

# Game Plan



Be Ready to Pass Your Torch  
to the Next Generation

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to Pass Your Torch  
to the Next Generation**

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[www.legacyhelper.com](http://www.legacyhelper.com)

*This booklet is dedicated to my parents and grandparents.  
May your legacies be blessings to me, my children, and my children's children.  
And to my amazing children, you are my sweetest joy in life and my greatest legacy.*

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## Introduction: A Dynamite Legacy

*“All of my remaining realisable assets are to be disbursed as follows:  
the capital, converted to safe securities by my executors, is to constitute a fund,  
the interest on which is to be distributed annually as prizes to those who,  
during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.”*

- Alfred Nobel

BOOM! The noise was so loud it shook him to the core. His ears were ringing. His heart was pounding. His gut told him what had happened. There was an explosion in the lab. Nitroglycerin was horribly unstable stuff and would go off with even the slightest disturbance. In a flash, he tossed aside the stack of bills he was lamenting and bolted outside, running like he was on fire to the building next door. He stepped inside and his worst fear was realized as he saw his younger brother had just been added to the growing list of lives sacrificed in the name of scientific research. Who would be next?

Now more than ever, he was determined to discover a safe way to manufacture and transport this potentially world-shaping explosive substance. He would not allow his brother's death to be for nothing! For the next three years he worked day and night, devoting all of his time and energy to this one singular purpose until finally one fateful day in 1867, he stumbled upon the answer for which he had been searching. Alfred Nobel had invented dynamite.

Alfred went on to invent several other types of explosives, as well as over 350 other patented products, and built almost a hundred factories all over the world to manufacture his prized creations. His explosives were used for building tunnels, canals, railways, and roads. They were also purchased by militaries around the world to make devastating new weapons of warfare. Very quickly, he went from rags to riches and eventually became one of the wealthiest and most influential people in the history of the world. At one point, he was making over \$100,000 per day.

Many years later, Alfred had the strange misfortune of reading his own obituary when a French newspaper mistook the death of his brother, Ludwig, for his own. It described Alfred as “The Merchant of Death” who became rich by finding ways to kill more people in less time than anyone in the history of the world. This did not sit well with him. He did not want to be remembered this way, so he took action and did something about it. He decided he would give away his fortune in a series of generous annual awards, including the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, the very thing for which he is now most widely known and remembered. And so from merchant of death to promoter of peace, like a dynamite blast, he radically changed the shape of his legacy forever.

Some day you too will leave this world and your obituary will be written. It’s going to happen. What will be your legacy? Are you planning to leave some money, real estate, or other assets as a gift for your kids, grandkids, or other loved ones? Proverbs 13:22 says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.” If we are wise and able, before we spend any of our salary, we give a portion of our firstfruits to the Lord, and then stash something away into some sort of savings, investment, or life insurance policy. We might also invest in the services of a financial planner or lawyer to write up a will or trust to make sure that our intentions are clear, that every dollar and every possession goes exactly where we want after we pass on to glory. It’s a great goal that we should all strive for. And if you are one of the blessed few who actually makes it happen, good for you!

However, most people either don’t make many preparations for their long-term financial legacy, or if they do, the plans get disrupted by job loss, recession, illness, injury, divorce, lawsuit, or some other mishap. It can be tough to leave a substantial financial legacy. There is so much that is out of our control and so most people just won’t make it happen.<sup>1</sup> Even if we are able to bless our children’s children with a good chunk of change, inheritances are often squandered away with nothing left to show for it.

As far back as I can remember, very few people in my extended family on either side have been fortunate enough to leave any significant amount of money as inheritance. In fact, as far as I know, only a handful have even had life insurance policies in place, and those

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<sup>1</sup> To learn more about leaving a financial legacy, see [The Legacy Journey](#) by Dave Ramsey

were just barely enough to cover the cost of the funeral and grave site expenses with nothing much left over to pass on to children, let alone grandchildren. There was definitely no rich Uncle Alfred. If there was, I haven't received my check yet!

