

Passing on a Godly Legacy

by Crawford Loritts

Crawford Loritts discusses the importance of personal integrity and authentic relationships in leaving a godly legacy for future generations.

Duration: 41:51

Scripture: Revelation 2:2

Topics: "Godly Legacy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of obedience in the Christian life. He encourages listeners to focus on the essence of their faith rather than getting caught up in the 'how to' aspects. The speaker also highlights the significance of passing on a godly heritage to future generations. He references Psalm 78 to discuss the responsibility of shaping the future generation and emphasizes the need for personal brokenness and integrity in order to impact our own families. Additionally, the speaker discusses the importance of humility and not boasting about accomplishments, using the example of the apostle Paul.

Transcript

Crawford has quite a bit of education, has a degree, Doctor of Divinity from Biola, Doctor of Sacred Theology from Philadelphia College of the Bible, and Doctor of Letters from Trinity International University. So Crawford has been a friend and encouragement for Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood for many years, and I believe you've been on the speaker team for Family Life as well for many years, so share it in both organizations, and we're just delighted to have him here. Crawford Levitz, thank you.

Well, thank you so very much, Wayne. I tell you, one of the great joys and thrills of my life is to be associated with Wayne Grudem and Dennis Rainey, and I deeply appreciate... I've got preachers and pastors walking out of here, so you can dress them up, but you can't take them out, you know what I mean? Preachers just have one volume. Wow! All right, I'll see you.

My, my, my. Well, you laugh. You do that too, don't you? It's like, you know, my kids are only concerned about how loud I talk when they have friends around.

Dad, you're so loud. But as I was saying, it's really a joy to know Wayne and to know Dennis, and one of the things I so appreciate about Wayne is that some people are content to stay in the background and to write and just think, and that's very, very important, but his vision and passion for the family is not reactive,

it's proactive, wanting to equip us and to help us and to pull us together. And so I am just so very grateful that this vision has been translated to reality, and this has been just a marvelous, marvelous time for me, and I so, so appreciate him and his dear wife, his staff, and this has just been an excellent illustration of teamwork.

What we can do together when egos and those kinds of things are thrust aside, and the cord of passion, the cause, is bigger than any one of us, and we can see things happen. And so continue to pray for the Council. There are many, many issues.

I started to say before them, but before us, I'm a part of it, and what a reference, and continue to pray for wisdom for Wayne and his team. There are a number of very significant initiatives that have to take place, and pray that God will use the Council to give a sense of centeredness and balance about these issues. Well, let's bow together for a word of prayer.

Father, we love you, and we bless your name for who you are. We're so very, very grateful for your goodness. We're grateful, Father, for the vision that you have given to others, and that we can not only partake of, but we benefit greatly from.

Now, Father, I ask of you in the name of your Son that you will help us as we think through issues that affect future generations, and where we need to be, what we need to do. Lord, you know what you've placed in my heart to share, and I pray that this will be a wonderful time of interaction, a great time of understanding what we can do to influence a future that we cannot see. Thank you for those who have gone before us, and the blessing that they've been to us.

Encourage our hearts in Jesus' name. Amen. I have a love-hate relationship with workshops.

Part of the problem is that you're charged with speaking to a subject or a topic or an issue, but I always feel woefully inadequate because you're going through something, and I don't know what's on your heart and mind. So what I want to do here, there are some things that I want to go through and share with you specifically about our topic of leaving a legacy to succeeding generations, impacting a heritage through your family, and I want to share some basic biblical principles together with you. But I also want to leave a ton of time for just what's on your heart, for you to ask the practical issues and questions.

I started to list a number of practical things, but then I thought, well, probably the best thing to do would be for you to talk to me, and let's talk together about these things. I've written this book, *Never Walk Away, Lessons on Integrity from a Father Who Lived It*. It's really not a biography about my dad, but it's about his enormous impact and influence on my life.

And as I alluded to last night, sometimes we make the horrendous assumption that leaving a legacy means that you've got to be all scientific about it, but it really has everything to do with your heart. And so at the end, I'm going to read a little letter that I wrote to the Lord as my dad was dying back in 1995. But he's left an indelible impression and impact on me, and I would encourage you, I wish I could give you this, but the publisher and Family Life also might have a problem if I gave out all the books.

