

LEAVING A LEGACY -- A VIEW FROM 90

Posted on November 12, 2014 by Emily Taylor



I love my Papaw. And he has made a mark on a *tremendous* number of people. After acknowledging a clear and certain call on his life, he went from being a brilliant mechanic to a passionate pastor. I'm pretty certain he has talked to more people about eternal stuff than days I have been alive. And he's sharp, you guys. He can tell you the exact date, time and place in 1948 that he first felt called into the ministry, and

can probably also tell you how much change was in his pocket. At 93 years old, [Cliff Herrington](#) is fast approaching 69 years of marriage with my Mamaw (Carolyn Herrington) and in their nearly 70 years of marriage they have experienced a lot (understatement, I know). ***Who better to talk to about [leaving a legacy](#)? Who's life better to examine?*** After wrapping up a long phone call, and reading the MANY statements from people who have been largely impacted by his life, I'm more convinced than ever that leaving a legacy is more simply done than we can make it out to be.

Love God, love people. That's it.

He started preaching in 1948 and has never stopped shepherding people. In fact, it took several days for me to get a hold of him because he had left town to go take care of his 97 year old sister who was dealing with some health issues. He's performing a funeral next Wednesday, and there are *countless* others benefiting from his wisdom and time. **During our conversation he made some powerful comments — I'll share two of my favorites:**

1. "If you'll start a life with the right basic concept of your value system, you can cope with anything that happens to you."

This isn't lip service; he's speaking from experience. He received a phone call from the family doctor unexpectedly one evening to find out that his 3rd son, at 19 years old had been killed in a car accident. There was grief, and there were aches; but there were never doubts. "I never had a problem questioning what happened to Scott; I never assumed that what happened to other people couldn't happen to me. But I did know that God promised he would be with me." To which I promptly sighed and said, "That's powerful, Papaw." "Well, He's powerful," was his reply. I came to find that year after year there was a youth that died similarly, and each time Papaw went to visit the families. So as he ministered to them in their grief what he heard through their hugs and tears was; "you understand." And he did. Lives were marked, his legacy of love enveloped people even in their grief.

2. "If you make up your mind that you aren't going to back off regardless of the hardship you will face; if God calls you, you give it all you've got." He mentioned that despite his love for ministry, it hasn't all been "a bed of roses," but when you know for certain what you are meant to do; you do it well. **Legacies require unshakable**

commitment to something bigger than yourself because your values will be challenged -- but when you love God, it's worth it.

Legacies can be caught, right? There's strength in multiplicative discipleship. So I find it powerful to highlight **what his kids are saying about him:**

"As my Dad, Cliff Herrington, has given me the opportunity to observe Christlike behavior in the flesh on a very frequent basis. He has shown me 1) Unconditional love for me and my family; 2) An unswerving faith in God; 3) an unselfish, servant-like attitude toward all kinds of people; 4) an uncompromising integrity throughout his life. We could not have asked for a better legacy!" — [Jerry Herrington](#)

"Dad has left a simple but indelible mark on us:

Integrity — consistent, unwavering devotion to Jesus Christ

Authenticity — he has been the same guy — with everyone

Filled with the freedom of self-forgetfulness — Dad has never made life about himself

Love for the Gospel — stay around him long enough and he will go there!

Pastor's Heart — a lifelong heart to minister to the sufferings of others

Absolute devotion to his wife — I never wondered if he would be unfaithful to her, and always believed he would take care of her.

Richness of personality — there is something commanding, something compelling, something endearing, something full of humor and gladness in him that makes me admire him deeply.

So, I love my Dad." — [John Herrington](#)

"One outstanding quality about Dad was the consistency of his behavior and character. He was the same at home as he was at church. He had integrity wherever he went. In life there is the spoken, formal curriculum which we are taught. I heard hundreds of Dad's sermons growing up... they were all true, biblical teaching. Yet what impacted me more, was the hidden curriculum... the unintended messages that he taught me by the way he lived for God and loved people." — [Phil Herrington](#)

There are not pages enough for me to illuminate the wisdom he shares and the dedication to Jesus that he steadfastly holds to; but beyond all of that brilliance the

truth is that I just enjoy being near him. **What I realize after watching his life is this: when you live in vigorous obedience to God's calling on your life; loving God and loving people, you will leave the only kind of legacy that matters - one that is pleasing to God. The more people you touch with the love of God, the more opportunity there is for people to embrace Him. Leaving a legacy is simple, but it's hard work.** Papaw has left a tremendous legacy after living sold out to the first and second commandments — love God, love people. *And he's still going.*