But there is hope. While financial legacies are very important, they are definitely not the most valuable thing you leave behind. Ask yourself, what do you miss the most about the loved ones you've lost over the years? It's not their money! It's the relationship you shared, the memories you made together, the things they taught you, the imprint they left upon your heart and mind, and the ways they influenced who you are as a person. This is the real treasure. This is what legacy is all about.

*"The legacy we leave is not just in our possessions, but in the quality of our lives. What preparations should we be making now? The greatest waste in all of our earth, which cannot be recycled or reclaimed, is our waste of the time that God has given us each day." – Rev. Billy Graham*

No doubt, like every other human being on the planet, your life has been a roller coaster adventure of ups and downs; seasons of loneliness, regret, anxiety, pain, and loss intermingled with moments of joy, romance, fun, laughter, love and blessings. And yet, your story is unique and special. There is no one else in the history of the world with the same story as yours. And through it all, with painstaking trial and error in life's great experiment, you've stumbled upon some dynamite ideas of your own. You've experienced so much and have now built up a great wealth of knowledge and wisdom that is desperately needed by the next generation.

This booklet was created to help you pass your torch on to the next generation with a simple step-by-step plan for creating your own sort of "legacy portfolio" made up of powerful tools you can use to share your life story both now and long after you're gone. As you will read in the following pages, these tips and ideas are pieces of the legacies lovingly passed down to me over the years. They've already been a great blessing in my life and in the lives of so many family members and friends, and I'm sure they'll be a blessing to yours!



# The Game Plan

## **Step 1 - Write Your Legacy**

Journal about the legacies you have received and the legacy you want to leave answering several important life questions. Then write a letter to your loved ones sharing how you feel about them and what your hopes and prayers are for them.

## **Step 2 - See Your Legacy**

Harvest photos, videos, and other memorabilia from the very best moments of your life so far, and put them into a single collection. You can then use this treasure trove to create a legacy photo album, scrapbook, or video to share with your loved ones.

## **Step 3 - Speak Your Legacy**

Create legacy audio or video recordings of yourself sharing stories, life lessons, words of encouragement, prayers, and blessings to those you love. You can use the writings, photos, videos, and other great resources from steps one and two for inspiration.

## **Step 4 - Share Your Legacy**

Use all of your new tools to create unforgettable, life-changing legacy moments with your loved ones. Learn to turn mundane events into meaningful new memories with thoughtful gift-giving and creative planning.

## STEP 1: Write Your Legacy

*“If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten,  
either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing.”*

- Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*

My father-in-law recently went home to be with the Lord. While he was here, he was not a very practical person. Actually, that might be the biggest understatement in the world. He brought chaos to virtually everything he touched! He was a bit of a hoarder and so his house was always a big mess. He wasn't good with repairs or mechanics, never cared much about science or economics, he just wanted to have his head in the clouds. You see, he was a poet, a dreamer, and he loved to write...a lot. But unlike most other writers, he rarely used a typewriter or word processor. No, instead he wrote masterpiece plays in his kid's half-used notebooks. He wrote moving love poems to his wife on receipts. He wrote deep, personal reflections on the back of bill envelopes. When he passed, we spent weeks digging through the chaos in his house and three storage units searching for buried treasures, and were greatly surprised at just how many golden needles lay hidden away in this enormous haystack.

For example, we found a short piece he had composed when my wife was just a girl. It's a clever little play about her childhood home, written as if each room had a mind of its own with a unique personality, and could speak to the others like the old saying, "If only these walls could talk." My wife read it outloud to me one night on our back porch. She laughed and then cried as she heard what beautiful and funny memories each room had to share, things she hadn't thought about for 30 years or more. It's very well done, and quite meaningful to the four siblings who grew up in that old house.

