Bob: In business the principle is obvious. What you invest in today are the assets you will have in the future. In life it is less obvious but no less real. Here is Louis Upkins.

Louis: I was just at a funeral of a highly successful business guy. I actually was grieved as I sat in the funeral because in the front they had a collage of all of his kind of significant moments. The first BMW he drove and all these trappings. As people came in, major politicians, major business leaders, everybody kind of walked in with this spirit of “Let me check it off the box.”

There wasn’t one person crying at this funeral except his 13 year old son. He was the only person crying and what I felt in my spirit as I watched that kid was this kid is crying because he didn’t get what all these people got. At the end of the day it was just a “check off the box moment” with these business leaders but it was legacy and it was impact for that child and that child is going to mourn because of the absence of his father.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday June 3rd. Our host is the President of FamilyLife Dennis Rainey and I’m Bob Lepine. Today may be a good day for you to reconsider, reevaluate your portfolio and decide whether you’re investing in the right things. We will talk about that today.

Welcome to FamilyLife Today thanks for joining us. I don’t know if anybody’s ever done the research on this but anecdotally I would venture to guess that if a person is in the top ten percent of their profession, you know whatever it is…

Dennis: Right!

Bob: If they’re a high achiever in their profession I would venture to guess that the statistics of how they are doing at home would be worse than the general population. Wouldn’t you think?

I mean again I don’t know if there is research to validate it. I am just thinking of the books I have read by the corporate CEO’s and seen different pictures of different wives on different book jackets. You know, the one wife is on this book jacket and five years later there is a different wife on the book jacket.
Dennis: Right! I think maybe the principle is high performance people at work and in public may not be high performance people at home.

Bob: That’s what maybe our guest can shed some light on that for us.

Dennis: Let’s ask him right now. Louis Upkins joins us again on FamilyLife Today. Louis welcome back.

Louis: Well, thank you. I think that’s an interesting observation. You know one of the things in the early part of writing this book that really jumped out to me was reading a Riches 400. There were these glaring statistics about what each one of these had in common.

One of the common trends that they had was each had been married over three times. They had it in a big column almost like it was, we all like yachts or something, like it was a great thing to happen. Ultimately I don’t know if it’s just the high performance. I think it is the general consumer can lose the lack of focus and priority if he just doesn’t focus and prioritize. I mean I don’t care if you’re a garbage worker or a restaurant employee. I think that if you have a family and you choose to focus on everything other than their needs and the respect in that same consideration then you can lose kind of yourself in your work.

Bob: You said that back at the beginning of your marriage you spent three years off the road. You had been involved in doing work with corporations, with entertainers, with pro athletes, in marketing and branding. A lot of time, a lot travel a lot of high power folks. Have you found over the years the pull the lure away from marriage and family? Have you had to consciously fight against that?

Louis: I think you always have to fight against that. I think the nature of flesh is always fighting at you. I think that anybody can find themselves vulnerable to that space if they choose. I think that’s the beauty that God has given us. He says “Choose this day who you are going to serve.” Are you going to serve your flesh or are you going to serve Him?

I think that when you have a larger picture that you have painted for yourself and your family and part of that picture is a healthy family. Then when a project comes and identifies itself you have to view it and say “Is this going to be good for my family or is this going to be bad for my family?”

Dennis: I have heard you talk a bunch about legacy and you evaluated what kind of legacy you wanted to leave. I mean, you’re in the midst of people who are going to be known for their talk shows, for their ability to win a NASCAR race, an athletic endeavor. As you pull back to your own life and your own marriage and family what would you say you want your legacy to be when it is all wrapped up at the finish line?
Louis: Wow! That’s a great question. I think if I had to fast forward and one had to review and study my life, I would hope that they would say that my legacy would be that Louis gave men and families a directive and direction to empower and make healthy families, healthy communities and a healthy world. How do you do that? By simply showing them the valuable asset that God has given us and how to treasure that, how to focus on that and how to love that versus how to stumble upon it or stumble over it.

Dennis: When you say “it” in that sentence what do you mean? You mean our spouse, our family?

Louis: I am talking about your family. I am talking specifically about your family, that “it” being the gift that God is given us, the asset, and the seed. You know we have two kids. We have a seven year old and an eleven year old. My hope and prayer is that when two thousand years from now if He hasn’t come back, that people will still use these simple principles to empower and to bring value to their homes and their families.

Bob: You saw this illustrated when you and your wife went to a funeral for, was it her aunt?

Louis: Yes.

Bob: Her legacy was celebrated wasn’t it?

Louis: Absolutely! I mean Charita’s aunt passed early last year, 80 something years old. She wasn’t a woman of wealth at all but was a woman of knowledge, a woman of godliness and excellence and humility. So at this funeral you saw this long line. You would have thought some celebrity had died but everything people had to say about her was the way in which she lived, the way in which she valued people and respected people, and things of that nature.

