

# October 2008

*“When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth.”*

**—Genesis 5:3, NLT**

Here is a sobering thought: Whatever you are during your lifetime lives on in your sons and daughters after you die. It’s a question not of *whether* you will leave a legacy but of *what kind*.

“Legacy” is an interesting term that draws its roots from the Old English word “legend.” By definition, a legend is the section of a map that defines the symbols. For instance, a double line depicts an interstate, a thin black line stands for a state road, a picnic table represents a roadside rest area and so on.

Maps give us direction in life. They are guidance systems that keep us on the right paths by helping us find our bearings and preventing us from getting lost. However, a map is only as accurate as its legend.

Your legacy is like a legend that shows people where you’ve been. It gives direction to those around you and affects those who come after you, just as your own heritage affects you. Each of us carries a lot of baggage, both good and bad, that didn’t originate with us.

This means that to some degree we are all hand-me-downs, especially in the areas of emotions, behavior and lifestyle. The Bible tells us, “[Adam] became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image” (Gen. 5:3, NLT).

Deuteronomy 5:9-10 says: “I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.

“But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those?? who love me and obey my commands.”

These words confirm that each of us is leaving a trail for others, possibly generations to come. I believe God is saying two things to us:

- Our personal baggage is picked up and carried by three to four generations.
- God desires to visit families in order to stop the influence of generational sin.

Whatever the case, legacies live on. But most of us fail to be intentional about leaving a legacy. Powerful legacies require hard work and self-sacrifice; they don't just happen.

Whatever you are lives on in the lives of your sons and daughters. What you leave behind becomes the legend on the map and speaks clearly to those who come behind you.

Ask yourself: What kind of heritage am I leaving? It's never too late to change. If you're not working hard at it, start today.

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