

How Can We Start a Legacy the Right Way?

How to Leave a Legacy Series, October 15 & 16, 2022 | 1 Kings 3:3-15
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How can we start a legacy the right way?

David built a powerful legacy.

David went from being an overlooked son and shepherd to being the King of Israel.

David was chosen by God to replace Saul, Israel's first king, whom God rejected because of the king's disobedience during his reign.

David was a complicated man. David actually sinned grievously against God.

However, David was known for his love for God expressed in poetry and obedience to God.

David expanded the kingdom of Israel, made Jerusalem his capital, and secured the kingdom's borders.

David dreamed of building a Temple for God, but God told him to leave that work to his son.

Instead of allowing David to build a house where the Lord would be worshipped, God promised to build David's house, his dynasty. God promised to make sure that a member of the House of David would rule over a kingdom that would last forever. What a legacy!

David attempted to hand off that legacy to his son, Solomon.

There was some confusion about who would be king of Israel after David.

However, David had received a message from God that Solomon would be his heir.

At the beginning of 1 Kings, David had to act to secure Solomon's reign.

David had high hopes for Solomon. He wanted Solomon to be faithful to God. He wanted Solomon to build the Temple and finish the work David had not completed.

David tried to hand his legacy to Solomon.

What is a legacy? Our legacy is the long-lasting effect of our lives.

The word "legacy" has several meanings.

However, it most frequently refers to something we leave behind after our death.

We may bequeath something tangible like money or a possession to a person, or we may leave something intangible like a lesson learned or support given.

For this series, the meaning of "legacy" that I am using is "the long-lasting effect of our lives."

There are natural times in life when we step back and ask about the legacy we're leaving behind.

If we have children, reach midlife, retire, or face a life-threatening illness, we usually step back and ask what our legacy will be. What will be the long-lasting effect of our lives?

In those times, hopefully, we ask what God wants that legacy to be.

Looking at King Solomon's life will lead us to ask questions about the legacies we're leaving.

We are going to take a whirlwind trip through three big moments in King Solomon's life: the beginning, middle, and end of his reign.

We will look at each of these points through the lens of legacy. What legacy was Solomon building? What legacy did Solomon leave behind? What did God think about that legacy?

As we hit these high points, we are asking questions about our own legacy.

We start today at the beginning of Solomon's reign by thinking about how we can start now to build a legacy that honors God.

Solomon started his reign with the possibility of a rich legacy.

Already in 1 Kings 3:3-4, Solomon seemed torn in two different directions:

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

In 1 Kings 3:1, we read that after becoming King, Solomon quickly secured an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by marrying Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon is already turning toward foreign alliances, foreign wives, and foreign ways of organizing Israel.

Then in 1 Kings 3:2, we read that the people were still worshipping in the high places. Before the Israelites conquered the promised land, it was customary for the pagans of the land to worship their gods in the high places. The Israelites started using the high places as spots to worship the LORD. In

Deuteronomy 12:13-14, we read that this was not acceptable:

Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.

In verse 3 we find that Solomon loved God. To say that he walked in the statutes of David meant that he obeyed the Law as handed down by Moses, just as his father had done.

However, we also discover that Solomon, like the rest of Israel, worshipped at the high places rather than at the Tabernacle. Gibeon was the leading place of worship before the Temple.

But there at Gibeon, Solomon made a generous sacrifice to the Lord.

We get the picture of a nation and a ruler torn in two directions.

However, when given the chance to ask God for a blessing, he asked rightly in 1 Kings 3:5-9:

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

After offering his sacrifice, Solomon spent the night at Gibeon. As he slept, he had a dream that was more than a dream. It was a vision. In the vision, God invited Solomon to ask for a gift.

Solomon responded with praise that lays out a problem.

Out of God's steadfast love for David, the LORD has placed David's heir on the throne.

Solomon protests, though, that the job is overwhelming. Israel is a large nation; they are important to God and to God's plan. He, Solomon, is not prepared.

Having framed the problem, Solomon makes his request. Would God give to him an understanding mind to govern God's people?

God answered by giving Solomon unparalleled wisdom in 1 Kings 3:10-14:

It pleased the LORD that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

What Solomon asked pleased God. He will give Solomon "a wise and discerning mind."

To make Solomon's mind discerning means that he can attend, look closely, and comprehend.

To make Solomon's mind wise implies that he would have the skill to accomplish the tasks given to him in governing. He would recognize the pathway that leads to the right outcomes.

God will give Solomon wisdom that will exceed anyone before or after him.

Solomon could have asked for long life, riches, or the death of his enemies. Since he did not, God will give him what he has requested plus unparalleled riches and honor.

Solomon responded to God's gift with single-minded devotion in 1 Kings 3:15:

And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

On waking, Solomon realized the dream had been a vision. These promises were from God!

He responded to his dream vision by going to Jerusalem and standing before the ark (where he should have been worshipping all along). There he again offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings. He also gave a big feast for his servants.

After his experience with God, Solomon seems to have decided. Equipped with wisdom and looking at the possibility of a successful reign, Solomon seemed determined to follow God with a single mind and to lead God's great people in keeping with God's perfect will.

Solomon responded to God's gift with single-minded devotion and a determination to build a godly legacy.

As we look more closely, there is a question hanging over Solomon's legacy.

The promises God made to David were unconditional.

God promised David descendants. No conditions.

God promised that one of David's descendants would build the Temple. No conditions.

