

A FAITHFUL LEGACY

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INTRODUCTION

This Fall, in Bible Study Fellowship, we launch a new study—People of the Promised Land. We are excited for the release and believe that by God's grace and power this is one of the strongest studies we've produced to date.

As many of you know, the heart and prayer of our ministry is that we may continue to face forward and face outward. Face forward to reach the next generation and face outward to impact and engage our communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We ask that you join us in this prayer and effort.

To this end, my friend Steve Graves and I have created a short eBook to help us all prepare and begin to apply the timeless truths we will unpack throughout this upcoming study. Truths related to leadership, faith and work, and cultural engagement. Truths that are as relevant today as they were centuries ago.

It's an honor to share this with you. So, go ahead—read, enjoy, digest, apply and share.

For the fame of Jesus Christ in the nations,

Susie

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CHAPTER 1 // STEVE GRAVES

A LEADER WORTH FOLLOWING

Not all individuals in leadership positions are leaders. A title might give you authority and it might place people under your direction, but it doesn't mean anyone is following you. For that to be true, you have to be a person worth following, and that's something a title can't give you.

We see a useful and powerful picture of great leadership in 1 Corinthians 3:4-9. In response to the people's argument about who their leader was, Paul, the first century apostle and super-leader, writes the following:

“For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?

Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (NASB).

Hidden behind the imagery and analogy are four traits of great leadership. Here they are:

1. GREAT LEADERS KNOW THAT FUNCTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TITLES

When the pressure is on, I want the person who can deliver ... regardless of their official title. I want the guy who cares about the job because he wants to do the job right. This is the type of leader Mark Sanborn was talking about in his book *You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader* when he wrote, "Look for people who are as interested in making a difference as they are in making money."

In similar fashion, David Brooks says great leaders are internally driven. Their outlook was grounded before ambition took hold of them.

Sometimes we get the titles right and sometimes we miss it. But there is no mistaking someone's contribution, and everyone can be a contributor because contributing is more about fulfilling a function than playing a role with a title.

2. GREAT LEADERS HAVE A HEALTHY SENSE OF SELFLESSNESS

“Are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants.”

Keep in mind who Paul was at this time. He was easily one of the two or three most globally recognizable followers of Jesus. But you don't get that from this reading. Great leaders have a healthy sense of selflessness and humility.

Be warned, though: I have never met a leader with a messiah complex who started out that way. Typically we start slow and take an inch and keep claiming real estate. Our peers or subordinates stop challenging us because it just isn't worth the grief, drama, or risk. It is just easier to let the messiah-complex leader live in his own world. And then he only gets worse.

3. GREAT LEADERS SEE THEIR LEADERSHIP AS ONE PIECE OF A BIGGER PROCESS

Paul says, “I planted, someone else watered.” It's like saying, “I framed and someone else came in with the finishers.”

We are all a part of the story. Every story has a backstory and a forward story, just like every product is part of a larger supply chain and demand chain. I do my part and you do your part and it all comes together at the end. But often we begin to think we are the full or only story. We see our leadership as a one-man brand model of life, work, and ministry that all story flows from and around.

I have been involved in hundreds of successions in my executive coaching business, and every structure has its unique challenges. But

the one-man brand, the messiah-complex leader always presents the greatest challenges. Period. I am always amused at leaders who think that there is no life or growth after their tenure. Either they're wrong or something's wrong with the company they lead.

On July 2, 1962, Sam Walton opened the first Wal-Mart store in Rogers, Ark. In 1988 Mr. Sam became sick and passed the keys to the \$16 billion company to David Glass, who served twelve years then handed it over to Lee Scott. Scott cleaned out his desk in 2009 and helped transition Mike Duke into that small efficient office. And then in 2014, Mike handed over the CEO role—at the time, a role leading more than 2 million associates worldwide, serving more than 200 million customers each week at more than 11,000 stores in 27 countries generating almost \$500 billion in sales—to Doug McMillon.

Who would have ever imagined the results of each “next guy in line”? Some expanded the borders and some firmed up the infrastructure. Some did both. But they all realized they were part of something bigger than themselves.

