



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LEGACY

This is the beginning of a new day. You have been given this day to use as you will. You can waste it or use it for good. What you do today is important because you are exchanging a day of your life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever; in its place is something that you have left behind ... let it be something good.

— Author unknown

In the introduction of this book, I talked about a rock that slid down a hill during a mudslide and came to rest in the middle of the road, completely blocking cars from getting around it. I used the example of the rock to help us think about what blocks us. What keeps us from being more successful leaders?

I've identified the fifteen common challenges all leaders face. They are the rocks that block our roads, the challenges that shake our leadership ladder. At different times in our careers, we may feel like we've got one or more of these challenges handled; but they are never completely conquered. The same challenges will continue to reoccur in new and different ways as we grow.

To end this book on the challenge of legacy, then, might seem a little out of place. Isn't legacy something that we leave when we die? How could that be a challenge now? Besides, we really don't have much control over our legacies, do we?

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Actually, we don't have to be dead to have a legacy. We are creating it everyday in how we handle the challenges we face. The concept of legacy underlies each one of the fourteen challenges I've already discussed. That's why it is the fifteenth. How we handle each of the previous fourteen challenges is what makes up our legacy.

Specifically, a legacy is dependent on:

- our focus.
- how well we cast vision.
- how we communicate.
- how we make decisions.
- the team we choose.
- the leaders we develop.
- how we handle change.
- how we handle conflict.
- whether we had organizational congruence.
- how we handled money.
- how we allocated our time.
- our ability to delegate.
- our ability to execute plans.
- our planning for the future.

The way we handled these challenges is the legacy we leave after we've moved on, changed jobs, or died. No leader is immune from these challenges. But what is important is how we handle these life and leadership storms. Our choices, our actions, and our behaviors become the legacies we leave the people around us. That's why this is challenge number fifteen. Do our people know that we are here on assignment? Do we know what legacy we will leave? We need to begin our leadership careers with the end in mind. We need to live intentionally in such a way that we pass on our core values.

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What the Bible **Says about Legacy**

In John 15:16 Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (KJV).

There are three parts to this verse, and they are all relevant to our lives and legacies. The first part is the past; that’s God’s part. He says that he has chosen us and ordained us. That is something he did, and we can’t do anything about it but accept it gratefully.

In the next section, he says that we should go forth and bear fruit. This is something active; this is the part we have control over. Many of us fulfill this mandate in the work we do. We build new facilities, we start new programs, and we grow existing ministries. We work hard doing our part, and we’re excited and blessed by the fruit that we see as a result.

In the last part of the verse, Jesus promises that whatever we ask in the name of the Father, the Father will give to us. But there is a condition on this promise. Right before the promise Jesus tells us to bring forth fruit, and that our fruit should *remain*, then whatever we ask in his name will be given to us. I think we often fail to catch that middle part. It isn’t that we’re to bring forth any kind of fruit; we’re to bring forth the kind of fruit that will remain. So the real question is: What are we doing to make sure that our fruit remains?

I’ve told pastors of huge churches, “This is a great campus full of wonderful facilities, but one day it will go away.” Buildings will burn. Programs and ministries can change as quickly as the leaders change. Church vans and church buses, TV and radio programs, they will also come and go. So what will remain? If we died today, what have we done that will remain?

I believe that the only thing that truly remains is the *who*, never the *what*. That’s why it is important for us as leaders not to

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get caught up in the what that surrounds us. We need to invest in the people. Those people might be the members of our churches who benefit from the what (programs and buildings). Those people might also be the leaders we've developed who will bring forth their own fruit. We have to make up our minds that our legacies will not be about buildings, marquees, or TV programs.

Yes, we are doing good work bringing forth fruit. We should celebrate that. But to bring forth fruit that remains, we have to

**Only people, never things,
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invest in other people. That doesn't mean we stop all our labors. Instead, it means that we focus more attention on the ones who remain. Our legacies should be about other people. What are we doing to intentionally invest in others? How do we make sure that our legacies remain in them and that their legacies go on to remain in others?

