

“PASSING THE BATON”

Father’s Day Message, 2003

By Pete Bertolero

The Words of Our Heavenly Father Toward His Sons, Our Fathers, as Spoken By Moses

Deuteronomy 6

¹These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ²so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey ***so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.***

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ***6These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.***

¹⁰When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, ***12be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.***

14Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; 15for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

¹⁷Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸Do what is right and good in the LORD’S sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers, ¹⁹thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.

20In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” 21tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders—great and terrible—upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised

on oath to our forefathers. ²⁴The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”

The Words of an Earthly Father to His Sons

Proverbs 4

- ¹ Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. ² I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching.
- ³ When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said, “Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.
- ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.
- ⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. ⁷ Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. ⁸ Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. ⁹ She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor.”
- ¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.
- ¹¹ I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.
- ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. ¹⁴ Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. ¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.
- ²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.
- ²¹ Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;
- ²² for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body.
- ²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- ²⁴ Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.
- ²⁶ Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.
- ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

I. THE FOUR GENERATIONAL RELAY RACE

A. A Multi-Generational Vision

- 1.** I would often tell the men I used to mentor that when it comes to their vision for their children ***“you are not looking far enough ahead.”*** I’ve said it so often that by now they know immediately what I mean. The point I am

trying to drill into them is that their vision for making an impact in their children's lives should not be merely a single generation long.

2. **I encouraged them to implement a directional process that has as its goal the impacting of the lives of their great-great grandchildren.**
3. ***“Look into the future four generations from now”***
I tell them. ***“Envision sitting on the bank of a river - your great-grandson, who is fishing with his own son or daughter. Is what your doing now, in passing on your heritage and legacy, being done in such a way that it will make it to that father and from that father to his children long after your gone?”***
4. I would then take them through a **personal evaluation exercise** to find out whether or not they were being consistent enough in mentoring their Children. I want the fathers of our church to be sure that the wisdom they are acquiring about eternal truths and the qualities that make up true, Biblical manhood are successfully being passed down to their own children **in such a way that it will impact at least four generations, if not a thousand.**
5. Merely having as our goal the shaping of our own children is far too near-sighted. We must intentionally pass on our faith, morality and our philosophy of life, which are built on Biblical teachings and principles, in such a way that they are easily remembered, recited, and renewed to the third and fourth generation of our posterity. For what good will it do us to just barely pass these things on to our own immediate children, only to lose our grand children, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren to the ancient three-fold enemy of the flesh, the world, and devil?
6. Let me ask you fathers present here today a hard question:
 - How would you feel if you could look into the future and see your great, great, great grandchildren, and know that they had died and went to hell, having never become a Christian and ended up dying unsaved?
 - Or that they got involved in some cult, or occult. Or terrorist group, etc...?
 - How would you feel if you knew your great, great, great granddaughter would wind up in an abusive relationship, or become promiscuous, or a stripper, or pregnant out of wedlock?

- Or that your great, great, great grandson was a criminal, an alcoholic, a dishonorable man who brought shame to his family and ancestry?
7. Just the mere thought of such possibilities causes my own heart to wince and spasm in pain.
 8. It may sound strange to you, maybe not, that I can imagine my future progeny and love them here and now - so much so, in fact, that I sense a focused urgency to mentor my own children **with those future great-great-grandchildren in mind**. In fact, I feel it is my God-given responsibility to make sure the baton makes it to them, one generation at a time, beginning with my own children.
 9. Therefore, it is not enough that my children agree with how I am raising them and training them. It's not enough that they accept my values and way of life at face value. They must also (and this is imperative) accept the responsibility to receive those things I hold to be true and value, and own them as their own, along with the mandate to pass them on to their children in the same fashion as I have done with them, with the same ceremonies, rites of passages, values, vision of manhood, etc...
 10. In a word, if these things are going to be successfully passed down, **my children must come to the place of owning them as their own**. They must see themselves as keepers of the flame, passers of the torch, stewards of the truths their family and ancestral fathers of the faith held dear; they must consider themselves guardians of the true light of Christ, as the ancient Cele de saw themselves, and their purpose in life must be seen in being bearers of the truth of God. I believe this so much that I want to some day have engraved upon my tombstone the words of the 3rd epistle of saint John, verse 4 –

“I have no greater joy than to know that my children are living according to the truth.”