You won't tell? Believe me, they'll talk to me. But there are some principles here that I outlined related to all of this. Now, what I'm going to do is actually, how I started last evening really is a part of what I want to say in this workshop, just where to begin.

And I want to do a couple of things. I want to take us to open our Bibles, and I want to take a look at what really we are mandated to do. Part of the problem of being a Christian at this point in history is that we're so absorbed and consumed with right now.

Our culture is hyper-individualistic and hyper-right now. And so we tend to want to measure the success or failure of what we do by what we can see taking place immediately. But we fail to realize that our lives, it's a continuum.

We're part of this whole thing of what God is doing in human history. And the real impact of what we're doing may not be realized right now. So if you'll allow me, what I'd like to do is sort of review last night what I said about our own personal lives.

Then I want to speak to this whole issue of significance, our view of it. Now, you may say, what in the world does that have to do with developing a godly legacy? It has everything to do with it. Because how you view and determine what is significant in your life, in your perspective, will also help you to understand what we will do with our children and children yet to be born.

For good or bad, we pass on a signature. Well, what will that signature be? And then thirdly, I just want to take a look at Psalm 78, that Psalm of Asaph. And by way of implication and application, I want to talk about the three biblical things that we have to do in order to shape the future generation, okay? Last night, by way of review, I talked about my feeble attempt at talking about it.

I don't know how clear I was, but I talked about really that if we're going to impact our own families and if we're going to see renewal in the home, then it begins with our own brokenness and our own integrity. That's where it all starts. I cannot underscore enough that sometimes we develop these surrogate relationships with information and materials.

We sometimes think that the information and materials will take the place of my heart, will take the place of my own personal holiness. That somehow, if I just say the right things to my kids and read the right books on disciplining them and read the right books on Bible studies and get the right devotional materials and give it to them, that that's going to change their lives. Now, I'm going to say something that might be a tad bit controversial, but I do need to say this because I think that sometimes Christian couples make this horrible, horrible error.

And I think sometimes, not sometimes, 80% of the problem is because of what we say in the pulpit as preachers. We've made the terrible assumption that the Word of God will change a person's life. Truth has never changed a person's life, ever.

Now, that sounds like heresy. Let me quickly say, I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God. I believe in the authority of Scripture.

I believe that it sits in judgment over every thought, action, and direction of man. This is God's Word. But I think that there's this dastardly tendency to commit bibliolatry.

Change takes place by a person. It's by relationship. Case in point, Revelation chapter 2. What was Jesus' problem with the church of Ephesus? Notice the verbs in that text.

He commends them for right behavior, right beliefs. You know, you've endured, and you put the test to say that they are apostles, and they are not. The assumption is you have a correct standard by which to judge.

But then he makes the statement, I've got a problem with you. The problem is not with your theology. Your theology is squeaky clean.

It is absolutely wonderful. It is clear. It is crisp.

Everybody can sign on the dotted line. But you know what your problem is? You've got a heart problem. Despite the fact you believe the right stuff and you behave the right way, you have left your first love.

In other words, you think by spouting correct theology, that means that you have a right relationship. Kids don't necessarily turn out right because they grew up in Christian homes. Kids don't necessarily turn out right because you make them go to summer camp, and you make them go to VBS, and you make them sit up in church, and you pour the scriptures in them.

They turn out right because they see a legitimate, authentic, real relationship with the Savior. I wanted to stand up and shout last night when John Piper was preaching. He was so right.

He was so right. I mean, the glory of God. It's about him.

It's about him. And so, you know, we need to understand. The truth frames us and gives us a definition for a right relationship.

If you don't have truth, you'll have a wrong relationship. But it is a fence. It is a fence that outlines the property.

It's not the property. Christ. Christ.

And his ability to change our lives. Ah, that's the answer. That's what it's all about.

So we looked at last evening that great text from 2 Chronicles 7.14. It's all relational stuff that God says the children of Israel needed to do when things were shattering. The realignment here. But if my people who are called by my name, the assumption is you do have a relationship with me, but something is wrong.