And then I'll never forget what a wonderful shock it was when we found this old yellowed and frayed piece of paper, folded up and tucked away in an envelope like a message in a bottle floating in an ocean of junk just waiting to be discovered in one of the storage units. It was a love letter from my late mother-in-law to her husband after an argument they had many years ago.

*Dear Don,*

*I love you very much.*

*I know not why. But I do.*

*As the part in the book I gave you said,*

*“If we try to understand love too much it disappears.” (a paraphrase)*

*Anyway, I love you very much, my Dear, and I always will.*

*Please forgive my crankiness and bad temper.*

*Your wife,*

*Nancy*

There was also a note to her four children that she had penned long ago during one of her more lucid moments as a young mother. She was a brilliant woman, Valedictorian of her class and a talented teacher, but sadly afflicted most of her adult life with a very difficult mental illness. She fought hard everyday to be a loving and supportive mother despite the extreme exhaustion and brain fog caused by her medications. In the note, she says:

*Don, Abbie, Christa, David, and Holly,*

*You are all the true loves of my life.*

*Be good sweet ones.*

*Pray, trust God and rely on His strength not your own.*

*He is the Great Physician and Totally Omnipotent.*

*Pray, pray, pray!*

*I love you all very much.*

*Remember me the way I was and am.*

*I love you.*

These are just a few shining examples from what is quite the collection of legacy writing from my in-laws which includes several journals, loads of letters, essays, poems, plays, and more. All in all, it has been a lot of work for the whole family to sort and

organize what we found, and we are still working at turning it all into something accessible and easy to read, but I can't tell you how valuable these writings are to my wife and her siblings! They are greatly blessed with a wonderful way to hear their father and mother speak their minds and share their hearts, something precious and tangible to pass on to their children and their children's children to enjoy for generations.

How about you? Do you have anything similar from your parents or grandparents? Do you think it would be valuable to your loved ones to have something written by you to read over the years? Imagine how much you would appreciate a letter written to you from your grandpa or grandma, telling you what great character traits they saw in you, how much they believed in you, what they prayed for you, and how much they loved you.

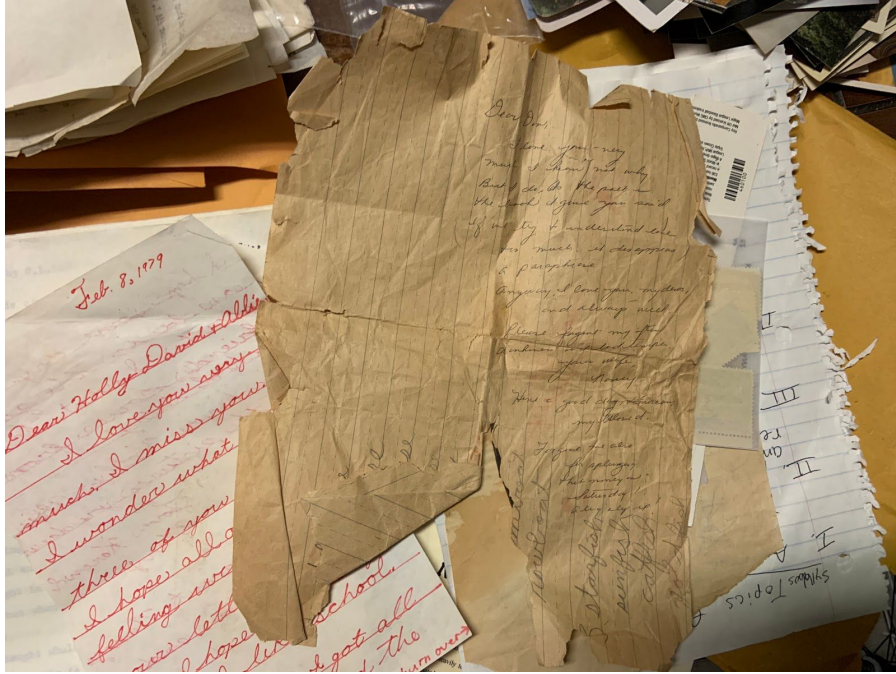
You may be thinking, "Yeah, okay, but where do I begin?" Well, I've chosen several starter questions to serve as a sort of catalyst or initial spark that will hopefully lead to a dynamite explosion of ideas you want to share, and a fiery passion for writing that burns for the rest of your life. Make a good effort to really chew on each question and write meaningful detailed answers you can feel proud of. At the same time, remember that it doesn't have to be so involved as a scholarly treatise on the meaning of life or a full scale autobiography. Very few people have the time or desire to write an entire book-length memoir, as amazing as that would be! But you, me, and every other person on the planet has a few minutes every now and again to turn off the TV, put down the phone, and jot down a journal entry, write a letter, shoot out an email, or at least send a text message. It could make all the difference in the world to someone you love.