11. Look at our Society today. The prevailing worldly philosophy's that make up the average citizen's thinking are Secular Humanism, which is grounded in evolution and is by

nature, atheistic; Relativism, which denies that there is in existence anything that could be considered absolute truth; and existentialism, which promotes lawlessness,

immorality, and nihilism. The Bible warns us in Colossians 2:8 to

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

12. The book of Deuteronomy, that we opened with in the 6th chapter, encouraged us and warned us – it encouraged us to make every effort, and spare no labor to pass on to our children the true Christian faith, grounded in the Holy Bible, and reinforced with symbols, question and answer times, story telling, and modeling. It encouraged us to take advantage of every opportunity to pass on our legacy of faith. It coached us to always have foremost on our minds those things we have received by God and from God’s word, with the intent that every experience, every place we find ourselves in, become props and backdrops for passing on our Faith and values. If we do so successfully, we will preserve our faith and insure that the blessing of God will continue to rest on our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and beyond.
13. But it also warned that if we fail to pass these things on, then the curses and punishment God poured out on the wicked nations that surrounded His people will be experienced first hand by our children and our descendents.
14. Such catastrophic happenings are only a generation away at any given time, and if you have paid attention to what some have called America’s progressive slide down the slippery slope of moral relativism, you know beyond any doubt that the hot breath of divine wrath is so near us now we can feel it breathing down our nations neck.
15. Should we fail to pass the torch of Christian faith to our children in such a way that they in turn, succeed in passing it to their children, it is more than a good possibility that our children will fall prey to poverty, immorality, a variety of addictions, etc; and that your grandson may be named Muhammad, or granddaughter drink poisoned cool aid in some jungle compound like the 900 hundred plus who died in Guyana at the command of Jim Jones; or your great-grandchildren commit suicide in order to meet up with the hale bop comet and hitch a ride on a UFO; or that one of your descendents may be recruited by some terrorist network and do heinous crimes for some cause.

16. For these are the kinds of influences that hover like vultures around our children, from the time they start watching TV, listen to music and most especially, begin attending one of the most successful recruiting agencies for paganism, atheism, humanism, and socialism: the public school system. And all these things reach a crescendo once our children start going to college.
17. J. Budziszewski has written a book that is indispensable for Christians attending college entitled: How To Stay Christian in College: An Interactive Guide in Keeping the Faith ISBN: 1576830616
18. My point is that the Christian faith is always only a generation away from extinction, and that the key to it's revival and survival is in the hands of faithful fathers who take their faith seriously and have subordinated everything else in their lives in order to make the passing on of their Christian faith and values their number one priority.
19. When fathers co-opt this responsibility, the legacy they leave their children will at best be inadequate to protect them from a society that no longer believes in absolute truth, which makes it one step closer to anarchy; and at worst, leaves them wide open to souls damning heresies and cults and revisionist histories that put everything they manage to acquire in life up for grabs.
20. Let me fail at anything else, but don't let me fail to pass the baton of Christian legacy to my children and beyond. This is one race I am running to win, with the help of Christ!
21. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

*"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize.***
²⁵*Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but **we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*** ²⁶*Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."*

II. DROPPING THE BATON

A. Biblical Fathers Who Failed to Pass The Baton

1. I don't know about you, but I've got to say that when I read 1st and 2nd Kings, I get depressed. That's right. I said that when I read some portions of the Bible, I get depressed.