Well, humble themselves. Embrace your brokenness. Don't give me your pharisaical list of stuff that you believe and that you've done and the volumes and all that stuff.

No. You need to identify with the mess that's going on here and understand that but for my grace you're in the same predicament. And pray.

Pray. Pour out your heart and ask God to intervene. Seek my faith.

A passionate search for God. Where is God in the midst of all of this? And turn from your wicked ways. Examine your own heart so that there's reality and authenticity about what you do.

When these requirements are met, then will I hear from heaven. You'll have heaven-focused attention. And I will cleanse you, forgive your sins, and heal your environment.

So that's where it begins. The next generation begins with my own holiness. It begins with my own spiritual health.

It begins with me. Dennis was so right this morning as he started out talking about family reformation. It begins with my household.

This is no gigging for God. This is no games. This is no Christian personality contest or whatever.

It begins with reality at home. And so my kids will become who I am and not necessarily what I say. It's called the eloquence of model.

No matter what you say, your kids are going to become, for good or bad, who you are. Not your articulation, but in essence, who you are. Now, having said that, let me move to the issue of significance.

We send conflicting messages sometimes to our kids. Not sometimes. We do an awful lot.

I do it. We want them to do us proud. And yet at the same time, we want them to honor God.

And we give them these crazy messages about who and what they ought to be. I'll never forget our oldest son. Now, sometimes people can be rather stupid, excuse the expression, but they can say some of the most God-awful things to a teenager.

Ryan, when he was about 14, 15 years old, he was with me at a very large conference. God blessed the ministry. And so he was standing there next to me and I was shaking hands with folks.

And this lady meant well. She really did mean well. But she probably didn't have any teenagers.

She said to me, she said, well, that was great, yadda, yadda, yadda, yadda, yadda. And then she turned to Brian and said, and I know you want to be just like your dad. You just want to walk in his footsteps and this kind of thing.

And I'm going, you know. So I was taking him to school that week and he was unduly quiet. And he said, as we got pulled up to this light, he said, Dad, I don't know that I could ever be like you.

I could never ever do it like you do it. And I knew exactly what he meant. He was referring to that conversation.

I pulled the car over and I said, son, let me tell you something. Let me free you up. You don't ever have to be anything that you think that I want you to be.

You don't have to be anything that you think other people want you to be. I want you here for me. I don't care what they say or think.

But you do have to be everything God wants you to be. And I'm happy with that, son. And to reinforce that, what we need to do is to make sure that our standards for them are God's standards for all of us.

Nothing more and nothing less. Let me give you three biblical propositions on this whole issue of significance. And this is what we need to embrace and model to our kids if we're going to impact a generation that we cannot see.

The first proposition is simply this. You cannot truly determine the significance of your own life when you measure it at any given point in life. Let me say it again.

You cannot truly determine the significance of your life when you measure it at any given point in life. Quickly, if you will, I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 11, that last paragraph. Actually, picking it up in verse 35, the middle part of the verse.

I haven't heard too many messages on this last section of Hebrews 11. We all want to talk about the victorious faith of Hebrews 11, but we don't want to talk about the legacy faith that the last part introduces. Listen to these words.

And others. And others. These are not the winners.

These are not the people that are in the cover story of our magazines and tell the wonderful testimonies in our crusades and big events. The no-name people. And others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection.

And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two.

They were tempted. They were put to death with a sword. They went about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.

Now, just in case, at this juncture, the writer's thinking that perhaps my audience is writing me so soft. He underscores it with this parenthetical statement. Men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

Now, listen to this incredible statement. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us. Do you see that? Do you see the generational thing here? God said, there's a group of people that I can trust to not give them what they believe in God for in their lifetime.

But I want them to live lives in such a way that they will serve as encouragements to a generation that they cannot see. They won't check out on God, but they'll show up. There'll be no names.

They won't write a book. They won't be published. They won't be recognized.

But future generations will eat the honey out of the carcass of their perseverance. You know, I've been teary here the last couple of years. I'm usually so.

