



Carol Keegan

Legacy

Hang on a minute while I look up that word “legacy.” I mean, I think I know what it means, but let me just double check. Yup. There it is: “Legacy: “anything handed down from an ancestor.” Let me just read that one more time. Does it say ANYTHING handed down from an ancestor? Yes, indeed, it does. Anything.

I ponder this. What has been handed down to me? I can think of physical things: my grandmother’s purple china set (it’s prettier than it sounds), an oh-so-well used coffee pot urn from my always-caffeinated stepmother, some hand-sewn placemats from my other grandmother. I’ve been given some physical traits that can be clearly seen (these beady little eyes? Not my fault). I’ve been handed some emotional legacies, too: my love for children surely came from my parents’ combined love for children, my love for family, my love for peace and quiet (which ironically sounds like something that conflicts with my love for children, doesn’t it? Wink). I have been gifted some negative emotional baggage, too. Some things have been handed down to me perhaps unintentionally, and I think how disappointed (and maybe embarrassed) my ancestors would be to know that in addition to some really great things, they also gifted me with some ugliness: a family history of alcoholism, too much concern about “what the neighbors think.”

So that’s my partial list. What’s your’s? What’s been handed down to you from your ancestors? Are there things you would rather they not have passed on? Think about those, and then know this: every single one of those inheritances is going to pass away. Not one of them will last. At least that’s how I read the apostle Peter’s encouragement to us in 1 Peter 1:4. But, Peter says, there are other kinds of legacies. Spiritual legacies. And those? They will last. Those are imperishable, undefiled and unfading and will be kept in heaven for us.

So that got me thinking. Spiritual legacies? And I remember. Three women in my life who have handed me a lasting legacy that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. My mother, Ellie. Grandma Mahoney. Aunt Norma.

Ellie died when I was four-months old so you wouldn’t imagine that she could have had any ability to pass on anything to me in the short time we had together. But imagine differently: *“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3, ESV)* We cannot imagine, either, that God could create the universe with just a Word and yet all the time His visible creations arise out of things not visible at all to us. And so it is with Ellie and me. When she found out she was dying, she confessed to her pastor that she was not afraid to die, she was only afraid to leave her four children behind. And so she spent her last months praying for us.

Grandma Mahoney was Ellie’s mother and after her death, Grandma committed that she would be part of our lives, and so she loved on us and she prayed with us and for us. Aunt Norma was the aunt who swooped in when I was newly-partially-orphaned and she loved me as her own

until my dad's remarriage two years later. Then Aunt Norma freely handed "her" two-year-old toddler back to my dad and spent the rest of her life praying for me.

Those purple china plates? Those were Grandma Mahoney's. I appreciate them. But that these three women prayed for me? That their eyes were on an eternal legacy? That has changed the trajectory of my life. That is the place where my faith was birthed. That is the legacy that lives on and will never die.

We can polish our china and put our favorite child's name in tape on the bottom. We can save, save, save for our grandchildren's education. We can be proud of all the emotionally wonderful things they've inherited from us. But that will all fade away and amount to nothing in the end. But if we want to leave behind a meaningful legacy? Ladies, let's fall to our knees and pray.

Oh, Jesus, we have one thing to leave behind that is worth anything and that is our faith through prayer. Light our hearts ablaze with fervent, fiery prayer that will be the living legacy we leave behind. Amen.