On the flip side, I was just at a funeral of a highly successful business guy. I actually was grieved as I sat in the funeral because in the front they had a collage of all of his kind of significant moments. The first McDonalds he opened, you know... the first BMW he drove and all these trappings. As people came in: major politicians, major business leaders, everybody kind of walked in with this spirit of “Let me check it off the box.” I’ve got 15 minutes, let me walk in and be seen and then leave. It was almost like business as usual.

There wasn’t one person crying at this funeral except his 13 year old son. He was the only person crying and what I felt in my spirit as I watched that kid was this kid is crying because he didn’t get what all these people got. Everybody else got all of his time. They had him on every kind of committee, serving on every kind of board and yes he had all the accolades about being a great business leader, community leader etc.
But yet at the end of the day it was just a “check off the box” moment for these business leaders. It was legacy and it was impact for that child and that child is going to mourn because of the absence of his father.

**Dennis:** That is an incredible illustration. Yesterday morning I read this passage from Psalm 1:12. These two verses are my life verses. “Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. Who greatly delights in His commandments, his offspring will be mighty in the land. The generation of the upright will be blessed.” There is more to a legacy than how much of an inheritance you leave your kids.

**Louis:** Absolutely! That reminds me, Dennis, I think God has allowed me to see one of the most powerful glimpses of my legacy in my son, Caleb. He was seven at the time and I had been out of town. I had been away for business, came home and I had a migraine out of this world and a toothache out of this world and I was preparing for bed. The kids normally go to bed about 8:30 and it was about 10:30. Caleb comes down stairs and he looks like he had seen a ghost.

I said" Caleb! What’s wrong, son?” He said" Dad, God just spoke to me!” He had never used these words before and I said “What do you mean, son? My wife Charita was preparing for bed. She said" Boy, got to bed! You just are trying to stay up because your dad’s been out of town!”

(laughter)

**Bob:** Playing the God card!

(laughter)

**Dennis:** He is using God!

**Louis:** She said" You’re just trying to work your dad!” I said “No, hold on for a second honey, hold on.” I said “Caleb, come here for a second. Tell me what God said to you.” So, he gets really close to me Dennis and he said “Dad, he told me there are going to be five homeless men that are on the sidewalk right now and He wants me to go feed them. They’re going to be asleep and He wants me to go feed them.” I said" Okay."

So I am sitting up in my bed now because this is a significant moment! My wife again, another voice that you love is “Louis we can do this tomorrow because we don’t have any grocery!”

I said" No honey, hold on for a second.” I said “Caleb, you are going to learn a valuable lesson tonight son. When God speaks, you listen and you move.” He said “Dad, He said immediately!” He took my hand and put it on his chest (thump, thump, thump) and it was just pounding, like he had been running a race.
I said “okay Caleb, do me a favor son and go get dressed.” So now it’s about 11:15 and my wife is looking at me like…You idiot!

Bob: You have a migraine and a tooth ache!

Louis: But also I am sensing and feeling the Holy Spirit.

Dennis: Yes.

Louis: So, I said” Go get dressed son.” I sit up and he goes and gets dressed, then comes down. I said “Caleb, what are we going to feed them?” He says “I will go and get my food.” So, he goes into the kitchen, gets all of his lunch room food. He didn’t take anything else except the stuff he takes to school for lunch: bottled water and all this different stuff.

He comes back and he has a big garbage bag and he has it loaded up with food and he says” It’s going to be five men dad!” I said “Okay… okay son we are on our way to see a valuable lesson.” We get in the car. Now it’s 11:30 p.m., pulled out the back of the neighborhood. It’s 19 degrees that night; it’s the coldest night in Nashville. We drive all the way downtown Nashville its 45 minutes from where we live and there is not a soul on the street. I look in the back as soon as we get on the main road, I look in the back and Caleb is sound asleep! I said “Caleb, what are you doing man? You got to go to sleep on me?!” He said “Dad I’ll wake up when we get there.”

So I am driving all the way to downtown and I am thinking okay, I’ll just go. So, I go all the way into downtown and I see these three people on a park bench. I make a turn and I pull over and start giving them food and they’re “Thank you Jesus! Thank you Jesus!”

Dennis: Now was Caleb awake at this point?

Louis: Yes, he is awake at this point.

Dennis: So, he is helping you pass out the food?

Louis: No. He is just looking. So, I give them the food and I am thinking to myself “Caleb said there were five.” So, I go all the way down to the riverfront and begin to go up and down every street: First Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue, and Fourth Avenue. I come around the corner at Fifth Avenue and there is five men laying on the sidewalk sound asleep. I said “Caleb, there they are!” and we go over to them, give them the water, we talk to them, we pray with them.