Whatever you write, be real, be yourself, share the true story and not just a Facebook fairytale. Remember that one of the marks of authenticity and historical reliability of the letters and books in the Bible is the fact that you not only hear the good news and stories of success, but you also learn about many of the tragic mistakes that were made. The authors are not trying to make themselves look good, they're simply bearing witness to what they saw and telling it like it is. In fact, if you take the time to look, you will see that every single person in the Bible whom God used in a mighty way had serious flaws and made big mistakes, and yet their stories were used to radically transform the world!

You might feel like you've made a lot of mistakes, like you've messed things up big time, and like there is no recovering from particular failures in your life. It might be that because of some hasty or poor decisions you've made over the years, you won't get to enjoy all of the benefits of a life full of careful, calculated, wise financial decisions, or the comforts of life-long, faithful, committed relationships. Perhaps you've even struggled with substance abuse or addiction and hit rock bottom a time or two. Don't let these things stop you from sharing your story!

The Bible says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..." (Romans 8:28) It doesn't matter what you've done, good, bad, or ugly, the Good Lord can and will most definitely use your story to greatly bless your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and all those you love. Just imagine if they didn't have to learn all of the exact same lessons the hard way by experience and could avoid some of the pain that comes from making the same mistakes. Think about how they can learn from your example what grit, courage, and faith it takes to keep it together when such crises arise.

Remember, you've got a great wealth of hard-earned wisdom and experience that is unique, special, and desperately needed by the next generation. You've only got one life, one chance to make a difference in this world before you move on to the next one. Now is the time to make a game plan, to take action, and to do something while you still have this wonderful God-given opportunity. Don't let your torch flicker out and go to waste. Let it shine and pass it on!



One of the Love Letters from Nancy to Don

One of Nancy's Many Journals

# Catalyst Questions

## Question 1:

*“If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”* – Isaac Newton

Take a moment to consider and to thank God for the legacies you have received from those who have gone before you. Who has influenced you the most in your life and inspired you to be who you are today? Choose someone and discuss how they made their mark on you.

## Question 2:

*“If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet, how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something about yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.”* – Mister Rogers

Who are the people you hope to influence and inspire the most with your life? Write down your prayer for each one by name, making mention of the specific ways you might have influenced them (good or bad) and how God might use it all for good in their lives.

## Question 3:

*“Even when you suffer a setback or a tragedy, there is often an unexpected, totally improbable, and absolutely impossible benefit to be realized. It may not happen right away. You may at times wonder what good could possibly come of it. But trust that it all happens for the good—even tragedies can turn into triumphs.”* – Nick Vujicic, *Life Without Limits*

What is one of the greatest obstacles or challenges outside of your control that you have had to face in your life, and how did you get through it?

## Question 4:

*“Every man dies. Not every man really lives.”* – Sir William Wallace in *Braveheart*

What are some of the most exciting adventures you have experienced in your life so far, times when you felt the most alive? Choose one of your favorites and tell the story.

**Question 5:**

*“The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.” - Henry Ford*

Leaving a great legacy is not only about passing down what you’ve *earned*, but also sharing what you’ve *learned*. What is one of the most important life lessons you learned the hard way from making a big mistake?