Once we find the thing that remains and start pouring ourselves into it, not only does that action define our legacies, but, according to the verse, it means that God will start answering our prayers. Whatever we ask in his name he will give to us. Only people, never things, can be our legacies.

The Legacy **Challenge**

There are recurring themes in this book: the importance of focus, strategic planning, and living intentionally. We've talked about when to concentrate on the *who* and when to focus on the *what*. We've also discussed the difference between abstract and concrete communication. All of these topics come together under legacy. We don't want an abstract legacy.

We want to have a concrete legacy. Rather than, "He was a good man," we want people to say, "He gave his lunch to a hungry child." Rather than "he was a good leader," we want to hear,

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“He invested in me.” After we’ve changed jobs, moved on to new challenges, or gone to join the Lord, we want others to remember us specifically and concretely.

I’ve also warned that many of these fifteen challenges will come up repeatedly in our leadership careers in new ways and different forms. But in an effort to help us focus on our legacies, on the fruit we want to remain, I’ve included an intentionality worksheet that can help us to consider how we want our legacies reflected in each of these challenges.

Consider the ideas that have been presented about each challenge, then focusing on the end, take a minute to write down how each one should be handled. For example, under conflict maybe you would write, “When challenged by conflict I intend to face it head on and ensure that regardless of the outcome both parties are healthy.”

Under execution you might write, “When challenged by execution on the part of my team, I will pay more attention to make sure that I clearly and concretely communicate my expectations.”

The point of this exercise is to take the things I’ve written about and begin intentionally living them. Having a strategic plan for our legacies helps us to surmount each challenge in a way that will remain after we’re gone.

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Intentionality Worksheet

1. When challenged by focus, I intend to _____

2. When challenged by vision casting, I intend to _____

3. When challenged by communication, I intend to _____

4. When challenged by decision making, I intend to _____

5. When challenged by choosing my team, I intend to _____

6. When challenged by leadership development, I intend to _____

7. When challenged by change and transition, I intend to _____

8. When challenged by conflict, I intend to _____

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9. When challenged by organizational congruence, I intend to _____

10. When challenged by financial management, I intend to _____

11. When challenged by time allocation, I intend to _____

12. When challenged by control and delegation, I intend to _____

13. When challenged by execution, I intend to _____

14. When challenged by future thinking, I intend to _____

15. I intend for my legacy to be _____

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John 17:4 says, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (KJV). The same verse in *The Message* says, "I glorified you on earth by complet-

**I have glorified thee on the earth:
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thou gavest me to do.
-John 17:4**

ing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do." That is my hope. There is no better way for us to finish than to complete to the last detail what we've been assigned and have our fruit remain.

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Teaching Points

1. No leader is immune from the challenges discussed. The same challenges will continue to reoccur in new and different ways as we grow.
2. Our legacies are created by how we handle the challenges we face. Our choices, our actions, and our behaviors become the legacies we leave.
3. We need to begin our leadership careers with the end in mind. We need to live intentionally in such a way that we pass on our core values.
4. Consider this verse: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16, KJV).
 - The first part of the verse is the past; that's God's part.
 - In the middle part, Jesus says that we should go forth and bear fruit. This is something active; this is the part we have control over.
 - In the last part of the verse, Jesus promises that whatever we ask in the name of the Father, the Father will give to us, conditioned on bringing forth fruit that remains.

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- So the real question is: What are we doing to make sure that our fruit remains?
5. The only thing that truly remains is the who, never the what.
 6. It is important for us as leaders not to get caught up in the what that surrounds us. We need to invest in people.
 - What are we doing to intentionally invest in others?
 - How do we make sure that our legacies remain in them and that their legacies go on to remain in others?
 7. Only people, never things can be our legacy.
 8. Having a strategic plan for our legacies can help us to surmount each challenge in a way that will remain after we're gone.
 9. John 17:4 says, "I glorified you on earth by completing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do" (MSG). There is no better way for us to finish than to complete to the last detail what God has assigned us and have it remain.