Bob: Someone has said that too often our lives wind up being summed up as the dash between two dates; the ‘DASH’ on a tombstone. Fifty years from now, or 100 years from now, will your life have been worth more than a dash?

Dennis: It is not the grand accomplishments or the goals that we set. Those are important and I don’t want to diminish them. I have enjoyed my work here at FamilyLife and the privilege of leading a ministry, but I believe that a man and a woman’s legacy is much larger than the tasks that they have done. It is about the people that they have loved and about the lives they have impacted.

Bob: Welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Monday edition October 4th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey and I am Bob Lepine.

That was Lee Ann Womack singing about a legacy and actually that helped me out because when I came in here I thought we are going to be talking about legacies, and the first time I have ever heard that word ‘LEGACY’ was when my sister was going through sorority rush. You know the term, right?

Dennis: I do! (Laughing)

Bob: My mom was and Alpha PHI and so when my sister was going through rush, I asked my mom, “Will she be an Alpha PHI?” And my mom said,”Well, she is a legacy.” I did not know what that meant. I said, “What does that mean?” She said, “What it means is that they pretty much have to invite her if she wants to be an Alpha PHI because ….  

Dennis: She is connected!

Bob: Yes!

Dennis: Connected by the past.

Bob: That was really the first time I had ever heard that word or have any conscience memory so I have always associated the word with sororities and fraternities.
Dennis: Well, we are going to broaden your perspective today of legacy because I think all of us; first of all, are given a legacy. Secondly, all of us I believe are called by God to leave a legacy.

Now, let's just take a step back for a moment. If you had to summarize, Bob, the legacy that you were given as a man by your mom and dad and your family, how would you describe that?

Bob: It is hard to summarize it and put it in just a few words. I mean, when I think in the terms that you have talked about often when you talk about parenting assignment, shaping our children's character, helping them understand their identity, relationships and mission. So when I think of the legacy I have received I think of some of the character issues that were built into my life. I think of some of the relational development that happened when I was growing up.

It is kind of the whole package of how your thinking is shaped in the environment that you grow up in. I think for example about things like my mom being very big on telling the truth. You tell the truth! You always tell the truth.

Dennis: Do you hear your mom's voice today?

Bob: Oh, I can hear it in the back of my mind and saying, "Always tell the truth." It is a part of the legacy that I think that I was given.

Dennis: All those things build into our lives; as you said, "Character qualities, the ability to relate to another person, and they help us become the person that we are." I did some reflecting on the legacy that my parents left me and I wrote down.

I

It was a good legacy, not evil. My dad was a good man. He was kind. He was generous. He didn't cheat people. He paid his bills on time. Sometimes I think when we consider the concept of legacy we think there has to be something high and mighty and noble. Well, certainly it needs to be above the muck and the mire of those matters that are sinful, but sometimes it is just good qualities of a solid character.

Bob: Would you say that the legacy that you received from your parents was intentionally transmitted or was it more caught than taught? Was is just them living out their lives in front of you and you observing, or were they purposeful about what they did?

Dennis: That is a good question. I think in all honesty, I don't think my mom and dad probably ever had a planning meeting or a couples get-away or a family get-away where they talked about our family's mission statement and what we were going to be about and what we were going to try to leave to the next generation. They just lived it and did it. It was caught.
But it was also taught too; purposefully, both my mom and dad taught Sunday school and Church and taught the scriptures to young people. They were intentional about teaching, but I don’t ever recall having a formal family time; a time where you get together as a family and sit down and study the scriptures together. I just think as they lived their lives they were very real people who lived authentic lives that there just wasn’t a lot of plastic or veneer. What you saw in them was really who they were.

**Bob:** Do you think it gives couples an edge if they do approach this subject with a little more intentionality; a little more purposefulness?

**Dennis:** Yes, that is why I want to talk about this. All of us are in the process of leaving a legacy to the next generation. Now the question is, “What is that going to look like? What is going to be the gift you give to your descendants?”

Picture it like a present that will be unwrapped over their lifetime. The gifts you give them; those character qualities you impart, the memories of fun, and laughter, and just enjoying one another and enjoying a family. Those can all be a part of a magnificent, yet intentional gift that you do pass on to the next generation.

