

WEEK 1: *Legacy Built through Stewardship*

Hook

Main Point: Building a godly legacy begins with godly stewardship.

Former college football coach Mike Leach passed away in December 2022, and he left behind a unique legacy. In the wake of his passing, many reporters, coaches and players reflected on their favorite moments spent around one of the more charismatic and interesting coaches of the last few decades. Leach's tenure included successful years of head coaching at Texas Tech University, Washington State University and Mississippi State University. He may be remembered in the short-term for a funny halftime interview or his intriguing coaching style, but Leach's long-term legacy will be marked by the coaching tree he left behind. According to the Associated Press¹, six current major college football head coaches (Lincoln Riley: USC, Sonny Dykes: TCU, Josh Heupel: Tennessee, Dave Aranda: Baylor, Dana Holgorsen: Houston, Neal Brown: West Virginia, Sonny Cumbie: Louisiana Tech), and one NFL head coach (Kliff Kingsbury: Arizona Cardinals) either played or coached under Mike Leach. He played a role in why they now find success, and they will be the ones to carry on his legacy through the game of football.

Transition: In a worldly way, Leach built a legacy through proactively stewarding the coaches and athletes entrusted to his leadership. Today we are going to look at building a godly legacy through proactive stewardship of all God has entrusted to us.

¹ Russo, Ralph D., "Mind of Mike: Expansive Coaching Tree Part of Leach's Legacy," AP NEWS, Associated Press, December 14, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/arizona-cardinals-mlb-sports-mississippi-washington-1495d6515192634e8b8d4b1de6a37a15>.

WEEK 1: *Legacy Built through Stewardship*

Book

Main Point: Building a godly legacy begins with godly stewardship.

Talking Point 1: A godly legacy is built through stewardship of authority

Q: What comes to mind when you hear the word *stewardship*?

The idea of stewardship is often positively applied in secular contexts, especially regarding the environment, personal wellness and personal property. It is “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care,” according to Merriam-Webster. The biblical idea of stewardship takes it a step further: It is the “responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider” (*Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)². Take the previously mentioned secular context of the environment as an example: How much more do we have a duty to steward and care for the environment once we consider that the environment is a gift from God? Managing the resources of the earth is not only God-glorifying, but it is the responsibility of man, because God gave man authority over much of His creation.

Read: Genesis 1:26–30

These concluding verses to the seven-day creation arc are often titled the “cultural mandate,” because God commands that humanity steward the gift of the earth. His mandate is clear: “Be fruitful and multiply” and “have dominion ... over every living thing” (v. 28). God entrusts the dominion, or authority, to man, rather than other created beings, because of man’s identity – made “in the image of God” (v. 27). The first man, Adam, took to the task of exercising his authority over creation by eating from the garden (2:16) and naming all the creatures (2:19–20). If the story ended there, that would be Adam’s legacy. He stewarded God’s creation, fulfilled the cultural mandate, and passed along his authority to those who came after him! Of course, this is not where Adam’s story ends, and his legacy is not so heartwarming.

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve fall into the trap of another created being – the serpent. Rather than exercising dominion over the serpent, they submitted themselves to the serpent’s deception, convincing them to eat from the one tree in the garden that they were told not to eat from. By failing to steward the authority over creatures that they had been given, they simultaneously rebelled against the authority of God. Scripture does not take the sin of Adam lightly – in fact it becomes his legacy. Paul reminds his audience in Romans 5:19 that it is “by

² Charles W. Draper with Stewart Don H., “Stewardship,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1534.

the one man's disobedience [that] many were made sinners." To his Corinthian audience, Paul also writes, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Q: In the Bible, what is an example of someone (other than Adam) who stewards authority poorly, and how does it affect his or her legacy?

Q: What is an example of someone who stewards authority well, and how does it affect his or her legacy?

From a practical standpoint, we have all been gifted individual contexts where we have authority. Parents have authority over children, managers have authority over employees, teachers have authority over students, and coaches have authority over athletes. The way we wield that authority affects our legacy. Using authority for the glory of God, rather than the glory of ourselves is counter-cultural, but it is what we are called to do. Adam did not understand this. He sought his own glory in the garden, hoping to obtain the same knowledge of God.

Q: How does the cultural perspective of legacy differ from a biblical-oriented perspective?

Q: Give an example of how you can steward authority in your life for the glory of God.

Talking Point 2: A godly legacy is built through proactive stewardship.

An example of someone in the Bible who properly stewarded the authority given to him is Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, betrayed and enslaved, eventually rising to a powerful position in the Egyptian ruling class. He received a hefty promotion after providing an interpretation for Pharaoh's dream that foresaw a coming famine. He rose to be second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, and he specifically oversaw the preparation for the famine.

Read: Genesis 41:41–57

Q: What role did stewardship play in Joseph's new job?

Joseph was entrusted with a great deal of authority in a time of impending crisis. The Lord had provided the dream to Pharaoh as a warning, and Joseph acted accordingly. For Joseph to fill up storehouses of grain when it was plentiful must have seemed strange to the Egyptian people because they did not know of the coming famine. Noah built an ark for a dry land that had yet to see rain, because he acted in faith according to what he had heard from the Lord. In the same way, Joseph used the authority given to him to proactively steward the grain in faith, because the Lord had shown him what was to come. At the end of the passage, we learn that people from around the world came to Egypt for food. Joseph's stewardship not only resulted in enough food to save Egypt from famine, but the surrounding nations as well. The story

continues beyond the conclusion of chapter 41, and we find out that Joseph's actions ultimately saved the lives of his brothers who had betrayed him as they came seeking assistance during the famine.