4. GREAT LEADERS RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A GOD COMPONENT AND A PEOPLE COMPONENT TO ALL SUCCESS

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

On a recent trip to the Tuscan region in Italy I was reminded that the entire grape harvest depends on sun and rain—two qualities outside the role and responsibility of any human.

Sure, we do the clearing of the land. We do the planting. We do the watering. We might even do the harvesting. But it is God that is causing the growth. Regardless of title, pedigree, wealth, intelligence, and experience, we have clear limits. Only a fool thinks they are controlling the weather.

Rick Warren said it this way: “A pretentious and showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life.” Simply do what is in front of you and trust the results to God.

CONCLUSION

Maybe you notice a theme here. In each of these four traits, the focus is not on the leader but rather is pointed outward—at the task at hand, at the co-laborers, at the larger story, at God Himself. This was true of the apostle Paul. You probably know others who fit the bill.

Ironically, we always want to talk about the leader, but the great leaders always want to talk about something else. ■

SOLDIER, ATHLETE, FARMER

I'm not a soldier. No, Colonel Jessup, I've never picked up a weapon and stood a post. I've never fought in a great battle, never landed in hostile territory, and have never really worn a military uniform of any kind.

I'm also not an especially gifted athlete. I crank out a few miles every week on my bike but that has rarely caused anyone to confuse me for an Ironman or an Olympic medalist.

I've also never harvested a crop for money. Sure, we've grown a few tomatoes in the backyard but none of my friends call me a farmer.

But if I had lived in the days of the Bible there is a good chance I would have been connected in some way to one of these three vocations (soldier, athlete, farmer). The farmer and soldier were common "career tracks," and athletes were just as prominent as they are today. The apostle Paul uses these three to outline a set of universal virtues people of faith should strive for in their work, regardless of their age, title, or industry.

Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. (2 Timothy 2:3-6 NLT)

Each job carried, and in fact still carries, a dual set of virtues worth pursuing.

The Soldier – endurance and focus

The Athlete – discipline and ambition

The Farmer – hard work and patience

THE SOLDIER - ENDURANCE AND FOCUS

Being a soldier during wartime is no picnic. It wasn't when Paul wrote to Timothy, and even today it's far from a day at the spa. The elements of war are unforgiving, unpredictable, and uncomfortable. Much is demanded and little is given in return. To exist and succeed in this type of environment, the soldier must be able to consistently endure hardship without complaint and always remain focused on his task.

Once a battle begins, the soldier is in it until his job is done. He can't take a break because he is hungry or tired. There's no time off. No sick days. He can't let his mind wander, and he can't be distracted by the chaos around him.

THE ATHLETE - DISCIPLINE AND AMBITION

Truly great athletes aren't just talented. Talent is actually pretty easy to find. Plenty of players have it, and plenty have squandered it. The difference between the great ones and the ones on the 'Biggest Wastes of Talent' list is that the great ones pair their talent with a combo of inner drive and outer discipline. Put another way, they don't just have the potential to be great. They want to be great, and they are willing to put in the work and make the sacrifices to get there.

In athletics and in work, success starts with the “want,” or what we might call ambition. Now we all know there is an unhealthy, all-consuming, win-at-all-costs version of ambition, but there is also an admirable type that separates humans.

It isn't enough, though, to just want to be better. We actually have to take the steps to be better. We have to be disciplined.

Ultimately, discipline in any area is really just a series of choices. For athletes, it's about saying no to the burger and yes to the grilled salmon. No to a late night out; yes to the early morning film session. For the rest of us, the choices may not be so cut and dried, but discipline is still about consistently making the small right decisions that make up a life or career of right choices.

THE FARMER - HARD WORK AND PATIENCE

There is a simple formula that every farmer relies on every year—hard work and patience. An impatient farmer is an irregularity, and a lazy farmer is a contradiction in terms. Successful farming simply takes hard work and patience; there is no way around it.

While most occupations in today's marketplace may not demand hard work and patience in the same degree as farming in the first century, I don't know of any job that doesn't require some measure of these virtues.