2. What I mean by this, is that these two books in particular chronicle one father after another who failed to pass the baton to their sons. Unfortunately, this is true even when it comes to the good ones. It seemed the bad ones, and the most evil and wicked ones among the kings (on both sides – Judah and Israel) who worshipped the devil and committed unspeakable wickedness, did a fine job passing on their devil worshipping wickedness to their sons, but the good guys didn't do as good a job.
 - David, a man after God's heart and the apple on His eye, didn't seem to successfully pass his faith on to his son and successor – Solomon, who became an idolater and practiced occult magic and divination of all kinds, even building temples for his pagan wives to worship their demons in. It's all down hill from there.
 - Rehoboam, Solomon's son, manages to cause the kingdom of Israel to split into two kingdoms: Judah and Israel.
 - Jeroboam became king over Israel and began what became a long history of idol worship and human sacrifice. Let me give you a few brief records of the good kings (there weren't many) to show you the sad commentary on their failure as fathers.
 - You see, a passive, uninvolved, emotionally and philosophically detached father's children will reap the same legacy as a proactively evil father. A father doesn't have to actively curse his children or abuse them in order to pass on dysfunction and evil. A father, in failing to pass on a godly, moral, spiritual and social legacy can actually end up passing on an evil legacy just by doing nothing.
 - Fatherhood signs you up to be a runner in the relay race of posterity, whether you like it or not. Unfortunately, it is not enough that you lead a good, decent, morally upright Christian life. That by itself, is not running the race set out before you. Your walking not running. Paul said to run, and to run in such a way that you win. Many good kings lost the relay race, by dropping the baton.

1. King Hezekiah

1. Take for instance the great king Hezekiah. After reading of one wicked king after another, Hezekiah is a breath of fresh air. Listen to what 2 Kings 18:3-8 says about him –

“³He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.

- *⁴He removed the high places,*
- *smashed the sacred stones*
- *and cut down the Asherah poles.*
- *He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it.*
- *⁵Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel.*
- ***There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.***
- *⁶He held fast to the LORD and **did not cease to follow him;***
- *he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.*
- *⁷And the LORD was with him; **he was successful in whatever he undertook.***
- *He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.*
- *⁸From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory.”*

2. No question Hezekiah was a godly man and great King. But that doesn't mean he was a great father. And unfortunately, by the time we get to chapter 20, Hezekiah's heir takes the throne -

²¹Hezekiah rested with his fathers. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king.”

3. Hezekiah's son reigned after his death. He was only 12 years old at the time but reigned 55 years. **He is understood by most to be the most evil, wicked man in the Bible.** Here is a few things he did as recorded in 2 Kings 21:2-9.

- *²He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.*
- *³He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed;*
- *he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done.*
- *He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them.*
- *⁴He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my Name.”*
- *⁵In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts.*
- *⁶He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists.*
- *He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.*

- *⁷He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. ⁸I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them.”*
 - *⁹But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.”*
4. Isn't that sad? **As great a king as Hezekiah was, he neglected to pass the baton of his faith to his son, with terrible results.**
 5. Many a godly man, Pastors included, have made similar mistakes. They practiced their faith and labored long and hard to bring others to faith in Christ, but withheld a their living, vital faith from their own families, with their children being so angry with them, the church, and with God, that they ended up in some cases, turning to belief systems that stood on the opposite end of the spectrum from Christianity. All because these good men, and even in some cases, great men, failed to intentionally pass their legacy of faith on to their children. How it must break their (the fathers) hearts. Yet what we see in the High Priest Eli's case is unfortunately true in many cases amongst pastors and priests today.

2. Eli, the High Priest

1. Long before Hezekiah, there was the High Priest Eli, another father who failed to intentionally pass on his legacy of faith and heritage to his sons. He didn't even get it to his first two sons, let alone getting it to the third and fourth generations. Eli's sons were both priests themselves, but had become corrupt in some of the worst possible ways imaginable. 1 Samuel 2: gives a summary of their character

“¹²Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.”

2. Those are words that should never be spoken over a Pastor's family. How often they have served as a sad commentary on the failure of even those who have been given special callings to pass such things down to God's people. When my wife SueJae and I started having children, I determined within myself before the

Lord that I would not be so busy equipping, helping and saving others, that my own children would be neglected and put at risk. I could not justify saving others only to end up with my children in hell.

