

ONE MONTH TO LIVE

Leaving Boldly

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1 Corinthians 3:12-17 (The Message)

Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing. If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won't be torn out; you'll survive—but just barely.

You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? No one will get by with vandalizing God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred—and you, remember, are the temple.

It is my hope, that these last four weeks of sermons, devotions, journaling and discussions have gotten you thinking. Thinking about how you would live your life if you knew that you only had one month to live. What would be your priorities, what are the things that you would want to accomplish? Those last four weeks brings us to today → to what I think is the most important principle of the four.

- Living passionately
- Loving completely
- Living humbly

Today's principle is: LEAVE BOLDLY.

Leave boldly – we all want to make a difference in life – we all want somebody to remember us and what we lived for. We want something that will outlive us → a legacy.

Harold Kushner said, "I am convinced that it is not the fear of death, of our lives ending, that haunts our sleep so much as the fear ... that as far as the world is concerned, we might as well never have lived."

I think, without a doubt, my favorite place is the beach.

If I was to retire tomorrow, and could live anywhere, I would love to live on an island in the Caribbean.

And when I reflect on our children growing up, some of our greatest adventures were family holidays to the ocean.

I can't tell you how many times we loaded the girls up into our van and drove to Florida for a week of fun in the surf and sand.

And one of my favorite memories is watching, and sometimes helping them build sand castles.

They would build these great castles that connected to one another. But it didn't matter how high they would build the walls and it didn't matter how hard they would work, because the next morning after the tide had rolled in, we would always walk out to the beach to find that all their hard work from the day before had been completely washed away.

I think that is a great illustration of many things in life.

You do the dishes --- but a few hours later they are dirty again
 You make the bed in the morning – but that night they are messed up
 You eat --- but a few hours later you are hungry again
 And the list goes on and on

And it may feel like every day at the end of the day everything you do gets washed away, but what's really happening is you're building a legacy.

We all want to live a life that matters.

We all want to leave a legacy.

Listen to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:12-14

1 Corinthians 3:12-14 (The Message)

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temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred—and you, remember, are the temple.

Every day of our lives --- we are building a legacy → and we get to choose what kind of materials we will build with.

And this passage suggests that there are three materials that stand the test of time and will build a legacy that will last.

The first is: VALUES

These are the core beliefs that we have that come from God.

And if you remember in our good Wesleyan fashion that those values, those convictions come from what we call the quadrilateral.

- Scripture
- Reason
- Tradition
- Experience

All four should help us understand and develop a core set of values that define our lives

Let me try to illustrate what I am saying.

Let's say that I tell you that I just found this book that is really inspiring and I think it might just change my life.

It's Arnold Schwarzenegger's Encyclopedia of Modern Body Building.

Imagine that you came up to me and gave me this book and you said to me, "Steve, I know this turning 50 thing is kinda bumming you out, so I know that you are trying to get in shape and that you are exercising. I want you to take this book and the whole church has decided we want to give you six months off just to become like this because we think it would be really great to have a pastor that looked like that.

And so I said, that's great. That's wonderful.

So I take six months off, and I come back and you're so excited. The great day has finally arrived.

You're anticipating me looking something like this, and I walk up and . . . and I look exactly the way I look today.

How disappointing.

And you say, "Steve, didn't you do this? Didn't you read the book?"

Sure, I read the book. It's my favorite book now. I love this book. I've read it six times. I read it once a month. It's amazing. In fact, I highlighted all the parts that moved me so deeply. Some parts about Arnold Schwarzenegger's life really made me cry. It was amazing, and not only that but I also memorized two chapters on his workout plan and I can say it word for word. In fact, I can even tell you what the Greek word for biceps is. I just studied this thing over and over. It's my favorite book now.

But you say to me: "you mean you didn't go to the gym?"

No, I didn't go to the gym; I was too busy studying this book.

"You didn't eat right?" --- No, I didn't eat right.

"You mean, you didn't do anything that's in this book?" --- No, I just read the book. I just studied the book.

I just -- I love it. It's just so amazing.

And you'd think that's silly, wouldn't you?

But that's what a lot of people do with this book.

They go to Bible studies over and over again, and they come here week after week and hear me preach, but yet they don't put it into their life.

They don't live it out.

They don't make God's values become their values.

Sure, you can KNOW the Bible from cover to cover, but if you don't live it out, you don't really believe it.

If we want to leave a lasting legacy, we have to build VALUES, CONVICTIONS, into our lives.

There is a second material that we must build with if we want to create a lasting legacy and that is CHARACTER.

Character is how we react to situation is life

Character is how we live the values that we claim as our own.

But I want to be very clear here – especially for those of you who have been reading the Shook's devotional book, *One Month To Live*. This is one of those places where I strongly disagree with them, and was tempted to throw out the baby with the bath water, but the ideas that they present are too compelling to let some of their theology get in the way.

They argue repeatedly that God builds our character especially through the problems, pressures and people that God puts into our lives. They believe that God allows bad things to happen to us to make us a better person. I DISAGREE.

Bad things happen – and character is developed in how we respond to them. But, I do not believe that, God does not cause them to happen.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is found in the book of Psalms. The 81st Psalm, when God tells that he can bring forth honey from the rocks.

Character is how we respond, how we react to the rocks of life → but God does not put the rocks there to chisel away the rough spots.

The third material that we need to build a lasting legacy on is COMMUNITY.

Being connected to other people, other people who are on the same path as you is so important!

It is so important to be in relationships with people who are on the same journey with you in a small group so that you can grow together, people who are going the right direction. Not people who have it all together, but people who are headed in the right direction and want to journey with you!

If you're too busy for a small group, then you're just too busy.

But at the same time, you need to invest yourself into the larger community because together we can make a huge difference.

A few weeks ago, LARRI (Lakeshore Area Regional Recovery of Indiana) had a recognition for their volunteers. It was an amazing event. I was invited to give a blessing, but the greatest part of the evening was listening to the ways that LARRI has changed people's lives. People whose homes were devastated shared about how they were given Hope because of LARRI, but the real power was listening to the volunteers – how helping others has changed their lives!

As I was leaving the event, someone came up to me and said → "you should be so proud of what LARRI has become and what they have accomplished."

That is the kind of community we need to build: A community that makes a difference in the lives of those who are dashed against the rocks of life. And when we do that, -- we taste the honey that God brings forth from the rocks!

When you think about it, you quickly realize that everything that you own is like a sand castle. Here today, but gone tomorrow.

Everything gets washed away, except three things:

- VALUES
- CHARACTER
- COMMUNITY

Sometimes we feel like we can't make a difference.

What can we do?

How can we leave a lasting legacy?

After all we're not wealthy or powerful?

I remember a great story that was told in one of the Chicken Soup Books:

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."

Perhaps Helen Keller summed it up best:

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."

If we knew our time on earth was running out, we'd want to do all we could to make a difference for others.

We wouldn't want the regret of a life misspent and self-absorbed.

We would want to know that we honored the God we love by being the very best stewards of all God has given us.

If we truly want to grow in our character and our faith, then we must be willing to change our goal from one of safety to one of sacrifice.

One of the first and most important ways we can begin to care more about others is to pray for the poor and oppressed throughout the world. Pray for their needs. For their healing. For religious and political freedom. For food and clean water and vital medicine. When we start praying for hurting people, we begin caring about them, and we want to learn more about the details of their lives.

It connects our hearts to theirs.

We're more mindful of what we have, how we can use it, and why we've been entrusted with it.

God has given each of us time, talent and treasure.

How we use them will define our legacy.

I challenge you to leave a lasting legacy.

And if you do that → then you will leave boldly when the time comes!