If you're on my payroll, I expect you to have already learned to work hard. I'm happy to provide on-the-job skills training, but working hard is one skill that you better already have down. Why? Because without a solid work ethic, the rest doesn't really matter. Talent, intelligence, and creativity are only

as valuable as the effort you are willing to exert.

What about patience? Even though it may seem like technology is quickly negating the need for patience, there are still many things that you just can't speed up. If baking cookies takes 30 minutes...it takes 30 minutes. You can turn up the heat hoping to shorten the time, but we all know the outcome of that. You can stubbornly say I only have seven minutes, and then I am going to pull them out of the stove and eat them. Go for it. But many things just take time. And anything that requires time requires patience.

TIMELESS TRUTHS

For me, one of the most compelling aspects of the Bible has always been its timelessness. By this I mean how God crafted messages that spoke truth into the lives of first century Jewish converts under Roman rule, and yet those same messages still speak truth into my life today.

Most of you, like me, aren't a farmer, soldier, or athlete, and you certainly aren't a first century farmer, soldier, or athlete. Regardless, I hope you will take five minutes and wash these six virtues through your life and work. ■



CHAPTER 3 // SUSIE ROWAN

PERSONAL GOSPEL INFLUENCE

It's easy to complain about our culture—where it is and where it is heading. But the corruption of mankind is nothing new, and neither is our obligation to respond. Yet, where do we begin? How do we engage our culture for gospel impact?

From the beginning, God designed humans to “rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (Genesis 1:26) And He placed Adam in the Garden of Eden with a specific purpose: “to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) When sin entered the world, our surroundings changed, but our mandate did not. As people, crafted in God’s image, we are still called to cultivate the culture around us.

Scripture provides several examples of kingdoms and people groups that were shaped by God through the men and women He placed within them. And there's a common theme in those examples: God often calls an individual who helps to build a community of worship, which He then uses to impact entire nations. For instance, God designated Joshua to lead his people into the Promised Land, He redeemed Ruth to leave a lasting legacy in the line of Christ, and He selected the shepherd David to strengthen the nation of Israel as their king.

Like Joshua, Ruth, and David, God can use each of us to impact the cultures within our families, workplaces, churches, and countries. All too often, however, discussions among followers of Jesus about this mandate jump quickly to the actions we might take. Should we get involved in politics? Should we organize or participate in protests? Should we express our perspectives through social media? Should we say nothing? Should we start a homeless ministry or enter discussions on racial reconciliation? Should we do something?

What should we do or not do? That is the question, right?

Or is it?

Cultivation actually begins with preparation. So, before we set our course, much less act on it, we need to prepare. And that preparation begins not with our plans, but with our hearts.

START WITH STUDY

The Bible is the most non-prescriptive prescriptive book ever

written. It provides all the answers but in ways that challenge the reader to find them through study. Harper Lee put it this way: “The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think. No book in the world equals the Bible for that.” And Theodore Roosevelt said a “thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.” (I recommend both.)

The introduction to the Psalms tells us there is a blessing for those whose “delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on His law day and night.” (Psalm 1:2) And David, the possible author of that Psalm and a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), writes often about the power of knowing God’s Word.

By reading Scripture through the lens of the original authors and viewing a passage in light of the entire Biblical narrative, which centers on Jesus Christ, we gain a deeper understanding of who God is. We see God’s character and learn His promises.

We know God’s Word is infallible (Proverbs 30:5-6), complete (Revelation 22:18-19), and provides exactly what we need to equip us “for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). But if we stop with study, we risk obtaining knowledge without any real power for change. We’ve done the homework, but we still need to do more heart work.

MOVE TO MEDITATION

The transformational power of meditating on God’s Word is referenced throughout Scripture, but especially in the Psalms. The psalmists commit to it (Psalm 1:2, 16:8, 63:6, 77:12, 119:15, 143:5, 145:5), pray for their meditation to be “acceptable” (Psalm 19:14)

and “pleasing” (Psalm 104:1), and consider it a “delight” (Psalm 1:2, 11:2).

Christian meditation is dwelling on what you have studied until your heart responds. Then it becomes sweet and delightful, and it changes your direction.