3. Sadly, many pastors have made such a mistake, and have paid an awful price, as have their families. In the case of Eli's sons, their corrupt behavior included taking for themselves portions of the offering reserved and consecrated to God alone, thus "treating the Lord's offering with contempt";¹ and seducing and committing sexual sins with the women who had set themselves apart to God as His hand maidens.²
4. The problem with Eli was that **he refused to bring his sons under control**, and in so doing, chose to honor them more than he honored the Lord.³ The Lord brought this accusation against him in chapter 3:13-14 –

*"For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, **and he failed to restrain them.***

*¹⁴Therefore, **I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'**"*

5. Wow! How would you like that to be the legacy you left your children? No hope of atonement!
6. It is so important that Christian parents understand they are not called by God to be their children's "bestest buddies" but to be their parents. This means that they have got to establish standards and discipline, privileges and consequences in their family. We are so committed to training parents to train their children, that my dear friends, colleagues and children in the faith, Dave and Andrea Wood, who are heads over our children's ministries, have undertaken this task as part of their sphere of care. Each year the Woods train groups of parents in the area of child discipline and child training, working in tandem with me to prepare them for the knighthood process. As a result, hundreds of parents have learned how to bring their children under control, and begin the process of passing down their heritage of faith to their children.
7. If only Dave and Andrea were alive at the time of Eli! Because of Eli's failure to discipline his sons, which was rooted in his own

¹ 1 Samuel 2:12-17

² Ibid, verse 22

³ Ibid, verse 29

undisciplined character⁴ **he passed on to all the successive generations of his posterity the consequences for his and his sons sins.**

8. This brings sadness to my soul as I meditate on the profoundness of this tragedy. Why it's almost Shakespearean. Listen to the curse that was brought upon Eli and his family forever, because he failed to be the father he should have been.
9. Notice that this generational curse begins with God declaring to Eli that He meant to bring generational blessing upon his father's house when He called Him to the priesthood –

"Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? ²⁸I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites."⁵

10. But, although Eli's father was faithful to train him and pass on to him this family legacy and blessing, when it came time for his turn to pass the baton on to his sons, Eli "dropped the baton" and the results amounted to a perpetual curse on all successive generations in his family tree afterward –

³⁰"Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. ³¹The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line ³²and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. ³³Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life."⁶

11. Fathers, I want to say it again: unless you intentionally bless your children in such a way, that you guarantee the legacy of faith God has given to you will make it to the third and fourth

⁴ 1 Samuel 3:18

⁵ 1 Samuel 2:27-28

⁶ 1 Samuel 2:30-33

generation, then by your passivity you are leaving the door open to other influences that very well may disinherit them in the bye and bye.

3. Samuel, the High Priest

1. After Eli's death, there was the great prophet/priest - Samuel. There was none godlier in the Bible except our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet it was due to the fact that he failed to pass the baton of faith and virtue to his two sons that, like Eli's sons, they became corrupt priests, and the people, seeing their wickedness, chose an earthly king, rather than God, to rule over them. Listen to what 1 Samuel 8:1-5 –

*“When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. ²The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³**But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.***

*⁴So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵They said to him, “You are old, and **your sons do not walk in your ways**; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”*

4. The Boy King, Josiah

1. In 2nd Kings 23, one of my favorite Old Testament heroes – the boy King Josiah, did an outstanding job bringing reforms and destroying idol worship in his realm. He was the most radical King of them all in regards to purging occult practices from his land. His wife was the daughter of the Prophet Jeremiah. Talk about a godly heritage! **Yet he, too, failed to pass the baton to his son.** As a result, this is what we read, after Josiah is killed in battle by Pharaoh Neco –

*“³¹Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. **His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. ³²He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.**”*

2. Now lest I have made it look like all the fathers were bad and failed to pass the baton in the Old Testament, lets look at someone who was perhaps the most successful dad ever recorded in Scripture.