God even promised to establish David's house forever in **2 Samuel 7:16**:

"And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever".

In this case, God was referring to Jesus. Jesus is the descendant of David who will sit on the throne of David and rule over God's people forever. No conditions. There is no "if."

However, as David passed those promises to Solomon, he introduced a conditional element.

David commanded Solomon to be strong and follow God's commandments in the Law.

In **1 Kings 2:4** David added:

"... that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'"

While many of the promises to David were unconditional, David also understood that the prosperity of his descendants and their continuous reign over Israel depended on his descendants who became king keeping God's Law.

Prosperity is conditional. Continuous rule is conditional. There is an "if."

Some of God's promises to Solomon were conditional.

If Solomon is single-hearted in his devotion to God, then he will have long life. However, if Solomon does not walk with the Lord as David his father did, then God will not extend his days.

If Solomon is single-hearted in his devotion to God, then his legacy will be healthy and secure. However, there is no guarantee that the House of David's rule over all Israel will not be interrupted. Nor is there a promise that Israel will prosper regardless of the people's behavior.

Thus, there is a question hanging over Solomon's legacy.

Will Solomon live loyally to God or not?

Will he lead the nation toward or away from God?

Will he pass along the kingdom intact to his heirs?

The conditional nature of God's promises to Solomon means that there are questions hanging over his life and legacy.

There is a conditional element to our own legacies.

We recognize the conditional element as we think about passing along tangible legacies, like financial resources, to the next generation.

Right now, we are at the start of the largest transfer of generational wealth in history.

Americans, age 70 and older, have accumulated a net worth of nearly \$35 trillion.¹

Eventually, all of that wealth will be transferred somewhere. Traditionally, that wealth would go to the children of the people who accumulated it.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/older-americans-35-trillion-wealth-giving-away-heirs-philanthropy-11625234216>

However, we're discovering that what happens to large financial legacies is conditional.

History shows that large financial legacies rarely last more than three generations.

One generation earns money. The second conserves money. The third spends it.

If these large financial legacies are carefully managed and future generations remain diligent about their use and development, then they can do good things. However, if future generations take these legacies and squander them, then they are gone quickly!

What happens to large financial legacies is conditional!

Therefore, we are thinking in disciplined ways about the transfer of financial legacies.

Families are structuring their legacies so that they do more good over a longer period of time.

Some families are giving part of their legacy to children and putting part in trusts that help their grandchildren get educations and start out in life.

Others, like billionaire Warren Buffet, are giving most of their wealth away to charities.²

If we plan so carefully for the transfer of financial legacies, ought we not to give the same kind of disciplined thought to the less tangible, yet more important, legacies we leave?

There are some elements of our relationship with God that are unconditional.

God's nature doesn't change. He is who he is. God's nature is unconditional.

Grace is unconditional; it's a gift offered to us freely. **Romans 6:23** says,

... the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We have to accept the gift. **Romans 10:9** clarifies,

... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

That's kind of a condition. However, the gift itself is unconditional.

On the other hand, our legacies are conditional.

God gives us the gift of life and the opportunity to do something with it.

God gives us specific gifts we can use. We are given financial resources, talents, spiritual gifts, positions of power, unique experiences, things that make our heart sing, faith in Jesus Christ, and the capacity to share that faith with others.

We have people and places over which we have influence. Our influence may be in the home. It may be over a group of friends. It may be over a company or a community or an entire culture. We all have influence.

God gives us lives, gifts, and an opportunity to use our lives and gifts with purpose in the places we influence. That's how we build a legacy.

However, that legacy is conditional.

If we waste the opportunities God gives us in life, we will damage our legacy.

² Ibid.

Three Ways to Start a Legacy the Right Way

1. Define the legacy you hope to leave behind.

Here at Valley, we have language that helps us to think about the legacy we want to leave.

We talk about impacting the world for Christ.

Sometimes we impact the world for Christ by creating the kind of beauty God creates.

Other times, we impact the world for Christ by giving life and caring for those God cares for.

We may even impact the world for Christ by healing that which is broken.

Impacting the world for Christ may mean building justice and righteousness.

Always, impacting the world for Christ means being a witness for Christ.

And always, impacting the world for Christ means making and multiplying disciples of Jesus.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? Think about it. Pray diligently about it. Define it.

2. Start building your legacy early, if possible.

Solomon made a decision at the beginning of his reign to serve God wholeheartedly.

He decided to use his God-given wisdom and his God-given position to build a legacy that would please God and stand the test of time.

By deciding at an early age, Solomon was able to pursue building a legacy for a lifetime.

As we will see, there are some things Solomon spent his entire life doing. He spent a lifetime dispensing wisdom, writing, creating a government, building infrastructure, and amassing wealth. By the end of his life, his achievements in these areas were monumental. He left behind a massive influence on the world.

Of course, that's not the whole story about Solomon. However, starting early and spending a lifetime building a legacy is wise. Let's be wise!

Start now building the legacy you hope to leave.

Start impacting the world for Christ now so that if Jesus waits to return, you will one day leave behind an inheritance of faith for generations to come.

3. Ignore the myth that it's too late to start.

There is nothing you can do to change the past.

If you have spent most of your life so far pulling in wrong directions, too many directions, or no direction at all, don't let that discourage you.

Decide what legacy you hope to leave to future generations.

Discover what God wants you to accomplish and what God wants you to be known for.

Then do it. Impact the world for Christ and leave a godly legacy.