I think what would be a real good second project for a person to complete; is not only to write down the legacy you were given, but as you listen to us talk about this today, begin to jot down what do you want your legacy to look like?

Now, I am going to tell you what I did with a group of men and you are going to think this is kind of weird, but if you have listened to our broadcast over the years you know that we kind of like to surprise people from time to time.

I had a men’s retreat where there was only a dozen guys that I was leading this get-away for three full days. When they arrived in the remote location where we were meeting in their bedroom, propped up on the pillow in their bed was a tombstone. It was a cardboard tombstone and it had their name on it.

For instance: it would have Bob Lepine with the birth-date and a dash, and then it was empty. For the next three days we talked about the legacies that we wanted to leave to the next generation and we talked about what we wanted to have etched on our tombstone.

In reality, Bob, I think God calls us to etch our lives not on tombstones, but on people’s hearts. I think he calls us to impact people! That is our legacy! It is not the grand accomplishments or the goals that we set. Those are important I don’t want to diminish them. I have enjoyed my work here at FamilyLife and the privilege of leading a ministry, but I believe that a man and a woman’s legacy is much larger than the tasks that they have done. It is about the people that they have loved and about the lives that they have impacted.
That is why I just want to lift your eyes up a little bit and I want you to picture that tombstone with your name on it and that ‘DASH.’ And then picture what could be written underneath those dates when you die? What do you want to be written?

As you look at the Bible, it is really fascinating. The word legacy is not found anywhere in scripture. Heritage is found! In fact, Proverbs 13:22 says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth, is laid up for the righteous.” There is another passage in Proverbs 10:7 that says, “The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.”

Now there is a contrast between; in a very simple form, two different types of legacies—The righteous or good person and the wicked or an evil person.

I have a feeling, Bob; we are talking to a lot of good people here on the radio. They are in the process of leaving a legacy to the next generation and we just want to come alongside of them and help them be more effective in leading the very finest legacy on the next generation that they possibly can.

Bob: Your tombstone illustration reminds me of something many of our listeners may have read in Stephen Covey’s book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

He has a very provocative scene where you are attending a funeral and you step forward and you all of a sudden realize that it is your own funeral and he wants you to imagine that it is 7 years from today and you are attending your funeral and 3 people are going to provide eulogies; someone from your family, somebody from your workplace, and somebody from the community, church or wherever you have lived life.

He said, “If it was your funeral today, what would they say about you? If it was your funeral 7 years from now, what do you wish they would say about you and what can you be doing now so that what they say is what you would hope they would say?”

Dennis: Right! There is so much about life that comes at us and we just react and we respond and we are not real intentional. You had a slight smile on your face when you asked me the question about, “Did I think my parent’s legacy that they left me was intentional or was it just a part of who they were as they lived their lives.”

The reason is, (for your smile) I know, you know a story that I am about to tell here……:

I was at a Cardinal Baseball game in their new stadium, a friend of mine invited my son and me to go to a game up there…. Boy! We had some good tickets, Bob!

Bob: Okay, just rub it in. Thank you!

Dennis: Yes! I know you are a big Cardinal fan, too! Anyway, as we were at the game, my friend turned to my son and he said, “What one word would you use to describe your father?”
I thought, “This is going to be good,” as my mind raced. My son just took a second to gather his thoughts and in that length of time I thought of all the words I wished he would say. He didn’t say any of them! It wasn’t any of the words I expected! He said, “Oh that is easy! INTENTIONAL!”

I went, “Give me a break – that is the best word you can come up with for me?” I really kind of pushed back at that point and honestly I felt a little wounded that that was as good of word that could be used to describe my life.

But since that time I have had some opportunity to reflect on that, plus to confirm it with the other five children who have all nodded their heads and said, “Dad that really does kind of describe you a bit.” I have come to the conclusion that ‘INTENTIONAL’ is not a really bad word.

Bob: Right!

Dennis: If you are ‘INTENTIONAL’ about the right things.

Bob: Have good intentions, right?