III. RELAYING THE BATON

A. What is a Legacy/Heritage?

1. A will or endowment could be called a legacy. But so could the way one lived one's life, the philosophy he taught and lived according to. **A legacy assists our children as they try to live out their lives in an often times hostile environment**, like a scuba or space suit does for divers and astronauts.
2. An earthly fathers legacy, when successfully passed on to his children, will do much toward protecting them in the midst of an ever worsening moral climate in the world in which they now live, and will be living in when we are gone.
3. **A legacy is something resulting from, and left behind by, an action, event or person.** Simply stated, a legacy is more about influencing your children through your words, actions and deeds, than by any other means.
4. **A fathers legacy must be durable and resilient** – able to endure in an ever changing world in which pop cultures rise and fall like so many waves in a stormy sea.
5. **It must be timeless and changeless in its principles.** The children who inherit their father's legacy should value it so much that it is worth far more to them than any financial inheritance ever could, so that they continue to walk in it and wear it long after their father is gone, as will their children and grand children.
6. The legacy leaving father should be careful to live his life in such a way that he leaves a **potent, lasting, almost legendary example to his children, enabling them to not only understand his philosophy of life, but also passing on to them the wisdom to know how to apply it in their own lives.**
7. Is your example and word respected by your kids in such a way that they form the guiding stars by which they will chart their course and navigate their families through life, one generation to another? God help us to make it so.
8. Example from the Lion King

B. The Greatest Baton Passer in the Bible – Jeremiah 35

“Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Jonadab son of Recab will never fail to have a man serve me.’”⁷

⁷ Jeremiah 35:19

1. This reminds of another promise like it God made to Phinehas In Numbers 25:10

¹⁰The LORD said to Moses, ¹¹“Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; **for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them**, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. ¹²**Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.** ¹³**He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood**, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.”

2. But believe it or not, there was even a greater baton passing, legacy leaving father than Phinehas. This man, written about in two places in the Old Testament, broke the long cycle of fatherly neglect we read about was so often the case in the OT. 2 Kings 10:15-31, and Jeremiah 35:1-19 record the successes of this incredible man and his incredible descendants. His name was **Jonadab, son of Recab**.
3. In 2 Kings he is met by Jehu who enlists him to help him rid the land of idolatry, occult practices and Baal worship. In Jeremiah, the Lord directs Jeremiah to test Jonadab’s ancestors by inviting them to a banquet, and offering them wine to drink.⁸ Verse 5 says –

⁵Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, “Drink some wine.”

4. **Now Jonadab, seeing the wickedness upon the land, sought to protect the virtue and faith of his children, and to insure that they would never be influenced by the evil that was around them.** So He had commanded his sons to never drink wine, build permanent dwellings, farm or plant vineyards, but to remain nomads and to pass such a command down the family line. So when they were tempted to disobey their ancestor’s command, which was meant to serve as a perpetual generational blessing, verse 6 – 10 –

“...they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine. ⁷Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.’ ⁸We have obeyed everything our forefather Jonadab son of Recab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and

⁸ Jeremiah 35:1-2

daughters have ever drunk wine ⁹or built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields or crops. ¹⁰We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed everything our forefather Jonadab commanded us.”

5. Jeremiah tells us that God was so impressed with the faith and faithfulness of this family to live in obedience to their great-great ancestor’s commands, that He commanded His people to learn a lesson from them,

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: ¹³“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, ‘Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?’ declares the LORD. ¹⁴‘Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me. ¹⁵Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, “Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers.”⁹

But you have not paid attention or listened to me.”

6. Then the Lord blesses the family and lineage of Jonadab by pronouncing and everlasting blessing upon them in verses 16, 18-19 –

¹⁶The descendants of Jonadab son of Recab have carried out the command their forefather gave them¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Recabites, “This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered.’

¹⁹Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Jonadab son of Recab will never fail to have a man to serve me.’”

