling her it doesn't look like she is going to make it. When the video was made she had lost 26 pounds and was recovering. They have a great perspective on how brief life really is.

**[Video] Sherri:** Prior to a couple of weeks ago, Friday, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, everything was normal. Normal. Work full time. Served at church. Had the family and I came home from work in the morning and I thought I had indigestion and I thought I would lay down for a while.

**Lionel:** I'm the one who's been sick for two or three years and thinking, you know, I always tell Sherri, you know, if anything happens to me now you take care of this, we do this, you do this with my son, you give this to my son and then in a heartbeat, she is laying in a hospital and I'm thinking, holy cow, what's going to happen here.

**Sherri:** So I went and laid down and I got up about three or four times in a couple of hours and by the last time I got up I couldn't stand up anymore and I knew something wasn't right, big time.

**Lionel:** Death never crossed my mind, you know that I was going to lose her.

**Sherri:** And I was praying to God out loud, I was screaming and I was saying, you know, please take away this pain or take my life.

**Lionel:** And when he started telling me about that it was a life threatening thing, it really hit me then, you know, that I could have lost her you know. That scared me.

In order to leave a godly legacy we need to do **three** things.

**1.** The first thing that we'll need to do is **is to say the words that God wants us to say**. We'll want to say to those we love, to the next generation, the things that are most important to us because many people don't.

Sometimes when a pastor visits a person in the hospital who is about to die they will say, *“Pastor, here’s what I want you to tell my family.”* If you ever find yourself in that position I hope you don’t have to ask me to relay the message for you because you have already said to them what God wants you to say.

**Solomon**, the wisest man who ever lived was imparting wisdom to this son. And he starts out by saying, *“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:20-24*

A counselor said that he had talked to hundreds of people and one of the things that he always asked them was, **“Do you believe that your dad was proud of you?”** And he said almost everyone would say “no” or that they didn’t know or wasn’t sure.

Leave a legacy, let them know. Express your words of wisdom and love and encouragement.

In Matthew 3 when Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, God’s voice from heaven said, ***“This is My Son with whom I am well pleased.”*** He let His Son know He was proud of Him.

I am not particularly good at this, and for many people, myself included, it is very challenging to communicate emotions and feelings. And if that’s you it means you have to work intentionally at converting positive thoughts into positive words.

Ask yourself, if you knew you only had one month to live and you were going to speak to the people who are the most important to you. **What would you say to them?** If you were talking to one of them how would you finish this sentence? ***“Above all else, here’s what I want you to know...”***

To leave a Godly legacy, we’re going to say the words that God wants us to say.

## **2. Second, We are going to do what God sent us to do.**

Acts 20:24 *“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel (good news) of God's grace.”*

In other words, the Apostle Paul said, if I can just spread the good news about Jesus, that’s all that matters. That is the task that I must finish to fulfill the reason God put me here on earth.

**What is your unfinished task?** What is your unfinished assignment? Most of us have more than one. Maybe God wants you to get involved in Kingdom work.

He has given you the gifts to do it but you haven't done what He has in mind for you. It could be something like helping or leading a ministry here at church or it could be mission work but chances are you know what it is.

It could be relational. There might be someone who is important to you but your relationship is not good and you know it. And, if that person were to die, you would regret forever that you didn't repair that relationship and now it's too late.

There may be someone who is hurting or struggling and you've had them on your mind and you've been thinking about them but you haven't reached out to them. You're supposed to but you haven't. You have an unfinished assignment.

There may be someone who's in need and you have the resources to meet that need and God's put them on your heart but you haven't done anything about it.

There may be a book inside of you that you know God wants you to write because it would help other people, but you just haven't done it. Maybe God wants you to lead your family spiritually, to disciple them in the eternal things of God but you haven't done it yet.

**What is your unfinished assignment?** We want to leave a Godly legacy and in order to do so, we're going to say the words that God wants us to say, and we're going to do the things that God wants us to do.

### **3. We are going to live how God wants us to live.**

Because, honestly, most people aren't, are they? It's sad to see people who call themselves believers who hear what God's Word says and then say *"I'll do whatever I want."*

When you live the way you want and not the way God wants, it makes for a really bad meeting one day. Every one of us, unless Jesus returns and we go up with Him, **there will be a meeting one day about you, but you won't be there**, because you've already passed away.

People you love will gather and a pastor will be there and say, *"Tell me about you."* And it usually goes one of two ways.

There are meetings where there are tears, but there will also be stories. Someone says, *"Remember when,"* and everyone hugs and cries and then someone tells a funny story and they are all laughing.

Then someone tells a touching story and you can feel God's presence and while there is human loss, at the same time there is peace.

But sometimes the pastor says, *"Tell me about so and so"* and there is an awkward silence and the pastor tries to help them out and says, *"Tell me about them. Give me a story, something you remember, what did they stand for, what was really important to them."*

Finally, someone says something like, ***"he really liked spicy food."*** And there is almost this awkward sigh of relief, that someone said something, and they say, *"Yeah he ate that spicy food, he really liked that spicy food."*

### **It can be depressing, even heartbreaking.**

Tell me about her. *"She liked gardening. Yeah, gardening, flowers, water, dirt, you know, she really liked that."* Tell me about him. Awkward silence and someone says, *"He sure loved golf, in fact, maybe he's on a cloud right now golfing."* *"Ha, ha. Yeah, loved Golf."* ... Sad, just sad.

