



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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## Jacob, Leaving a Legacy

### Lesson #3

Genesis 35:11-29

Jacob, soon to be renamed Israel by God, fathered twelve sons. In these passages, God tells him to be fruitful and increase or multiply. Also, a nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.

These sons would become the twelve tribes of Israel that we will read about throughout the rest of the Old Testament. Jacob was faithful and God not only blessed him with many sons but a legacy that is still felt to this very day.

So, what can we do, as men of God, to create a legacy that will not only last over time but have a positive influence on our loved ones for generations to come and the world as a whole? Let's start with a story:

A husband and wife who walked by faith and, consequently, left a legacy far beyond anything they could have imagined, lived in the early 1700s in colonial America. Their names were Jonathan and Sarah Edwards.

Jonathan Edwards felt God's call to become a minister. He and his young bride began a pastorate in a small congregation. During the years that followed, he wrote many sermons, prayers, and books, and was influential in beginning the Great Awakening. Together they produced eleven children who grew into adulthood. Sarah was a partner in her husband's ministry, and he sought her advice regarding sermons and church matters. They spent time talking about these things together, and, when their children were old enough, the parents included them in the discussions.

The effects of the Edwards's lives have been far-reaching, but the most measurable results of their faithfulness to God's call is found through their descendants. Elizabeth Dodds records a study done by A. E. Winship in 1900 in which he lists a few of the accomplishments of the 1,400 Edwards descendants he was able to find:

100 lawyers and a dean of a law school

80 holders of public office

66 physicians and a dean of a medical school

65 professors of colleges and universities

30 judges

13 college presidents

3 mayors of large cities

3 governors of states

3 United States senators

1 controller of the United States Treasury

1 Vice President of the United States

What kind of legacy will you and your wife leave? Will it be lasting? Will it be imperishable and eternal? Or will you leave behind only tangible items—buildings, money, and/or possessions?

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to invest his life in faithful men who would be able to pass God's truth on to the next generation. Where does God want you and your mate to invest the time you have been given?

### **Living a Life Worthy of Legacy**

1. Fear the Lord and obey Him. Your legacy begins in your heart, in your relationship with God. Psalm 112:1-2 reads: "How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed."

Imagine if a new husband and wife gave a gift to God first. These sheets of paper would become title deeds to their lives—to their marriage, to their hopes of having children, to their family, to their relationships, to their rights to their lives, to whatever ministry God gave them—if they gave everything to Him.

2. Recognize the world's needs and respond with compassion and action. In Matthew 9:36 we read: "And seeing the multitudes. He [Jesus] felt compassion for them." You and your wife need to leave a legacy by being committed to doing something about our world. Many Christians today are walking in the middle of the road; they're so focused on what other people think that they are unwilling to take any risks in order to make an impact for Christ. In light of this, Jamie Buckingham wrote, "The problem with Christians today is that no one wants to kill them anymore."

When you fly over rows of houses, do you wonder how many people in those homes know Jesus? This year thirty million people will die without hearing the name of Christ. Hundreds of millions will pray to idols. Someone needs to reach these people with the Good News.

John F. Kennedy, in *Profiles in Courage*, described the need for courageous people: "Some men show courage throughout the whole of their lives. Others sail with the wind until the decisive moment when their conscience and events propel them into the center of the storm." If you want to leave a lasting legacy, you need to act with courage to reach out to those in need.

3. Pray as a couple that God will use you to accomplish His purposes. As recorded in 1 Chronicles 4:10, Jabez prayed, "Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that Thy hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldst keep me from harm."

What did Jabez ask God to do? Bless him. Give him new turf and enlarge his sphere of influence. Keep him from temptation. Stay with him. Pray this prayer with your wife, and at the end of the year, see how different your lives will be.

4. Help your wife be a better steward of his gifts and abilities. Help your spouse recognize how God has used his gifts and abilities in the past. Serving others? Teaching the Scripture? Advising a Christian Ministry?

Help her plug into the local church, which needs committed laymen and women who have strong, godly character and a vision for their communities.

Help her recognize her convictions. Thomas Carlyle says, "Conviction is worthless until it can convert itself into daily conduct." Help your wife determine what she is willing to die for so she can ultimately determine what she can live for.

5. Ask God to give your children a sense of purpose, direction, and mission. The challenge here is to leave your children a heritage, not just an inheritance. As someone once said, "Our children are messengers we send to a time we will not see."

### **Dignity through Destiny**

David Livingstone, the missionary to Africa, said, "I will go anywhere, as long as it is forward." And by moving forward and advancing God's kingdom, he undoubtedly also advanced his sense of dignity.

Gaining a vision and a direction in life will yield significance to your mate's life as well, especially if the omnipotent God of the universe has set that heading and direction. In fact, true vision, direction, and destiny can come only from the One who controls not only the present but also the future. By discovering your eternal destiny, you will begin to build lasting dignity in your lives. The internal

awareness of that God-ordained dignity will enhance the self-esteem of every member of your family.

The challenge is the same for all of us. Will we follow Christ and fulfill His call and vision for our lives? Just as we found spiritual life in no other Person than Jesus Christ, so we find a dignity like no other in the destiny He provides.

### Application/Activity

This week's challenge is a combination of numbers three and five. I challenge you to lead a prayer, every day or night or both, with your wives. Pray that God will use both of you to accomplish His purposes. Pray that God will give your children a sense of purpose, direction and mission. Lead these prayers. Say these prayers out loud. Hold her hands while you say these prayers. Be the leader inside the house that you wish to be outside of the house. This challenge begins tonight!