

A Legacy That Matters

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Introduction:

One day a little boy was sitting on the curb next to a dog. A grown man walked up and said, "Little boy, does your dog bite?" The little boy answered quickly with a "No, my dog doesn't bite." The man reached down to pet the dog, and the dog bit him right on the hand. The man yelled, "I thought you said that your dog doesn't bite!" The little boy yelled back, "That's not my dog!"

Interestingly, we do have something that is ours. We've been given a precious gift called a legacy. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word legacy has two primary definitions. One definition is, "Something that happened in the past or that comes from someone in the past." The other definition is, "Something (such as property or money) that is received from someone who has died." So, if we were to put these two definitions of legacy together, we could say, "Resources have been passed on to us from previous generations, and now we have an incredible opportunity to invest these same resources into the next generation that ideally will continue the process after we're gone." It's truly a call to leave a legacy that matters. This is the kind of legacy that is bigger than anything that we can do alone; it's what that world needs, and it makes life worth living because it gives purpose to the day.

Scripture: 3 John 1:5 – 8

Background: A personal letter from John to Gaius, who was described as a beloved friend of the apostle and faithful adherent to the truth. The main topic covered in the letter was the correct standard of Christian hospitality to those out on the frontlines of ministry. It's an incredible letter encouraging God's people to leverage His resources toward the legacy of passing on the Gospel to those who don't have it.

- I. Legacy Is About Faithfulness (v. 5)**
 - a. God has been extremely faithful to us – *1 Corinthians 1:9*
 - i. He has extended His legacy of the Gospel to us through the use of human instruments that shared the Good News to us.
 - b. We get to be faithful to others
 - i. Since God was faithful to use human instruments to share the Gospel with us, we get to be faithfully used to share the Gospel with others. This is passing on the legacy.
- II. Legacy Is About Sending (v. 6)**
 - a. "The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity but its sending capacity." — Mike Stachura
 - i. God's mission is all about sending, not hoarding.
 1. God sent His Son.
 2. Jesus sent His disciples.
 3. God sent His Holy Spirit.
 4. The Spirit sends the Church.

- ii. The word “church” literally means a “called out people; a sent people.”
 - b. The Church has a great opportunity to send out people and resources.
 - i. Remember Merriam-Webster’s definitions on legacy? This is truly a beautiful way to pass on a legacy that matters.
- III. Legacy Is About The Church (v. 7)**
- a. The church and its resources aren’t just “sent out.” It is “sent out” with a mission and a message.
 - i. The mission is to “go.” – *Matthew 28:19*
 - ii. The message is the “name.” – *Acts 4:12*
 - b. The people of God (the Church) should resource the mission that shares the message. “Accept nothing from the Gentiles” was a reference to unbelievers. The church cannot depend on the “lost” to resource a mission to save the “lost”.
 - i. “If you are looking for the best bang for your buck in mission giving, the Cooperative Program goes further and does more than any other avenue.” – Dr. Jim Richards (Executive Director of the Southern Baptists of Texas)
- IV. Legacy Is About Cooperative Work (v. 8)**
- a. “We” is always stronger than “I”.
 - i. Notice how John is taking in plurality throughout this verse.
 1. “we” ought to support
 2. “people” like these
 3. “we” may be
 4. “fellow workers” for the truth
 - b. “Together” can do more for the Kingdom than we can “alone”
 - i. Over the last year, our church planted churches all over Texas, participated in disaster relief for the hurting, put on equipping conferences to strengthen thousands of churches, provided more than a 100 different resources for over 2,500 churches in Texas, supported IMB missionaries all over the world, equipped thousands of people to share the Gospel, impacted immeasurable amounts of souls that we won’t fully know about until eternity, and so much more. How did we do all of this? We leveraged our resources to give to a Cooperative Work through the SBTC. This is Kingdom impact. This is a legacy that matters!

Conclusion:

A magazine once carried a series of pictures that depicted one of the saddest stories imaginable. The first picture was of a vast wheat field in western Kansas farm. From horizon to horizon, all you could see was the wheat waving in the wind. The second picture was of a mother in distress inside her farmhouse in the middle of that wheat field. She had a small boy who had somehow wandered away from the house into that wheat field. The little fellow was so small that he couldn’t be seen; she couldn’t find him. She had called for her husband, and the two of them had searched all day

long for that little boy, and they finally decided that they should call the neighbors, who began to search frantically all over the wheat field with no success.

They knew the boy was too little to see above the wheat and find his own way out, so the picture showed her in great distress. The third photo depicted all the people who had heard of the little boy being lost. They gathered in the morning, joining their hands, hand-to-hand, and in a great, long line of humanity, linked only by their hands, swept from one end of that wheat field to the next. The last picture was a heartbreaker; it was a picture of the father standing over the body of his little son. They had finally found him, but he was dead. It was too late. A cold, cold night had claimed its victim. Underneath the final picture of a weeping father were these words, "Oh, God, if we had only joined hands sooner."¹

May we join hands as the church sweeping across the fields, from Texas to the ends of the earth seeking those who are lost. And, may we never regret that we didn't join hands sooner to pass on a legacy of sharing Jesus with the next generation.

¹ An illustration from a John MacArthur sermon, *"You Are The Light Of The World"*. February 4, 1979.