Pastor Tim Keller put it this way in *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, “Meditation is thinking a truth out and then thinking a truth in, until its ideas become big and sweet, moving and affecting, and until the reality of God is sensed upon the heart.”

This might take the form of asking questions about the text, such as “What does this teach me about God, myself, and others?” Or it might involve thinking carefully about each word and memorizing the passage. And, it certainly involves remembering the words of a verse or passage throughout our day in a way that impacts our choices.

Regardless of how we reflect on Scripture, the goal is to absorb God’s truth. And, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we will experience genuine heart work and life-change.

RESPOND WITH PRAYER

When our minds are filled with God’s Word and our hearts are full of the Holy Spirit, our lips can’t help but respond. Study and meditation might lead us to confession. It might prompt us to praise. Or, it could even cause us to cry out to our God.

We see all of these responses throughout the Psalms in the heartfelt

reactions to God's promises. Consider Psalm 39:3, where David writes, "While I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue." Then, he cries out in a heartfelt prayer about his place in this world.

Psalm 27, a beautiful prayer from David about the majesty and power of God, says, "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." (Psalm 27:8) And it ends with expression of his confidence to see God's goodness as he waits on the Lord. (Psalm 27:13-14)

Jesus was the ultimate prayer warrior. And God calls us to prayer, not because He needs to hear from us, but because it creates fellowship with Him that is for our good and his glory.

When God transforms us through study, meditation, and prayer, something wonderful happens. He uses our personal heart-change to alter our perspectives and the perspectives of those around us. Here gospel community happens and Kingdom culture cultivation begins. ■

THE FOUR WAYS CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO CULTURE

When it comes to taking a position on culture, Christians, in my experience, tend to fall into one of four groups. I, Steve, first pondered this after reading a book by Richard Niebuhr, who taught at Yale and wrote *Christ and Culture* in 1951. Niebuhr outlines the four buckets differently (and adds a fifth bucket), but it's the same idea. He wrote about the role of each perspective in history and the value of each position.

1. WITHDRAW FROM IT

Christians in this first group think that culture is so worldly and so wicked that the only way to preserve their spiritual purity is to avoid participating in the culture as much as possible. They may critique culture among themselves or they may simply try to cocoon themselves apart from it. But in any case, they don't want to have much to do with it.

Social media evidence: They may not be on social media, but if they are, everything they're posting involves other Christians. In other words, their social media won't change much in heaven or on earth.

Implications for work: People with this attitude toward culture usually think that the only way to activate the gospel at work is to take a job in a Christian company or organization. If they work for a "secular" company, their only "sacred" objective is to get a chance to talk about Jesus with coworkers and customers; the job itself is just a means to a paycheck.

2. LOOK DOWN ON IT

Andy Crouch wrote, "If we are known mostly for our ability to poke holes in every human project, we will probably not be known as people who bear the hope and mercy of God." Rather than turning their backs on culture, Christians in this second group look down their noses at it. These people take a superior attitude toward what's going on in the general society and engage in "culture wars." In a way that's often more unkind and arrogant than they realize. They like to point out what is wrong in the culture around them and why their way is better. (It's not an attitude that's well received by non-Christians!)

Social media evidence: These are culture war posters—shouting at the enemy of secular culture from a distance with a bullhorn. "Look how bad the world is!"

Implications for work: Those who take this position with regard to culture are not going to have much influence within their companies, since others will see them as the opposite of team players. What they're offering isn't constructive criticism but merely criticism. They are branded

for being negative and judgmental, and often have a hard time keeping a good job.

3. GO ALONG WITH IT

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the first two groups are those Christians who actually take their lead from culture. These may be uncritical folks, never having taken the trouble to examine culture biblically. They may simply prefer to avoid the hard work and potential conflict of doing things differently from the mass of humanity. They may even have theological reasons for arguing that the current trend of culture (whatever that may be at a given time) is what God wants. In any case, they endorse and embrace pretty much whatever is going on in society. This is dangerous because, as Russell Moore writes in his book *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel*, “A church that loses its distinctiveness is a church that has nothing distinctive with which to engage the culture. . . . A worldly church is of no good to the world.”