Dennis: If you have good intentions. That is where this Book that we have opened in front of us here comes in to play. The Bible is calling us to live an intentional life. To be intentional about obeying Him, coming to know Him, placing our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, Lord and Master and following Him. Consulting Him intentionally about major decisions and minor decisions that we make in life. In the process of all those intentional decisions that we make; if we have kept this Book as the plumb-line and we have listened to God and for the most part followed Him, you can leave a powerful legacy!

I have been impacted by some men and women who have done that and again, you don’t have to be in the ministry, you don’t have to be a pastor or a teacher or a writer of books or a radio show. You just need to live an obedient life to what the Master called you to do. He can use you to impact generations!

Bob: Well, you have said that we are all going to leave a legacy and it is either a legacy for good or a legacy of mediocrity or a legacy of evil. Do you think there is a universal sense in the heart of man as to what that legacy ought to be?

Do you think there is something inside each one of us where we affirm together what ought to be the core elements of the legacy any one of us passes on to the next generation?

Dennis: Well, I would hope that in our hearts we have this longing to leave a legacy of goodness to the next generation. But as I think of some of the legacies that men have left, you had to wonder what was taking place in their hearts? For instance, what would you say is the legacy of Hitler?
**Bob:** Well, if you stop and think about what he is remembered for and what he is known for it is evil. It is death and destruction and really evil is the best word I can come up with.

**Dennis:** Yes! You wonder, what took place in his life for him as a man to lose his sense of goodness and become so narcissistic and self-centered that he didn’t want to leave some kind of powerful legacy of goodness to his people and to the nation he attempted to lead.

**Bob:** I guess he thought that if he could annihilate the Jewish race, and have an Aryan nation that he was leaving something good. It is just that his priorities were twisted.

**Dennis:** I think so! Let me ask you about another legacy that was left. How would you describe the legacy of Winston Churchill?

**Bob:** Certainly, if I lived in the British Empire I would describe it as preserving. He led with courage in Europe’s darkest hour.

**Dennis:** He was a courageous leader of a nation. He knew how to make a tough decision even when everyone didn’t agree with him and you sure can’t disagree with where he ended up taking the British people. He ended up getting the American people involved and ultimately saving that nation. Those two legacies, I think are just good reminders that we can leave a legacy of evil to succeeding generations.

But, one thing I want to point out Bob, that I think is very, very important. I know that a number of our listeners feel like they have failed in their journey in life. Maybe it was when they were a young person growing up; they made some decisions that were wrong. Perhaps as adults they have gone through some things, experienced some things, and made some choices that they feel like they are going to mark the next generation with their choices in a negative way.

The story of Christianity and of Jesus Christ is that He redeems! He takes our failures and He delights in taking our ashes and the ash-heap of our lives and carving in to something noble and good. It is to me why Jesus Christ stands out above any other man who has walked the planet.

He offered, not only the route to God through His death on the cross and resurrection and ascension into heaven, but He offered us redemption right now! As we live life and make mistakes He promises to be able to take those wrong choices and we can learn from then and we can pass on to future generations’ lessons they might not have been able to learn if we had not warned them.

**Bob:** The message of the gospel is a message of forgiveness for our broken past, transformation for a different today, and then hope for a future that is what God intends – a future of blessing for us.
Dennis: And who doesn’t want that? As we wrap up today, I want to just want to challenge the listener today to do two things: sit down with a piece of paper and just jot out what you think was the legacy that you were given by your parents and by your family. Just write it out! Let it be what it is! Okay?

And then secondly I want you to begin to craft and work with and think about how you intentionally (to go back to that word), how you can intentionally leave a legacy of righteousness, godliness and goodness to future generations.

Bob: Are you going to be handing out a lot of assignments as we talk about this?

Dennis: I think I may! I want this to be practical.

Bob: Because I am trying to decide do I want to keep listening based on the number of assignments I am going to be getting.

Dennis: Do you feel that this is too hard?

Bob: I just want to know what I am getting myself into?

Dennis: You have listened to FamilyLife Today, Bob; you know what this broadcast is all about is transformation

Bob: Yes!