7. Many other families at the time of Jeremiah didn’t survive the immoral and occult oriented society around them. They compromised their faith, choosing rather to go with the flow of the Pagan peoples around them, and be led away by the prevailing secular philosophies of the day, rather than to remain true to their covenant commitment to the Lord.
8. Jonadab’s family, however, not only survived, but thrived wherever they were, at any particular time. The key ingredient to

⁹ Jeremiah 35:2-15

this families success was that Jonadab set himself and his family apart both spiritually and socially and morally in such a way, that his children understood clearly the reasons why their father believed like he did, and lived like he did, and required them to live and believe like he did. Later on, God blessed Jonadab's descendents with a profound legacy. **Not one of his future lineage would fail to serve God. Not one!** What this means is that after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., when Nehemiah got his orders to go and restore the city of Jerusalem that we can be sure that among Nehemiah's leaders was one or two descendents of Jonadab. Among the Jewish knights that fought along side the Maccabees during the Maccabean revolt were the descendents of Jonadab. We can be assured that of the thousands that John the Baptist baptized in the Jordan river were Jonadab's descendents; and among the thousands who heard Jesus gladly when Jesus preached His famous sermon on the mount, were the descendant's of Jonadab. And in every generation where an example of uncommon, above average godly leadership and example was called for, you can be sure that among the movers and shakers, and among the faithful martyrs and preachers and servants of the church, there never failed to be a descendent of Jonadab among them!

C. Jonathan Edwards as an Example of Winning the Relay

1. The late Noel and Phyl Gibson, in their book, *Evicting Demonic Intruders*, wrote about a sociologist by the name of E.E. Winship, who published a study of two well known American families who lived in the ninetieth century: The Max Jukes family and the Jonathan Edwards family.¹⁰ The former is an example of the law of legacy in terms of its negative aspects, i.e. - consequences and curses. The latter is an example of the positive aspects of the same law of legacy, or generational blessings (Deuteronomy 28: 1-14).

- **Max Jukes** was an Atheist who married a godless woman. Some 560 descendants were traced back to max Jukes. Look at the legacy Jukes passed to his children. Of these 560 descendents:

310 died in poverty
150 became criminals, 7 of which were murderers
100 alcoholics
More than half of these women was prostitutes

¹⁰ p.112-114

In all, Jukes descendants cost the U.S. Government One and one quarter million 19th century dollars!

- **Jonathan Edwards** was a contemporary of Mr. Jukes. He was a committed Christian, and one of the greatest theologians ever to come out of the U.S., if not the greatest. Rev. Edwards married a godly young lady who also was a committed Christian, and together they labored to make sure they not only left their own children a godly legacy, but that they did so in such a way that they, in turn, passed the baton, etc.... **Some 1,394 of Edward's descendants were traced.** Of these:

295 graduated from college, from where 13 became college presidents

65 became college professors

3 were elected U.S. senators

3 were state governors

Others were sent out as ministers to foreign countries

30 were judges

100 were lawyers

1 was a dean of an outstanding law school

56 were practicing physicians

1 was a dean of a medical school

75 became officers in the Army and Navy

100 were well-known missionaries, preachers, and prominent authors.

80 held some form of public office, 3 of who were mayors of large cities

1 was a controller of the U.S. Treasury Department

1 was a vice president of the U.S.

In all, not one of Jonathan Edwards 1,394 descendants was a liability to the U.S. Government.

IV. SUITING UP FOR THE RACE OF YOUR LIFE

- Now I am not going to give you some points on how to pass the Baton this morning. I am saving that for next week, when I preach about how to pass the Baton. And then the week after I'll conclude with How to Repair a Damaged Relationship with Your Child.
- But this morning, I felt the Lord wanted me to take another route by way of application.

