

LESSON 26:

People Will Summarize Your Life in One Sentence—_____.

Someday you and I are going to die. And eventually our lives will be summarized in a single sentence. What do you want yours to be? Claire Booth Luce cleverly called this your “life-sentence.” If you are intentional about creating your legacy, people at your funeral won’t have to wonder what your life sentence was.

“Life is like a parachute jump, you’ve got to get it right the first time.”

--Eleanor Roosevelt

What Will You Leave Behind?

1. _____ the Legacy You Want To Leave Others.

“The average man does not know what to do with his life, yet wants another one which will last forever.”

--Anatole France

I started thinking about my purpose in the late 1960s and it has continued to evolve. Here is how my sentence has changed over the years along with my thinking:

I want to be a great pastor.

I want to be a great communicator.

I want to be a great writer.

I want to be a great leader.

I want to add value to people.

I want to add value to leaders who multiply value to others.



2. _____ the Legacy You Want To Leave

In his book *Training for Power and Leadership*, Grenville Kleiser writes: Your life is like a book. The title page is your name, the preface your introductions to the world. The pages are a daily record of your efforts, trials, pleasures, discouragements, and achievements. Day by day your thoughts and acts are being inscribed in your book of life. Hour by hour, the record is being made that must stand for all time. Once the word 'finis' must be written, let it then be said of your book that it is a record of noble purpose, generous service, and work well-done.

3. _____ Today the Value of a Good Legacy

Charles F. Kettering, inventor and one-time head of General Motors' research division, said, "The greatest thing this generation can do is lay a few stepping stones for the next generation."

To Determine Your Legacy Ask Three Questions

1. What are my responsibilities? (This helps identify what you should do.)
2. What are my abilities? (This helps identify what you can do.)
3. What are my opportunities? (This helps identify what you could do.)

There is a poem called "The Bridge Builder" that I have enjoyed for many years. It was written by Tennessee poet Will Allen Dromgoole, and describes what it means to create a legacy for those who follow us:

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;



The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide --
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pit-fall be,
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

What kind of a bridge are you building for those who follow behind you? Are you



making the most of your leadership—not just for yourself, not just for those who follow you today, but also for those who will follow you tomorrow? Knowing that someday people will summarize your life in one sentence is sobering. Picking it now is a way of saying “thank you” to God, life, family and others you will never meet.

“We should so live and labor in our time that what came to us as seed may go to the next generation as blossom; and what came to us as blossom may go to them as fruit. This is what we mean by progress.”

--Henry Ward Beecher

notes