Dennis: We are talking about helping people experience the truth of scripture in a practical way. To simplify matters maybe what they can do is as they think about the legacies they were given and the legacy they want to leave perhaps consider typing out on our website what the legacy was that you were given and the legacy that you want to leave to succeeding generations.

Bob: In a way that the other folks could look and see what you are typing? Is that what you are saying?

Dennis: Oh yes! So that you can see what other people are writing as well. I really think, Bob, as you begin to shape your own legacy and what you want it to be, you can really learn from what other people have said what they want their legacies to be.

Bob: Iron sharpens Iron! If you go to FamilyLifeToday.com there is a transcript of each day’s program on our website and at the bottom of the transcript you can type in comments so that would be a good place for you to just type out: “Here’s the legacy I have received and here’s the legacy I want to leave.”

Just answer those two questions and it will be interesting to see how different folks answer that question.
Again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com. I don’t know if you are aware of this but somebody just mentioned to me that we have something of a famous listener who has been tuned in for today’s program and actually has an interest in this entire series and that is Larry The Cucumber from *Veggie-Tales*. If fact I think he is on the line with us.

Larry, welcome to *FamilyLife Today*!

**Larry the Cucumber:** Hey Bob, how ya doin? Larry the Cucumber here!

**Bob:** I had no idea that you are a regular *FamilyLife Today* listener.

**Larry the Cucumber:** Well yes! I am you know! I was really interested in the whole legacy thing, cuz’ you see I’ve got no legs – you see. Get it?

(laughter)

I don’t have legs, but I have plenty of puns!

**Bob:** Actually, what we have been talking about ties in a little bit with this new DVD that the story you tell called, *It Is A Meaningful Life*, Right?

**Larry the Cucumber:** That’s right, “It Is A Meaningful Life”

**Bob:** And tell us the main story of this new DVD.

**Larry the Cucumber:** Well, I play a character named, Stuart, who is just a little dissatisfied with his life. I think I could have done bigger and better things. At the end of the story I learn that God has a plan for me and that I am living exactly the life that God wants me to live.

We tell that story and we really highlight Jeremiah 29:11, and that says, “I know the plans I for you, declares the Lord, they are plans for good and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.’ That is the message we are trying to get across.

**Bob:** At the end of the day that is what God is calling all of us to, to find the path that He has set for us and walk it faithfully, right?

**Larry the Cucumber:** That’s right, Bob!”

**Bob:** I appreciate you tuning in and I guess you are going to listen to the whole series?

**Larry the Cucumber:** Absolutely! Absolutely! I am going to be right here. Sorry about my cold, you might have noticed, you know, I have got al little head cold which for me is an issue…. Cuz’ I am pretty much all ‘Head.’

(laughter)
Bob: You don’t mind if we check in with you from time to time do you?

Larry the Cucumber: No! Not at all, Bob.

Bob: Larry the Cucumber and I will just mention that this week we are making copies of this new Veggie-Tales DVD called, *It’s a Meaningful Life*. We are making them available to any of our listeners who can help support the ministry of *FamilyLife Today* with a donation of any amount. When you call or go online at FamilyLifeToday.com and again, make a donation of any amount, we are happy to send you a copy of *It’s a Meaningful Life* DVD, starring Larry the Cucumber.

If you are making your donation online type the word, ‘MEANING’ into the key code box, so that we know to send you the DVD. If you call 1-800-FL-TODAY and make a donation of any amount, just ask for the Veggie-Tale’s DVD *It’s a Meaningful Life*, and we will send it out to you.

Our hope is that a story like this can help both you and your children think more specifically about your meaning and your purpose and what God intends for your life. Again, donate online at FamilyLifeToday.com and type the word, ‘MEANING’ in the key code box if you want the DVD; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY, and make a donation. Just ask for the Veggie-Tales’ DVD and we will send it out to you.

Let me quickly say a word of thanks to those of you who help support the ministry of *FamilyLife Today*. We’re a listener-supported ministry and we appreciate your financial support of what we are doing here.

Now, tomorrow we are going to come back and talk more about the kind of legacy we will leave to future generations. “What will the impact of our life be?” That is the theme we are going to address this week and I hope you can be back with us for that tomorrow.

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 addition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas.
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