

Legacy of Love

Those who write about leadership seem dedicated to defining the crown of effective leadership as “leaving a legacy.” Some writers suggest five, seven or 10 levels of leadership progression, with the last being legacy leadership.

The dangling carrot for a leader is to do something, build something or say a lot of somethings that outlast a lifetime. Maybe this explains why I like to see my quotes on Twitter enveloped in a meme. I can convince myself that my words will forever mark the Twitterverse.

I searched the Bible for the *l* word and found nothing in most translations. A few versions, including the Modern English Version, include the word in this one verse, “The wise will inherit glory, but shame will be the legacy of fools” (Prov. 3:35).

I can best understand the word *legacy* through a synonym such as an inheritance or gift of money or property. But it seems leadership writers are referring to something more.

Some suggest that philosophers left a legacy in their manner of thinking out loud. (And those ancient philosophers had nary a tweet among them.) And Billy Graham once said this about legacy: “Our days are numbered. One of the primary goals in our lives should be to prepare for our last day. The legacy we leave is not just in our possessions, but in the quality of our lives. What preparations should we be making now? The greatest waste in all our earth, which cannot be recycled or reclaimed, is our waste of the time God has given us each day.”

A good friend of mine suggested I consider the Bible’s “hall of faith” to gain an understanding of legacy. Hebrews 11 is peppered with legacy imprints. The book of Hebrews is pastoral in nature and it seems to be written to encourage and edify.

In Chapter 11, the author forms a message arc around the importance of faith in our Christian walk. After making an opening statement on faith, he references the lives of men and women who modeled faith. Apparently this is how their legacy was established—in faith. And we know faith works through love (Gal. 5:6).

If you hope to leave a “good report”—a strong legacy—walking in faith, which works through love, is your aim. By faith, Abel demonstrated his love to God through his obedience and sacrifice, and his faith speaks volumes to this day (Heb. 11:1-6).

The Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God for 300 years (Gen. 5:22). Can you imagine? All told, he lived 365 years and never tasted death. His legacy is that he pleased God. I could live with that! Love-driven leaders seek to please God and are quick to repent when they don't.

It seems Enoch's legacy of faithfulness to God influenced future generations. His grandson Noah also made the hall of faith: “By faith Noah, being divinely warned about things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to save his family, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Heb. 11:7).

Noah feared the Lord and demonstrated a righteousness that comes by faith. Noah's legacy is obedience in the faith of what looked ridiculous—and his obedience essentially saved the human race. Love-driven leaders take risks.

We also see in Abraham a legacy of faith that influenced generations (Gal. 3:13-14; Heb. 11:8-12, 20-22, 30-31). Love-driven leadership is moved by faith, which works through love. Even when you spy out the land and it looks as if the giants are too great for you, you can choose to see through the eyes of faith, as Joshua and Caleb did (Num. 13). Love-driven leadership seeks the Lord, finds confidence in Him and

executes His vision in His timing in His way for His glory. And it takes great faith, which works through love.

Indeed, faith seems to be interwoven with legacy. Leaders with little faith probably do not leave a legacy. So consider this question: When you make decisions, do you consider how your choices will impact your legacy? Should you?

The teams we lead will remember us not by profits earned or buildings built. We will be remembered by the love we have demonstrated. When I am gone, I pray that love will remain.