

PROLOGUE - TO OUR CHILDREN,

Encountering death, especially sudden death, is inevitably a face to face encounter with an evaluation of priorities. It is easy to remember a funeral we attended a couple years ago. We did not know our neighbor well, but we knew his children. It was their grief that tore at us. Because we have grown up in a time of insurance and other forms of protection, we wondered how well they would be provided for in the future. With no warning or timetable for preparation, what had he left for them? We could not help but place ourselves in the same situation. Should time stop for us, what legacy would we leave behind? Of all the things of value we have acquired in our lifetimes, which do we feel that our children should not have to do without. We concluded that those we would choose would be those which can not be touched. They can not be handled in any way. Though bought with a price, they can not be purchased. For they are gifts from another world.

We once heard a man's heart breaking testimony about such gifts. He had just suffered the loss of his sixteen year old daughter in a car accident. Held in memory is the look on his face as he talked of her death. He had lost a part of himself that all parents invest in our children. The part that we pour into you in the hope that you will carry our name, our dreams, and our beliefs forward in a semblance of immortality. Mostly though, we remember him telling of the many things he bought for her throughout her lifetime in an effort to bring her happiness. He realized that ten seconds after she died, the only gift he had given that mattered was an introduction to Jesus Christ. His prayer was that a heritage of service to Christ had taken root in her life. We were compelled to consider the heritage we will pass on to you.

Our parents, your grandparents, passed on certain gifts that are intangible, but beyond valuation. We both grew up in families that were poor by today's standards. We just did not know it. Our fathers worked two jobs for most of our lives. Not to get ahead, but to stay even. They were so busy providing for children and stepchildren, we never really knew them till we were grown. But we have snatches of memories they took time to create for us. Nowadays, those moments are called quality time. Back then, they were called selflessness. They create a standard of love against which we measure ourselves as parents. That is one heritage given to us and to you.

A more powerful heritage to pass on is a memory of your Grandpa in the hospital. In a nest of tubing, wiring, and machinery, his body is filling with fluids and his heart keeps trying to stop. As his internal systems break down, more and more painkillers are given to at least keep him comfortable till the end we are promised is inevitable. Your Dad holds what is left of his once strong hand, leans over his unconscious face, and cries to God of how unfair He is. And in a whisper, never opening his eyes, he hears his father quote from Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."

The value system of the world defines a heritage in terms of acquired wealth. Like others, we desire to give good things to you children. We want you to have it easier than we did growing up. We want you to have the opportunities we never had. We want to be wealthy enough to never have to worry again about next month's bills. Sometimes we even think it would be nice to have enough money that anything we desired could be ours. There would be real security in those kind of riches and our earthly destiny would then be ours alone to control. The odd thing is, we probably could do that. We have observed and noted well two ways in which wealth is usually acquired. Being very goal oriented, we usually accomplish what we set out to do. The problem is that neither total dedication of our lives and beliefs to building a business, or cheating and using

people, seems consistent with the purpose for which we were created. It is a matter of which god we choose to follow.

We would rather pass on to you the heritage our parents have given us. We may never leave you anything of significance as far as material possessions go. We hope though, like earlier heirs of the promises of God, who found themselves trapped as slaves in the land of Goshen, to be able to make you understand:

This is not our home. We have a better one promised us.
We are not in control here, but we serve a God who is.
He has promised that we would be His people, and He would be our God.
His covenant with our father Abraham was an everlasting covenant.
He has not forgotten us.
If we call upon the name of the Lord, He will save us.
He has promised to send us a deliverer who will come and take us out of here
He is coming and judgment is coming with Him
We are to be ready to leave this place
He is coming, but fear not
The blood of Christ has been applied to this home.

So with pen in hand, we attempt to give Life to you again. It is not the life of this world, but our knowledge of Life in the body of Christ. A small portion of the wealth we have discovered that does not rust or diminish with time. In a world growing increasingly poor in spirit, we give you a portion of the treasure we have found hidden in God's word. And we pray. We pray that it will be enough to nourish you. We pray that you will learn more easily, grow more swiftly, and accomplish more for God with your time on this earth than we ever have. That of all the people whose lives we have been privileged to touch, you will be the first fruits that we are able to present to the Lord of the harvest.

With pen in hand, we write.

With love,
Mom and Dad

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Of all of the things given to you by others, which item do you treasure the most?
2. This thing that you own, what would you trade it for?
3. Are your hopes and dreams for the future based more upon the present and visible world or the future and unseen world?
4. When you set your plans and goals for each day, will any of them, if accomplished, affect your life after death?
5. How far ahead do you set the goals that shape your daily decisions? One day? One month? One year? The end of high school? The end of college? Marriage? Retirement? A party around the throne of God in two thousand earth years?
6. The disciples left everything they owned behind in order to follow Christ. What would happen to you if you tried that?
7. If the Bible is true, and eternity beckons, what significance can really be found in clothing, fashions, cars, electronics, fine foods, etc., that when weighed against eternity, will vanish in the blink of an eye?
8. If you never received anything from anyone but the knowledge of God, could you be content with that?
9. Knowing that the Word of God is as important as nourishment to your spirit as food is to your body, if both your body and your spirit were hungry, would you be most likely to miss a chance to study the Bible or to miss a meal?
10. When is enough wealth enough? How do you define what it means to be rich? How does God define it?
11. Can you truly trust God, no matter how poor the quality of your natural life seems in contrast to the lives of others around you?
12. What price do you put on the knowledge of the Word of God? Do you really treasure the truth that has given to you by revelation or by preaching?
13. How does God define "Life?" What is the difference between your definition of life and God's definition of Life?