

Words That Will Change Your Life – “Last”
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January 26, 2020

Main Idea – Because Jesus was sure of who He was - and that the Father was His source for everything – Jesus was able to sacrifice Himself and pray for others. He set an example for you to follow: to make sure you prioritize the needs of others, thereby establishing an important part of your own legacy.

Don't keep score

- Jesus told a parable about a landowner who employed workers at different times of the day, but ultimately paid them all the same in the end (**Matthew 20: 1-16**). Some of the workers who worked longer hours complained about this. However, Jesus questioned whether their thoughts were evil because they resented that the landowner was good to the others who came last. Those with the evil thoughts were comparing their reward with others – and comparing the perceived merits of their own labor to others' work.
- **“But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” (v 13-16)**
- Jealousy is the #1 block to promotion.
- Each of us is standing on the work of those who came before us.
- Each of us should work for those who will come after, envisioning their blessings as a big reason for our own labor.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF PUTTING OTHERS AHEAD OF YOURSELF

1. Leaders go last

- General George Flynn once shared the unwritten Marine Corps tradition that “officers eat last.”
- Perhaps, it is a similar idea to what Jesus taught in the above parable: **“So the last will be first, and the first last.” (v. 16a)**
- Leaders know the source of their provision. They know how to access that source, and that the source is reliable. They take care of those under them who don't have that same awareness.
- Mature believers know that God is in control, and that He will provide for them. Mature believers are not anxious about their own sustenance, or about feeding

their egos.

2. Give God the last word

- If you let Him, God will write your life's story. **Hebrews 12:2 – looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NKJV)**
- Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God the Father does not pay attention to your failures or shortcomings. Rather - in the end - God looks at the big picture of your life.
- A Bible example of this is the legacy of Abraham. Abraham, as we know, is described as the "Father of our faith" (**Romans 4: 16-17**).
- However, in the Old Testament, we know that Abraham – at times – did not walk by faith. **Genesis 16** tells the story of how Abraham attempted to take God's promises into his own hand by having a baby with his wife's servant.
- Nevertheless, the New Testament seems to ignore those actions in the final analysis of Abraham. **Romans 4: 19-21 – And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (NKJV)**
- Give God the last word in your life. The details of failure that happen in the middle of your story are not significant to your final legacy.

3. Build a legacy that lasts

- Jesus taught that you should have life's big picture in mind as you live your days. He said each of us sows and each of us reaps. Of the two, sowing is more difficult because it is easy to reap the results of prior work.
- Therefore, work at sowing so that someday others will receive the benefits of your labor.
- Then, in eternity, we will all enjoy together the fruit of all that work.
- **John 4: 34-38 – Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you**

have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” (NKJV)

- Gratitude is thanking God after something happens. Faith is thanking God before something happens.

Pray about your legacy

- Most of what is recorded of Jesus’ prayers is about the needs of others. For example, He prayed for three different things in **John 17**:
 - 1.) The accomplishment and manifestation of His work on earth at that time; work that the Father had assigned ahead of time. (**v. 1-8**)
 - 2.) Protection and blessing for His disciples and other believers at that time. (**v. 9-19**)
 - 3.) Blessing and unity in the faith, and with God, for all the believers that would follow. (**v. 20-26**)
- Pray for - and work for - your legacy. Your legacy is what will inspire those who will follow after you.
- What God has written about your life is true. It is sure. It is a positive legacy. It already exists, even though it may not yet have manifested in time.

Reflective Questions for Words That Will Change Your Life – “Last”

1. Pastor Stephen talked about how the Apostle Paul, in writing the Book of Romans, described Abraham as having not wavered in his faith. However, Genesis seems to describe a man who did occasionally waver in his faith. What does this tell you about how God will regard your own final legacy (or reputation)?
2. In order to build a positive final legacy, the Bible teaches we should serve others. We should regard others’ needs before our own. What does that have to do with team building? Why is team building important for the Body of Christ (the Church)?
3. Like the marines, why might it be Biblical wisdom for “officers to eat last” in the church?