Social media evidence: These folks don’t stand out from the culture around them on social media. The kinds of things they talk about, link to, and share reflects their alignment with modernity more than their faith.

Implications for work: The go-with-the-flow types aren’t going to ever stand out from the crowd with their faith and convictions. Their motivation for all things work, performance, and identity is made of the same fiber as the culture itself. They have plenty of audience but very little message when it comes to gospel delivery in any measure.

4. TRANSFORM IT

Finally, some followers of Jesus, rather than holding themselves separate

from culture (group 1), trying to make others feel badly about culture (group 2), or accepting culture unquestioningly (group 3), try to transform culture—that is, infuse it with the truth and values of Jesus. They understand that they must be enough like their culture to have audience but enough different to have message. They live and work with the catalytic vision of being salt, light, and the sweet perfume that, over time, changes everything it touches.

Social media evidence: They're constantly sharing good and influential ideas. Some of these will be faith-based but all of them will be challenging and born out of a desire to improve things, not simply to say things. They want to add value, and they aspire to leave each day improved by their digital touch points.

Implications for work: The position toward culture that these people hold opens up all sorts of potential for doing good. Christians in this group recognize that work is, in itself, good. They also try to bend the ways they go about doing it to make it even better, bringing God's common grace to bear for the common good—and bringing uncommon glory to God in the process.

They're asking the questions of "How can we use this to improve lives?" in a way similar to what Tim Keller says in a Q conference talk: "Culture making is taking the raw material that God has made, and the potentials in that material, and drawing the potentials out and rearranging the material for human flourishing and human thriving as God defines it."

Andy Crouch, in his book *Culture Making*, reminds us that culture is really made up of lots of specific artifacts—music, clothing, books, movies, ads, automobiles, food, furniture, architecture, humor, and so much more. Therefore, through the goods and services we create in our

work lives, we have an opportunity to add positive cultural artifacts to the total. It's all about going into work with the attitude of a joyful creator and cultivator. So, Crouch asks, are we thinking about what we can do to create our cultural artifacts in such a way that Jesus is honored?

As Chuck Colson once said, "Christians are called to redeem entire cultures, not just individuals."

What is your approach to engaging your culture? ■



CHAPTER 5 // SUSIE ROWAN

GOSPEL COMMUNITY

The Outback is the land of rugged individualism, or at least that's the idea that movies and advertisers often attempt to sell us. Something in us, they recognize, longs to be in control of the world and to go it alone.

That's clearly not God's plan. He calls us to depend on Him, and to live in community.

Author Donald Miller points out that, "We see those cigarette advertisements with the rugged cowboy riding around alone on a horse, and we think that is strength, when really, it is like setting your soul down on a couch and not exercising it. The soul needs to interact with other people to be healthy."

Great writers understand this, too. That's why Frodo had Sam Wise and Han Solo had Chewbacca.

God, of course, knew this from the dawn of time. In the midst of creating His perfect new world, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone ..." (Genesis 2:18), and He created community.

As mankind multiplied, some communities honored God and others didn't. But while God appointed and anointed leaders, those leaders most typically worked in community with other believers to do the will of God and accomplish some mighty works.

King David acted in solo occasionally, and sometimes God calls us to step up and slay a giant (with His help) when others are paralyzed by fear and lack of faith. But David knew the value and power of community.

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" David wrote in Psalm 133. "It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore."

So, what does it mean to live in gospel community, and how can we build it?

First, the idea of gospel community is just that—a group of individuals radically changed by, and dedicated to, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Second, we build it by spending time together in worship, in prayer, in the study of God's Word, and in the routine and non-routine activities of life.

What does this gospel community look like? Here are some traits to which we can aspire:

WE EMBRACE OUR DIFFERENCES

A gospel community is not a collection of people who look the same or even have similar interests and hobbies. This community may not agree about how they take communion, when they should be baptized, or the songs they sing in worship. But through the grace of the Holy Spirit, God's people are drawn to one another.