Joseph's faithful and proactive stewardship solidified a godly legacy. His leadership is remembered in Psalm 105 (v. 16–25), which reflects on God's wondrous works throughout the early history of Israel. Stephen, in his final words before being stoned for his faith (Acts 7:9–14), preached a sermon in which he reflected on Joseph's stewardship of authority which ultimately saved his family. Thousands of years later, we can now see that Joseph's legacy foreshadowed Jesus Christ, who sacrificially saved even those who betrayed him.

Joseph was given a unique gifting from the Lord that enabled him to interpret prophetic dreams. Even though he knew the famine was coming, Joseph still required faith that the Lord was behind the dream and that storing the grain was the right thing to do. Even though we do not have the same divine gifting as Joseph, we can still be proactive and faithful in our stewardship of authority. It is important to note, however, that this does not always mean hoarding our resources is the godly thing to do. Mere pages later in Scripture, we find the Israelites chastised by God for keeping the leftovers of the manna and quail that fell from heaven. This is all to say that we must engage with God to grow in wisdom to learn and discern His will for each situation individually. For parents, as an example, it may take children until age 6 or 7 to come to a confident understanding of the Gospel, but that does not mean parents should wait until their children are 6 or 7 to begin reading the Bible to them and praying with them. Faithful stewardship of parental authority must be proactive because discipling children is the responsibility of parents first, even before the church. Or it could mean being generous with the resources for which God has called you to be generous, recognizing that the benefits of generosity sometimes outweigh the cons of seeming instability in finances.

Q: What are practical examples of what proactive stewardship may look like in your life?

Q: How can proactive stewardship impact your legacy?

Talking Point 3: A godly legacy is built through stewardship of faith and character.

Read: 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; Ephesians 3:1–3; Colossians 1:24–26

Out of all the possessions, platforms, abilities and relationships that we are responsible for stewarding, nothing is more important than how we steward our faith, which is rooted in the grace of God. The apostle Paul writes with a similar purpose to the Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians regarding the idea of faithful stewardship. At a personal level, Paul firmly believes that he has been entrusted (1 Corinthians 9:17) with stewarding the Gospel, because of the grace God has shown him and the mysteries revealed to him – salvation for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:2). In Colossians 1, he makes it clear what proper stewardship of the Gospel looks like: “to make the Gospel fully known” to his audience.

A prime example of Paul's legacy being built through the stewardship of his faith can be seen in the person of Timothy, who was discipled under Paul. Timothy was loved dearly by Paul and was a clear successor to Paul's ministry. Paul trusted Timothy to provide guidance and oversight to churches where he could not be present. Paul even charged Timothy to point the Ephesians back toward stewardship (1 Timothy 1:3–5) But stewardship of the Gospel was not solely dependent upon the great apostle, though it did become his legacy. We, too, have been entrusted with the Gospel, and in our own lives, God has revealed the truth of His Word that was once a mystery to us. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he broadened the scope of who has been entrusted with the Gospel.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:19–20

Q: What does it mean to be “ambassadors for Christ”?

As ambassadors, we represent Christ everywhere we go. The “message of reconciliation” entrusted to the ambassadors is that Christ has bought us back from the bondage of sin to be in right fellowship with Him. By using this language, Paul emphasizes that the Church is the vessel by which the message is to reach the world. Jesus first entrusted the good news of reconciliation to His disciples in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20). In the Great Commission, Jesus did not simply ask the disciples to steward the Gospel well, He commanded it and set an expectation. Our role as stewards of the Gospel should have a profound impact on our legacy. An eternal impact is far more important than anything physical we can leave behind.

The story from the “hook” is applicable here. Mike Leach built a coaching tree that will carry his legacy through those who played, trained, and coached under his leadership. In a secular sense, Leach properly stewarded the responsibility he had been given. Now consider the early church. The only way the Church could carry on was through the multiplication of believers. The apostles discipled a new generation of Christ-followers, such as Timothy. Timothy, through his leadership, likely discipled another generation, and so on. The tree that may have started with Paul's discipleship of Timothy and others in the early church has continued all the way to this generation. If we are part of the Church – the vessel that God has divinely ordained to expand his kingdom – then we must disciple the next generation. We must live like Christ in every corner of our life so that we leave behind a legacy that is much greater than ourselves. In the end, what does it matter if we are individually remembered? Honoring the family name or making sure the family name is carried on may be a piece of an individual's legacy, but it pales in comparison to honoring the name of Christ, and ensuring the family of God carries on within your earthly family.

Q: Who is in your “discipleship tree”?

Q: Compare and contrast a legacy that is centered on the earthly family, and then do the same with a legacy centered on the spiritual family.

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Took

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We should not desire that our legacy be marked by how kind we were, how much money we saved up for our kids, or how important our role was in our local church – we should desire that our legacy be marked by Christ alone. Whether our name is remembered is not the point. We never learned the name of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), but her legacy is marked by the transformative nature of Christ, and the rapid and bold evangelism of her town. We can make a lot of guesses, but we have no definitive answer on who authored Hebrews – and yet the author’s legacy has carried on, marked by the declaration of Christ’s true identity: “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Hebrews 1:3), “merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17), “the mediator of a new covenant” (9:15), and much more. How many martyrs have died for the cause of Christ, and yet their names are not recorded? The bridge of the worship song “The Missionary Anthem” by YWAM Kona Music reads:

I will preach the gospel
Die and be forgotten
As long as You get the glory

If we live according to the biblical definition of stewardship by managing “all the resources of life for the glory of God,” then our legacy will not be about us, our name on a tombstone, or the finances left behind for our loved ones, but it will be about the God who saves.

Challenge: What are you building? Use whatever authority or platform you have been given as a stage to steward the Gospel proactively and faithfully. Whether it is at home, work, or somewhere else, actively pray that the Lord would open the door for you to build a legacy that glorifies Him alone.