Because all of this stuff has just come crashing down on me in a very personal but wonderful way. I've just begun to appreciate what my parents did, what my grandparents did, what my great-grandparents did. My dad used to say when I was growing up, boy, I'm working hard, and I'm trying to do the very best I can with my life to be an example to you and your sisters so that you can take this thing to the next level.

See, that generation parented from their graves. They had an eye on a future that they could not see. And that's what this principle is all about here.

Don't get caught up with trying to measure how weighty you are right now. Because you can't really do it. Our lives, they're a continuum.

And faith is a continuum. What I do today can set in motion events and repercussions long after they bury me. That also, by the way, helps me with arrogance and pride.

I'd be lying if I said I never wrestled with it. But you know, the Lord reminds me so very, very often. I thought about him last night as my great-grandfather Peter.

I have no idea what that man prayed for. But sometimes when I see what God has done in my life, the Lord reminds me, it ain't about you, buddy. I've just decided in your lifetime to answer a prayer of somebody that's up here with me.

And by the way, while we're at it, we need to redefine greatness. We need to help our kids understand what greatness is. You know, there's a difference between greatness and recognition.

Prominence and recognition is not necessarily biblical greatness. I've got a tad bit of recognition. But greatness is buried side by side in Old Dominion Cemetery outside of Roanoke, Virginia.

That's my mother's father. That's great. No community leader, but they showed up.

And so the first proposition is that you cannot truly determine the significance of your life when you evaluate it in a given point in life. The second biblical proposition is that the significance of your life is not measured by what you do, as in profession and platform. Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, you know the reason why he wrote the book.

He wrote the book because there's a bunch of egomaniacs running around there and party spirits and they were divisive. Everybody trying to measure their worth and significance by what camp they were associated with. Paul said, you know, you're all stupid.

I'm not being extravagant here. Read chapter 1. By the way, ain't many wives been called among you. You've got a bunch of fools up in this church.

I know why you're bragging and boasting about who you're associated with. And then Paul says this in chapter 4, verse 1. He says, okay, you want to write a biographical sketch on me. You want to say something about me.

You just have to have something to say about me. Here's what I want you to say about me. Here's what I want you to say about me.

And by the way, ladies and gentlemen, this is still very important. You must separate titles and positions from your personhood. Keep it away from you.

Truly great people in the eyes of God. The more they accomplish, the less they talk about their accomplishments. And Paul gives us this principle right here.

Okay, okay. You've got to say something about me. Here's what I want you to say.

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Listen to that play on words here. I am possessed by someone else, and even what I do, I don't own.

I am possessed. I'm a servant of Christ. That's my identity.

I am in him. Again, it gets back to what John said last night. It is the glory of God.

I am possessed by him. And not only that, I don't, I'm not the proprietor of my life and ministry. I'm the steward of it, oikonomia, household manager.

I manage what belongs to somebody else. Now he says, the only thing I really do own here. If you guys give me some ownership, this is what I do own.

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. I own the responsibility to be faithful, to be faithful. See, what this second proposition is really saying is that we have to demonstrate to people around us that life is a sacred assignment.

And all that you do, again, I don't mean to be parroting John Piper, but all that you do is done for the honor and the glory of God. I'm not trying to prove my mettle by my position. You know, my kids need to catch that from me.

They need to catch that from me. Dad doesn't do what he has to do because he's such a big shot. He's a servant.

He's a steward. And parenthetically, while I'm talking about it, I'm going to be teaching this next week, I have a major problem with what we call Christian leadership. I have some big problems with that.

We borrow these secular models of leadership and slap a few Bible verses around it and try to sanctify it. But biblical leadership has nothing to do with position. In fact, the position that's given in the Bible only has a platform for greater service.

There are four distinct biblical pillars upon which all biblical leadership rests upon. Brokenness, uncommon communion, servanthood as an identity and not as an action, and fourthly and finally, radical immediate obedience. That's the essence of biblical leadership.

It has nothing to do with image and class. And I think this is what Paul is driving at, that I'm a servant. The third thing that we have to do, and I've already alluded to this, the third biblical proposition on this whole issue of significance, number one, you cannot truly determine the significance of your life when you try to evaluate it at any given point in life.