When we read Scripture and study together, our backgrounds don't matter and our skin color is irrelevant, because we are one in Christ and on a common mission to know God deeply and to serve Him alone.

WE DISCIPLE ONE ANOTHER

While spending time alone in study, meditation and prayer is important, true life change happens in the context of authentic, biblical community.

As the Lord works in each one of us, through the Holy Spirit and Scripture, we share those moments in ways that help each other grow. You are spiritually mature in areas I am not. I am spiritually mature in areas you are not. We encourage one another as brothers

and sisters to continue to seek His truth, and we add value to our mutual spiritual growth. We need each other.

C.S. Lewis once said, “The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.”

Or, as Proverbs 27:17 put it, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

WE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER

As we navigate our broken world, we are sure to face difficult circumstances. Whether through our own mistakes or the faults of another, the pain of sin will seep into our lives. And the natural result of a fallen world will threaten our peace and joy. But, God doesn't call us to face these trials alone.

Rick Warren called fellowship “a place of grace, where mistakes aren't rubbed in but rubbed out. Fellowship happens when mercy wins over justice.”

In a gospel community, there is honest sharing of our joys and hurts. In a gospel community, there is accountability and correction, but grace, mercy, and forgiveness prevail.

WE STRENGTHEN ONE ANOTHER

When Saul forced David to flee in 1 Samuel 20, his dear friend Jonathan gave him hope. And when Ruth stepped into Bethlehem, she was treated as a foreigner among those she called, “my people.” But in Chapter 2, Boaz, a godly man, gave her rest and a place at his table.

Ecclesiastes speaks to the strength we find in our fellow believers when it says, “Two are better than one, because they have good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up...Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10,12)

Like the cord in Ecclesiastes, we are bound to our brothers and sisters in Christ through the Holy Spirit and we can connect on a deeper level through God’s Word.

We are not meant to journey alone. If we truly want to cultivate a culture for Christ, we must start by building a rich gospel community. From there, the Holy Spirit is free to work in wonderful ways. When the outside world sees the way we love one another, non-believers will feel compelled to investigate. ■

ENGAGING THE CULTURE FOR CHRIST

As Christians, we're bombarded by a culture that runs counter to the gospel community we long to create. Our response is often to either withdraw from relationships governed by a secular mindset and lifestyle or to oppose everything we see in the culture around us. Let's think about those responses.

Modern advertising tells us that we don't measure up and daily news cycles warn us to fear our neighbors. But God's Word doesn't call us to withdraw from the people around us or universally oppose everything; it compels us to engage. Jesus calls us to initiate and make disciples of all people. (Matthew 28:19). To do that we must engage.

There is a place for separation. The first century Christians developed an interesting reputation: They were considered, as New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman put it, antisocial, sacrilegious, and dangerous. In other words, they didn't participate in "normal social life," they didn't worship other gods, and they brought about disasters and afflictions because they didn't sacrifice to those other gods.

There are times when we need to reject the "normal social life." We must

always reject the “other gods” of our day (materialism, self-absorption, etc.). And sometimes we will be seen as the cause of pain rather than the balm. Yet, over time, a true gospel community is a light to the world, a city on a hill that can’t be hidden (Matthew 5:14). We must learn how to engage with love, purpose and gospel impact.

In Genesis 1:28, God tells us to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...” Within God’s holy garden, Adam and Eve were instructed to fill the earth. As believers, we’re not called to stay within our comfortable church walls. God directs us to spread through our neighborhoods, fill our schools, and occupy our cities.

ENGAGEMENT REQUIRES A RELATIONSHIP

In the second part of this mandate, God uses the word “subdue,” which has led some Christians to take a forceful approach to interacting with the world. We become as oppositional as the cable news broadcasts of our day. We power up in an attempt to triumph over culture. A gospel-centered direction, however, penetrates the broader culture on a deeper and more fruitful level.

Subdue can be defined as, “to reduce the intensity or degree of: to tone down.” (Merriam-Webster)

Theologian Russell Moore put it this way: “Those who would pretend to enforce the kingdom with tanks or guns or laws or edicts do not understand the nature of the kingdom Jesus preached.”