A. Hand-Me-Downs

1. We all wear Hand-me-downs

2. The point in all this is that the kind of connections you make with preceding generations, and in turn, the connections you make with your children and their children have a direct impact upon future generations for good or for bad.¹¹
3. Louis Pasteur once said
“Chance favors the prepared mind.”
4. But many of us here today, myself included, weren't prepared by our fathers or parents, didn't receive a positive legacy. What about those of us who are not fathers today, necessarily, but are teenagers, mothers, single mothers, or those “done growed up?” What about those of us whose fathers dropped the baton or didn't run the race at all? (Josiah; Ruth; Paul; Manasseh, etc...)
5. Eric Liddel, Chariots of Fire. Go back, pick up the godly legacy, and run to win!
6. I speak from experience. My dad left me nothing in terms of a legacy or heritage. I know nothing of my ancestors and have had to trust the Lord for everything that I am and that has come to me. As I was researching my family's coat of arms, I came across an interesting crest that has a huge black, raven overarching the top of a shield. In Heraldry the color black stands for grief and loss. The **Raven** represents someone who, having derived little from his ancestors, has through the Providence of God, become the architect of his own fortunes. In other words, God brought me to the place in my life where I had to make a choice either to play the victim and grieve and complain and moan about the lack of heritage and legacy in my life, or suit up for the race that was marked out before me, go back and pick up the baton of faith in Christ and run with all I had. I've been running to win ever since, and trying to help other dads do the same.
7. **(At this point, Pastor Pete has an assistant bring out his wife, SueJae's wedding gown)**
8. J. Otis Ledbetter tells the story about his wife Gail's use of a mannequin clothed with a beautiful turn of the century wedding gown, as she explains to her audience that –
9. “Some beautiful bride wore this elegant gown on her wedding day in the early part of this century.”

¹¹ J. Otis Ledbetter and Kurt Bruner. Your Heritage. P. 10

10. *She then continues to use the gown as a symbol of the wonderful heritage that was handed down to her from her parents who inherited it from their parents, etc...*
11. *Though her wedding gown is not her own, it continues to be a powerful reminder of the precious and godly heritage she received, and that she desires to pass on to her own children.*
12. **At this point Pastor Pete has an assistant bring out a garment of filthy rags)**
13. *In the course of her message, she speaks about a young lady who was not so fortunate. Because of the impact of her heritage, she became a homeless drug addict, covered with needle scars, dirty and paranoid. She had become a prostitute to support her habit. By the age of 30, she had grown tired of the life she was living, and through the outreach of a local church, surrendered her life to Jesus Christ. Her life took a 180 degree turn. Now, when she gives her testimony, people are awed at the fact she survived all those years of abuse and drug addiction, and admire her for her courage to escape a situation in which she had become deeply entangled.*
14. *One young lady may continue to see God's blessing on her life and the life of her family as she continues to preserve and pass down that which was carefully handed down to her from past generations.*
15. *Another young woman experiences God's grace as she recovers an innocence lost to sin and degradation, and breaks the cycle of dishonor and sin that she inherited from her ancestors, and begins a new life of honor and virtue that will form the basis of the godly heritage she will one day pass down to her children.*
16. *Some have been handed down filthy rags. The question that needs to be answered by them is: **"Are you content to continue wearing those filthy rags?"***
17. *Some were handed down a beautiful Victorian wedding gown, and the question they need to answer is: **"Will you continue to wear it?"***
18. *And for those of you who have been blessed with a godly heritage and legacy, that is not enough, as we learned by studying the Kings. **You must involve yourself in an intentional process that has been carefully thought out, and continually worked out in word, deed, example and carefully crafted ceremony.** For the sake*

of that great-great-great grandchild (should Jesus tarry), be wise in how you pass the baton.

19. *Believe it or not, some who were handed down such a beautiful thing, will end up rejecting the gown for the rags. Others, like the young woman above, will come to reject the rags and begin sewing an exquisite gown for their children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren...*
20. Because of what our redeemer Jesus Christ did for us in paying the penalty for our sins by dying as our substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, we have been given the power to choose which one we will wear. You may not have had control over what you were given, but you can choose what you will wear today. Ephesians four uses the terms “put off” and “Put on” when talking about repentance and holy, legacy leaving behavior. (making faith choices)
21. What you were yesterday now belongs in the tomb of time. What you will one day become lies in the womb of time, and remains to be seen. (Christians are human beings, instead of human beings. We have been destined to be conformed into the image of Christ).
22. But God is calling you today, and the Bible says “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart as they did in the day they provoked God to anger” (Hebrews 3:7-8)