We get back into the car and Caleb said “Dad, I told you!” and he goes right back to sleep.
The beauty of that for me was is that when you talk about legacy and you talk about yielding to the voice of God, God couldn’t have given me a greater gift than to see that in my son already and him yielding to it and responding to it.

**Bob:** You couldn’t have given him a greater gift than to value what he came and said to climb out of your comfort zone because this was not how you wanted to spend the evening, right?

**Louis:** Absolutely not man because my mouth was hurting and my head was pounding!

**Dennis:** I thought too how wise you were in letting him go get the food. Now the temptation of a parent would be to just go “Oh, oh okay, we’ll just go do it.” But instead you let him prepare the food, put it together and it was his mission not yours, you were assisting.

**Louis:** And it has become his mission. He is now developing things out with Second Harvest Food Bank. Where he is now leading kids, instead of kids having birthday parties at little family places they’re now taking classes of fourth graders and fifth graders and choosing to have their birthday parties at Second Harvest Food Bank to pack food for kids who are hungry and homeless.

That’s just a start. I think those of the kinds of things as business leaders and the CEO’s when we take ourselves away from the business and we treasure the moment of what God has given us in a family. Those are the nuggets. Those are the powerful things you can’t get back if you just shun them off and say “son go to bed I have a toothache and I have a seven o’clock board meeting in the morning.” That’s the special stuff!

**Dennis:** I want you to take this message back to Caleb, next time you come visit us here at FamilyLife I want you to bring him.

**Louis:** Absolutely!

**Dennis:** Bob and I want to interview him. We don’t want you in here. We want him!

(laughter)

**Louis:** He’s strong.

**Bob:** You have a practice and really a ritual that you go through with your daughter. I don’t know if you do it with Caleb as well but when you leave to go somewhere…

**Louis:** With Zoe.

**Bob:** Yes, tell us about that.
Louis: Well, Zoe is our special little girl. She just turned seven and I call her our piece of art because she is very, very creative. She is a little Minnie me and she just loves to hug and all these different things.

So when it is time for me to leave the house Zoe takes about 40 minutes to say goodbye because she has to give you a kiss, give you a hug, give you a kiss, give you a hug, give you a kiss and give you a hug and it just goes on and on and on and on!

One time that really sticks out in my mind is this particular day kind of like today I had an early morning flight. I needed to get out of the house as quick as I can because I know that when I hear those little feet it’s a forty minute exit strategy. So, you know…

(laughter)

So this particular day I am trying to get out of the house and I hear Zoe’s feet come down just as I close the door and about to jump in the car. Then I close the car door then I open it up and I can hear her just crying. She’s crying uncontrollable. So I walk back in the house. She crying and she says “Daddy! Daddy! You didn’t bless me! You didn’t bless me! I said “Daddy’s back.” “Yes, but you didn’t bless me!”

Part of that forty minute cycle for us is for me to affirm her, to pray with her, let her dance on my toes if she wants to do that. Zoe just likes to do those kinds of things. Again, to me those are not interruptions to my day. Those are blessing to my day. Those are things that I count all joy around being able to experience with her.

Bob: You’ve talked with enough guys who would hear you tell that story and go “that is sweet and I wish I could do that but running the company I am running, there is no margin for having your daughter dancing on your toes.”

Louis: I would have to say I totally disagree with that guy because part of the research and preparation for this book was I went out and I asked some of these guys that are running these big companies. For example I interviewed Kemmons Wilson whose father was the founder of Holiday Inn. Charita and I went to visit with he and his lovely wife simply to ask the question “Kemmons, how did you balance your business as you were developing it with your kids and your wife and all these kind of things?”

Kemmons was very, very intentional. He said “Louis, we developed a plan for our kids where they had to succeed outside of the business before they could be brought into the business. They had to create their own merit of excellence and then be brought back into the business.” But they were also very intentional about having… when their kids were in the eighth grade, that they had Bible studies every morning.

His wife would make biscuits for all these little sleepy boys coming into the house. They made their home a place of refuge where they could create an environment for kids can
learn about values, etcetera. Kemmons has been a very intentional father and grandfather to put family first.

There was another gentleman by the name of Dave Stewart. Dave owns the largest African American company in the country, about a $4 billion company. Mr. Stewart was in town speaking at a school that our kids attend and I spent the entire day with him. He is a strong believer.

At the end of the day I asked Mr. Stewart “Mr. Stewart, I have one question for you. He said “What’s that.” His son who was twenty six, Dave Jr. happened to be traveling with him. I said “I’ve spent the entire day with you. I understand your company is in about 16 different countries and thousands of employees.