Neither withdrawal from nor triumphant opposition to our culture fits with what the Bible says. Could there possibly be another, third way, we

might relate to or “tone down” the culture around us? I think so.

SEE ALL PEOPLE AS GOD’S HANDIWORK

Let’s look to David, while a warrior, he understood God’s heart toward all of humanity.

In Psalm 8, David wrote: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.”

David’s Psalm praises God as Creator by drawing attention to mankind as the pinnacle of God’s creation. In using words like “glory and honor,” David wasn’t simply referring to God’s chosen people, but instead, to every man, woman and child crafted in God’s image.

Martin Luther said, “when you pray, give us this day our daily bread—” God could just drop a loaf of bread onto your dinner table...but, He doesn’t!” Rather, God chooses to answer this prayer and provide for our needs through the work of other people.

God works through the baker, the merchant, and the delivery person, everyone involved along the way, in baking and producing a loaf of bread. God uses the work of those individuals to answer that prayer.

Luther went on to say, in reference to all kinds of jobs, “these are all the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things.”

It is the common grace of God that He gives good gifts and works through all people.

And if God views humanity with “glory and honor,” then shouldn’t we also see our neighbors, friends and co-workers in that light?

When we approach our acquaintances, friends, family, and co-workers with the “honor” that David mentioned in Psalm 8, we show them God’s heart. Through grace, humility, and respect, we open the door for questions, truth, repentance, and right relationship with God. Just imagine what our gospel communities could accomplish through this approach.

I, Susie, recently had an unexpected eye surgery. Without the miracles of modern technology and the expertise and training of medical professionals, blindness would have occurred. How grateful I am for all the research, biomedical advancements, medical schools, scientists, technicians, nurses and doctors. When we find ourselves in a place of need we don’t withdraw, confront or oppose. We gratefully engage experts for our healing. What if we engaged many people around us with the same gratitude for what they have to offer to the world as people made in God’s image? Would not gratitude open doors for Gospel engagement? ■



CHAPTER 7 // STEVE GRAVES

FOUR LESSONS IN LEGACY

“Recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.” That’s what the inscription on Sam Walton’s grave reads.

Not “Wal-Mart founder” or “Billionaire philanthropist” or “Man who transformed the modern economy” or “Everyday low prices.”

Epitaphs always fascinate me because you see how people want to be remembered. Here are a few more:

✦ “Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, I’m free at last.”—Martin Luther King, Jr.

✦ “Here lies a man who knew how to enlist the service of better men than himself.”—Andrew Carnegie

✦“3.14159265358979323846264338327950”—Ludolph van Ceulen (the first man to calculate Pi to 35 digits)

✦“The greatest honor history can bestow is that of peacemaker.”—Richard M. Nixon

Of course, even though we may get to choose an epitaph, there is One whose opinion matters much more than our own and whose viewpoint looks quite different. God doesn't look at our lives through rose-colored glasses. He sees it all—the good, the bad, and the ugly. So from a heavenly perspective, we don't choose our epitaphs from a book of favorite quotes; they are determined by how we live our lives.

One interesting place to see how God evaluates lives is in the histories of the Hebrew kings, specifically in the 23 kings who reigned over Judah. The first ones—Saul, David, and Solomon—ruled over Israel, but when the kingdom split, the remaining 20 kings ruled over just the southern section of the kingdom, called Judah.

Think of Judah as a long-running private business that was passed from one generation to the next ... over and over again. Some kings handed down a wonderful legacy and some handed down a lousy one. Some kings inherited a moral, spiritual, and political mess whereas others were set up for success.

Judah, Inc., thus, is a study in legacy that applies to everyone from the CEO to the middle manager. We all are building a legacy of some kind and here are four reminders in that endeavor:

1. A GOOD LEGACY IS A PERSONAL CHOICE

The fact that our predecessor left a good legacy does not guarantee

that we will do the same. It comes down to personal choice.

At Judah, Inc., this reality was particularly noticeable in the father-son pair of Hezekiah and Manasseh. Hezekiah was effusively praised by Scripture, but his godly life didn't keep his son, Manasseh, from reviving the abominations his father had destroyed. Manasseh chose to pursue evil.