**I'm trying to put a meaningful funeral together** and someone is talking about golf, or fishing, or how he loved to hunt. Or she was active in her canasta group, loved bowling. Whatever.

James 1:22, *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* Please, do not just listen to this. Let it speak to you, challenge you, comfort you, convict you, change you and when it does you will leave a legacy.

What happens when you start to live His Word? **You begin to be different** and everyone notices, even nonbelievers will look on and say there's something special about that person.

What happens is that it changes everything and you start to love people the way Christ loves people and you start to find that you are **patient** and you are **kind** and you do **not envy** and you do **not boast** and you're **not proud**.

You are **not rude**, **nor self seeking** and you're **not easily angered** and you **don't delight in evil** but you **rejoice** in the **truth** and you have this **love** that **always** hopes and **always** trusts and **always** protects and **never fails**.

Even nonbelievers respect you and there's this admiration and respect and you have rich networks of people who love you and you are leaving a legacy. 1 John 2:17, "*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*"

And your children may tell your grandchildren, "*Our family is different*" because of the life you lived. Because of the way you followed Christ. Because of what you stood for. You want that? Then you need to live the way God wants you to live.

Live by the **convictions** of God instead of by your **preferences**. Too many people are living by preferences. **What is a conviction?** A belief on the inside that always shows up on the outside.

**What is a preference?** A strong desire that you will compromise when the cost becomes too high.

People are living by their preferences. I prefer to be a virgin when I get married until the peer pressure is too much and the moment is just right and then I give away my preference.

I prefer to be generous until I see that new car. I prefer to be generous, but it's not the way I always live. Maybe you would prefer to go to church but your favorite football team is playing. **Church or football.** You have to make a choice. Football often wins out. Preferences.

You prefer to be a tither until money gets tight. You prefer family time, but you have softball and my wife has PTA and the kids have soccer, dance, ballet, and piano and so we don't eat together, and we really have no significant family time.

We prefer it, but it's something we give up when things get tough.

**Convictions.** What's on the inside that always shows up on the outside. If what you want is that one day people say, "*He loved spicy food, she was a great gardener; he loved golf, if you want that, live by your preferences.*"

Instead if **you want people to say**, we are closer to God because of his or her life, that there are people who were influenced because you lived by the convictions of God. Say what God wants you to say. Do what God wants you to do and live how God wants you to live.

The couple in the video were glad to have another chance. Because if their story had ended earlier it wouldn't have ended the way they wanted.

**[Video] Lionel:** I mean, she could have been gone and what would I have thought? You know, God, man, the TV mattered so much. Give me the remote. I haven't touched that remote since she got home. I don't want it no more. It's hers now. It is. It's hers. We've been watching cooking shows now for six days. I would have never sat through a cooking show in my life and I sat there hour after hour and I said you know what, it doesn't matter, Lionel. You are learning something.

**Sherri:** You know, so you get humbled very quickly. Yesterday I patted all the clothes in my closet because I've only been able to wear three things and this is one of them for the last two weeks and I have clothes in there that still have the price tags on them that at some point really meant a lot to me and I just patted them all and just touched them and I was like this is all for nothing, it's all for nothing. This means nothing. These clothes are for nothing. The shoes are for nothing. All your shoes, new shoes, shoes, shoes for nothing. You know, I just keep going around looking at it going it's just all for nothing. The only things that mean anything are the people. It's just the people.

**Lionel:** I would hope that they would say, you know, my dad was a very spiritual man and that he was a good dad because I was an awful dad for 40 years, 30 years, totally lost until I found Jesus, just four years ago. I accepted him right here in this house here. So, to me they've seen the change and so that's what I would hope they would see me in that way.

**Sherri:** Hopefully it doesn't happen for a long, long, long time because actually the things that they might say now I'd like to have a chance to change some of that but I want the next 50 years to be able to make an impact through God, through the church and to our family to be able to change that. to change what he would say now into something different and I don't even know what that would be, but I know that I want it to be different because I haven't made that impact yet. I haven't made that Godly impact, you know, but we're working on it.

**Lionel:** That's the most important thing in my life, God. It really is. It might sound like a cliché or what people say, you know, I don't really care, you know. I know that I love God. I love Jesus. I love Him. Everything I do is centered around Him. I don't care what it is. I thank Him for everything that I do every day. Every day. Whether it's fishing or catching a fish or not catching a fish, thank you. It doesn't matter. I thank Him for my family, for my friends, for my church. This church has done, you have no idea what it's done for me. I had been searching for such a long, long time.

**You don't have to get sick or have a near death experience to get your priorities right.** What are you waiting for? Life is brief. It's a mist. It appears for a little while and then vanishes. We have one shot at this life. It's time to do it right.

If it was over for you today, would you be thrilled? Would you say yes, generations will be different or would you say I think there are some changes I need to make.

Here's what Paul said to Timothy, his son in the faith. II Timothy 4:6-7, “...*the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.*”

Paul is saying, “*I've said what God wanted me to say, I did what God wanted me to do, I lived how God wanted me to live, now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness. I've completed the task. Now, I am ready.*”

**Are you ready?** Live as if life is brief, because it is. If it was over for you, would you be pleased? Would God be pleased or would you say honestly there are many things that could be better.

Prayer: Father I pray in the name of Your Son, Jesus, that Your Holy Spirit would lead us and empower us to leave a legacy that would please you. Lord give us the words to say and we will speak them. Lord show us what to do and we will do it. Lord show us how to live and we will live it. Lord, may our lives honor You in every way.