

Our Legacy

What do you want your legacy to be?

Legacy is one of those funny things. It encompasses the questions, “What do I want to be known for?” and “What do I want to leave behind when I go?” As we near the end of our primary careers and transition to our next seasons, legacy becomes increasingly predominant in our thinking and choices.

But whether we are aware of it or not, legacy is being created all the while. Legacy is what people experience from us whether we think they are paying attention or not. Habits, patterns of behavior, things we do that impact others—all of these and more shape our legacy.

For example, like it or not, with my family and friends, I am known for the giant homemade chocolate chip cookies I make for events (a childhood neighbor’s recipe). I can’t go to a dinner or visit without being asked to bring these

cookies. The church requests them for their annual bake sale, where shoppers ask for them by name. These delicious cookies will be part of my legacy even though they are not in the top 100 things I would choose to be remembered for!

Another legacy element with my family would be my propensity to overschedule family vacations with activities and adventures, many of which required us to be up and out very early in the morning. (Vacation was treated like my work life: fit the maximum in the allotted time.) Although I have gotten a LOT better (feedback is a powerful thing . . .) it’s like gum on a shoe. My grown children still tease me about it.

While I hope there will be other, more flattering, things I will be remembered for one day, as a factual matter, legacy begins and maybe even ends with *who* we are every day, with *how* we

are every day, with *what* we do every day, and with how people experience us and our actions. A single gift may earn a mention in the obit or eulogy, and a big gift may earn a naming right. However, real legacy is the impact of our behaviors on others, the influence and memories that remain after we are gone.

Legacy is the people we mentor; the children we raise; the grandchildren we influence. It is the things we invent or change or influence significantly. It’s the way we do things repeatedly; how we help others. Legacy is how we handle bad news and how we help others navigate disappointments. Legacy is whether we show up—or not—for others who need us, and how we help them... or not.

We can be intentional in our actions and where we focus, and in doing so, we are influencing our legacy.

What do you want others to emulate about you? Is that what they see and experience from you every day? Are you living and creating a legacy you are proud of?

It’s never too early to start.



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