Incidentally, the motivation that often drives the second generation away from a good legacy is an unhealthy spirit of independence. In contrast to that unhealthy independence, an article in *Economist* titled "Passing the Crown" includes the statement, "Families whose businesses survive seem to operate on a set of agreed principles that pass from one generation to the next, written or unwritten."

It is patterned choices that create our legacy.

2. PRIDE IS A POISON

Like the kings in the Old Testament, we can seek God one day, then be poisoned by our independent pride the next day. Uzziah, for example, was a great and godly builder for his first two decades in power. He fortified the capital, strengthened the military, and gave the nation prosperity it hadn't seen in centuries.

But he began to believe in himself more than God.

It all culminated in a moment when he tried to force his way into the temple, ignoring the pleas of the priests that he was overstepping. He began to offer incense and was struck with leprosy. He spent the rest of his life isolated from society.

What a sad finale to a reign that began with such promise. And what a sobering lesson to anyone in leadership. The best way to mar a good legacy is to allow pride to gain a foothold. Be overly cautious of the poison that strikes us down. Pride will soil your business, but more importantly, it will ruin your legacy.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS MEAN LITTLE IF A PERSON LACKS INTEGRITY

Dwight Eisenhower said, “The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is a football field, in an army, or in an office.”

Most of the Jewish kings probably organized great construction projects and fought successful battles against their enemies. But Scripture generally records the accomplishments of only the good kings. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah are all noted for their building achievements.

In contrast, Manasseh reigned for 55 years and gets nothing!

Surely he built something significant during a half-century in power. But the biblical record concentrates primarily on all the evil he perpetrated in the kingdom. It only mentions some positive work after he repented of sin at the very end of his life.

The lesson? Integrity is the mortar between the bricks, holding them together, and the foundation holding the building up. Achievement at any cost and by any means is not an ingredient of a great legacy.

4. MENTORS AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

Relationships can make or break a legacy. We might begin our careers on the right foot because we have good mentors who guide us in the right direction, but it's up to us to find other godly counselors when our original mentors leave the picture.

Here's a good example: Joash, who ascended to the throne as a young boy. Joash was a good king so long as Jehoiada, his godfather of sorts, was alive. But when Jehoiada died, the king failed to find new godly counselors.

Had Joash wanted to leave a godly legacy, he might have heeded the words of his great-great (15 times) grandfather, Solomon—"My son, do not forget my teaching."

CONCLUSION

Let me close with two different quotes about two different kings. Think of them as epitaphs:

•King David—"When David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed." (Acts 13:36)

•King Jehoram—"He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David." (2 Chronicles 21:20)

Both men lived. Both men were kings. Both men did stuff. Both men died.

The similarities don't go much beyond that. But that's a good reminder—we all live and we all die.

David's death, however, completed a life in which he did what he was supposed to do. Jehoram, on the other hand, couldn't complete his life soon enough according to many people. Jehoram died and was buried in a city named after David whereas no one wanted to remember Jehoram.

Let's leave David legacies and not Jehoram legacies. It's never too late to start.

And here's the trick: We don't sit around posturing for history. We live our lives day after day. It's not about preparing for posterity; it's about living well today. If we live well now, we'll leave behind something worth remembering. ■



ABOUT STEVE

I love helping people flourish in their life and work. Over the past 25 years I've worked with thousands of organizations from Fortune 500 giants to small boot strapping start-ups. When I'm not writing or coaching CEO's and business owners you might find me back-casting in the cold clear rivers of northwest Arkansas. You can find some of my content on stephenrgraves.com.



ABOUT SUSIE

Susie Rowan is Executive Director of Bible Study Fellowship. She has served as Teaching Leader of several BSF classes on three different continents. Susie holds a Juris Doctorate degree and practiced law in Kansas City, Missouri, before serving overseas with BSF. Previously, she served as president of a corporate foundation and worked with her husband in real estate. She is married to Roger Rowan and has two married children and three grandchildren.

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