The jury is out. Number two, the significance of your life is not tied up in your image and platform and what you project. You're owned by Christ, I'm owned by Christ, I'm on assignment by Christ, but I do own the responsibility to be faithful.

But thirdly, the significance of our lives is determined by the depth, degree, and consistency of our obedience. And, actually, I alluded to that last evening, and that's again Joshua 24. It is obedience.

And I think, you know, we move too much to how-to in our Christian culture, and we need to start talking about essence issues. We need to communicate to our kids and future generations that life, again, is not a crapshoot. Life is a brief moment in history lodged between two vast eternities.

And every day of your life, you've got to determine, what am I going to do at this moment? Is this going to be a God moment, or is this going to be my moment? So, now having said that, again, for review purposes, I believe as we take an eye into the future, we have to slay the significant giants in our lives now. We have to develop a biblical perspective and parameters to protect our understanding of what really is significant. What is this really all about? Now, thirdly, I want you to turn to Psalm 78.

And, now according to the immediate context here, this is a Psalm of Asaph that's talking about the nation of Israel and their heritage and what God has done for them. But, by way of implication and marvel, I

believe verses five through seven is really the job description of what we're to do as godly parents. And, I want to say something here again.

I want to underscore what I said last evening. If there's one thing that sticks in my craw, it's irresponsible preachers and teachers who make stupid statements and conclusions such as, if you were just doing the right stuff as a parent, your kids would turn out. That is absolutely asinine.

Where do you find that in the Bible? Oh, Proverbs says, I have two problems with that. Number one, even a close examination of the text will reveal it's talking about proclivity and bent, not necessarily determining their righteousness and holiness. So, what I'm saying is that, you know, we can do the very best we can, and I believe in the power of prayer, and I believe we can claim God's promises.

But I also believe as parents we must not hold ourselves guilty for choices and decisions that our children make that happen to be wrong. Now, as long as they're breath, again, there's hope. There's hope.

Now, having said that, however, I do believe that this is what we need to do. There is a perspective here mentioned in verse five. This is how we establish a godly legacy.

This is what we do, verse five says, for he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel. Would you take your pen, if you write in your Bible, and circle the words testimony and law. Testimony and law.

I'm reading from the New American Standard. What we give our kids, what we focus on, if we're going to build an eternal legacy that won't stop from one generation to the next, here are the two things that we must focus on. Number one, we give them the character of God.

For he established a testimony in Jacob. That has to do with the patterns of God's activity in the context of their daily lives. We need to give them a sense of God's faithfulness and his relationship to them, what he's doing in their lives, what he's doing in your life.

That needs to be before them. And so we keep pointing them back to an unfailing God, a God who works, a God who's active, a God who's around, a God who is alive. Not a detached God, not a God that is out there that is mean, that wants to beat us up, but a God that's a part of our very lives.

We give them the character of God. But number two, we point them to the content of Scripture. The testimony is how God works.

The law, appointed a law in Israel that is the standard by and through which they are to live their lives. Now, I don't want to be misunderstood. I said a few moments ago that the word of God does not technically change your life.

I don't want to push that too far. We need to give our kids a biblical worldview. We need to measure on that in our homes.

And while I'm on this, I'm telling you, you know, don't ever, ever, ever, ever, abort or prostitute your parental responsibility by making the horrible assumption that some Christian school is going to give your kids a biblical worldview. That is terrible. Now, I say that with some degree of credibility.

Our youngest daughter goes to a fine Christian school. Our two older kids went to a Christian school, and I believe in Christian schools. But I also see sometimes in this movement, we are abdicating our

responsibility by making the assumption that Christian schools will give them a decisive worldview.

And that's not necessarily true. They'll give them a worldview that is apart from a context of reality sometimes. That job belongs to us as parents to let them see how the Word of God relates to choices and decisions and issues in life, and so that they grow up with this editing board around them.

And I might also say, by the way, don't make the mistake of assuming that protection is development. That's another problem that sometimes as parents we run up against in our Christian homes, where we have kids who know truth, but they have no conviction. Convictions are only developed in the context of testing and failure.