I said, “How do you maintain balance and how did you build this company with a young family?” He said “Very simple, Louis.” He said “I built our business around my family.”

He said “Ask Dave Jr.” Dave Jr. was in the back. He said “Dave how many things have I missed in your life?” I am waiting to hear this answer of a thousand, two thousand…three thousand. Dave Jr. says “Zero.”

I thought wow! That means it can be done, even if we get half the mark. There are people who are intentional about doing the right thing. I think that we can easily all, myself included can take the excuse of “I’m too busy; I don’t have enough time.” I don’t think that’s a good answer.

Dennis: You wouldn’t have any way of knowing this but I know Kemmons Wilson and happen to have dinner with him one evening along with one of his sons. We were together for a lengthy time and I said “Why don’t we ask one another a question.” That’s kind of my favorite questions to ask around a dinner when you got time to answer it.

“What’s the most courageous thing you have ever done in your life?” It was interesting as we went around the table when we came to Kemmons’ son. He looked at his dad and he began to weep. He talked about the power of his dad’s love, the model of sacrifice and of commitment that he made to him as a young man growing up. He goes my dad’s life is the most courageous thing, watching him. That’s powerful!

Louis: When you think about that and that’s why Kemmons was chosen for me to go talk to because I saw that same power. Kemmons and I have absolutely nothing in common when you look at the exterior but when you look at the heart and you look at the things that matter to us we have everything in common. When you can see that lived out in a very practical way, one can argue and say “Well, Holiday Inn! That’s a big company!” But Kemmons is not on his fourth marriage, third marriage or second marriage.

Dennis: Right.
**Louis:** He is still in love with the girl he fell in love with. His kids are healthy. They’re marriages are healthy. He has shown a very fundamental way in which and how to live a balance life.

**Dennis:** Kemmons will be the first to say he hasn’t left the legacy of perfection. But you know what? He has left a legacy of following the God of this book the Bible and of putting Christ first and of attempting to represent Him in the market place.

Whether you work in a company like Holiday Inn or whether you’re a school teacher or whatever you do... What you have to do in the middle of where God has you is be faithful to fulfill what He called you to do because you are in the process today of leaving a legacy.

You will finish the race somehow some way and to go back to your illustration, will people go to your funeral and check a box and say I was there but shed no tears or will there be some people there who said “You know what? He impacted my life.”

**Bob:** That comes when we’ve been purposeful and intentional as you said, not when we are accidental about it. I am thinking of successful businesses and a successful business doesn’t happen by accident. I mean there may be some that have, right? But most businesses will do some strategic planning and thinking and they will be deliberate and be purposeful. They will get everybody on the same page and they'll all be working pulling in the same direction.

Those same kinds of principles are true in family management. It is that kind of thinking that is behind the book that Louis Upkins has written called *Treat Me Like a Customer* that we have got in our FamilyLife Today resource center. You can go online if you’re interested in getting a copy of the book. FamilyLifeToday.com is our website. Again the book is called *Treat Me Like a Customer* and the website is FamilyLifeToday.com.

You can also order by phone at 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800-358-6329 that’s 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY. When you get in touch with us we will let you know how you can get a copy of Louis’s book sent to you.

Let me take a minute here and just say how much we appreciate those of you who are regular listeners to FamilyLife Today and who get in touch with us from time to time to help support the ministry. We are listener supported and as best we can tell by the numbers that we have seen over the course of a year somewhere between three and five percent of those who listen to FamilyLife Today will either go online or make a phone call and make a donation to support the ministry. That’s very meaningful to us. We appreciate those who do that from time to time. You make it possible for this program to be on this station, not just for your family but for the entire community and we appreciate your partnership with us in that effort.

This month if you are able to make a donation of any amount to help support the ministry of FamilyLife Today and if God has used this ministry in such a way in your life
that you think it’s worth making a donation of any amount, we would love to send a thank you gift. It’s a book by Truett Cathy. Truett is the founder of Chick-fil-A called *It Is Better to Build Boys than Mend Men*. In it Truett reflects on things like discipline, trust, reputation, generosity and common sense, family stability, things that go into making young boys into strong godly young men.

Again the book is our thank you gift to you this month when you make a donation of any amount to support *FamilyLife Today*. If you donate on-line at FamilyLifeToday.com type the word “BOYS” in the key code box on the online donation form or call 1-800-FL-TODAY make a donation over the phone and just ask for a copy of the book on building boys and we’re happy to send it out to you. Again, let me say thanks for your partnership with us in this ministry.

We appreciate your support. We hope you can be back with us tomorrow when Louis Upkins is going to join us again and we are going to continue talking about lessons from the market place that make sense at home. I hope you can be here for that.

I want to thank our engineer today Keith Lynch and our entire broadcast production team on behalf of our host Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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