You cannot develop convictions unless you have been challenged. A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what it was built for. Sooner or later it's going to have to set sail.

And sometimes I think the pendulum goes to the other extreme in the Christian community because we go, look at all the hell that's going on. You know, we pull them back and we hold on to them. They're 18, 19 years old and all of a sudden we send them off to school and they go belly up.

Along the way we've got to help them to understand how the character of God and the content of Scripture needs to become their own. So there's gradual releasing. Exposure is necessary for the development of experience and conviction.

Now that's a little bit of prophet's philosophy. That's the perspective. Now here's the prop there.

The last clause of verse 5 says that they should teach them to their children that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children. Asap says, The character of God. How he works.

The content of Scripture is what we do. Now what do we do with it? Well, the point is, is to teach them to their children. He uses a very interesting word for teach here.

It's not just a pedantic dissemination of content words, but it could have been translated by all means possible. It is the idea that the daily concourse of their lives, is a platform for teaching, for giving the character of God and the content of Scripture. You know, one of the greatest pieces of advice that Karen and I got before we had kids, right after we got married, this dear old Saint of God was talking to us about family stuff and this kind of thing.

He hadn't even been married all six months and stuff. And he said, You know, when you have children and you have to spank your children, you have to spank Before I had kids, I didn't believe in spanking. But at any rate, he said, and you have to spank them when they do something wrong.

Let me pass on what we did. He said, What we did was we set them down and explained to them what they did wrong and pointed them to a biblical injunction that they should not be violent. And then we prayed with them.

Then spanked them. Then had them tell us what they did wrong. You know what? I'll be honest with you, we didn't go through that all the time.

I mean, sometimes they're encroached by the produce and they act crazy and you know, we didn't go through them. I'll give you the Bible later, but you're going to have worn out now. But at any rate, just got to

be honest with you.

Then we explained the scriptures later on. But most of the time we did that. Now, I didn't spank them in public.

Well, I was hoping if I was looking. But I'll get letters. My address is Wayne Grudem Trinity.

Take the opportunity to infuse truth and a character of God in the daily concourse of their lives. Every issue in life, every decision that they make, every choice that they make. Let them see that God is everything.

He's the center. And by all means possible. I love the tribute that Gregory Hines gave to Sammy Davis Jr. I remember a few years ago when Sammy Davis Jr. died.

More than a few years ago it is now. They had his funeral service and I was watching on CNN the rebroadcast of that. Hines paid him a powerful tribute.

Sammy Davis Jr. really was a mentor and all of this stuff. He used to sneak into the Apollo theater to watch Sammy Davis Jr. and his uncle perform when he was a kid. He told a story about a week or two before Sammy Davis died.

Hines said he went to see him. He was frail. He was a very thin man anyway.

He was just very frail. Couldn't speak. He was dying of throat cancer.

So Hines said he got up to walk away. He had given him tribute and kissed him on his cheek. As he was walking away he heard this shuffling behind him.

He turned around and there is Sammy Davis Jr. He pretended as if he had a heart attack about a year and a half ago. Suddenly he had a knee replaced and mom never had a heart condition at all but went to first rehab session after her knee was replaced and had a massive heart attack. And then a week after that had a stroke.

My mother was a woman of God. Mom had calluses on her knees because she prayed on her knees. She would cry out to God.

You know one of my early remembrances my mother used to when she prayed she prayed out loud. The thing that kept me out of trouble as a teenager most of the time was I had this picture of my mother walking by her bedroom seeing her on her knees praying. Well a couple of years ago I was up there visiting and talking to her.

She lived in Roanoke Virginia. We live in Atlanta. We were talking about death and all this stuff.

She was just adamant about certain affairs. Then she said to me honey when I die I want you to preach my funeral. And I you know when mama asks you to do something you say yes.

So I said yeah I'll do that. I got my car about an hour away on the road and it just dawned on me what I agreed to. I said are you out of your mind? Well sure enough she died.

And in the apartment there I was looking through her old worn Bible asking God Lord what would you want me to preach on. Please turn the tape over at this point to continue the message.

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