**Question 6:**

*“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” - Matthew 25:23 (KJV)*

What do you feel most proud of accomplishing in your life? Make a top ten list of what you think are your greatest achievements along with a brief explanation of why for each one.

**Question 7:**

*“Those were the stories that stayed with you. That meant something. Even if you were too small to understand why.” - J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings**

Which books, movies, and songs have inspired and moved you the most in your life? Make a top ten list for each category and say a little something about why you chose them.

**Question 8:**

*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” - I Peter 3:15 (KJV)*

What do you believe about God, and why do you believe it? Wow, that’s a big question! It may be the most important question of all, and yet it’s also the one most people have the hardest time answering. Do your best to try to explain yourself as though the reader knows nothing about you or your faith.



## STEP 2: See Your Legacy

*“A pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered.”*

– C.S Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*

I hate moving. I’ve moved thirteen times in my life. It’s so much work and absolutely always super stressful. On the other hand, one thing I do enjoy about moving is that it gives me an excuse to go through all my stuff and get rid of a lot of junk I don’t use and really don’t need. At the same time it also helps me remember the things that I never want to let go. For example, I have this big plastic bin full of old keepsakes that I’ve been collecting throughout my life; things like personal letters and cards I have received, old journals, work name tags, sports trophies and medals, academic award certificates and diplomas, graduation caps, a few good papers I wrote in college, race bibs, a ton of great photos, old mixtapes, trinkets given to me by the kids, and a bunch of other stuff that’s meaningful to me.

Every now and then, usually during a big move, I crack open my bin and take a stroll down memory lane. I just love the feeling of being surprised by a good memory. How the hint of perfume on an old withered corsage can instantly transport me back to prom night and what an amazing time I had with the pretty girl who has since become my wife. How slipping on my old beat up cleats can take me right back to the middle of the football field during the homecoming game we won senior year, and I can literally feel the electricity in the air as the band plays and the crowd cheers all around me and my brother. How holding this piece of red sandstone puts me right back at the bottom of the Grand Canyon laughing around a campfire under the stars with my closest friends. You can’t help but forget over time. But then, one day many years later, it’s like a window in your mind is cracked open and the old memories come flooding through, and you get to taste the same pleasures all over again. I love it! Sometimes I’ll invite my kids to sit down with me so they can see a bit of my story.

I learned about creating a sort of legacy box from my Grandma Dolores who had a big old wooden box she called her “hope chest” full of secret sacred items she’d squirreled

away over her many years. Every time I saw it, I wanted to rifle through it and see what treasures I could find, but she wouldn't let anybody so much as take a look inside. I think she enjoyed the magic of mystery and surprise. She was such a great gift giver. When she walked over and opened the hope chest up, you just knew something cool was coming out. Every so often she would show me old photos of me and her together, or pictures I'd colored for her and letters I'd written to her as a little boy, always things I had no idea ever existed. Incredibly, it was a surprise every time. She did this for all of her kids and grandkids. Grandma's hope chest was filled with mementos she was saving to remind herself and the rest of us of what she thought was worth remembering, what she hoped we would never forget.

As much as I don't like taking time to sort things out, I love the idea of having one central location to safely store legacy treasures. It can help to prevent them from being lost over time, make them easier to transport in an emergency, and will also make them easier to find during those opportune brief moments when you want to share them with your loved ones, both now and after you're gone. In this step, you'll take some time to harvest photos, videos, and other memorabilia from the very best moments of your life so far, and put them into a single legacy collection. Take Grandma's word for it, when it's all done, you'll be so glad you did!



My Legacy Box

## Harvesting Hard Copy Photos

How many pictures do you have stored away in boxes in deep dark places of the closet, ignored in dusty photo albums on the shelf, or forgotten in folders on an old computer nobody uses anymore? When do you ever actually go back and look at those pictures and videos again? How often do you stop to hunt through your collection to relive those memories you captured on the vacation you took ten years ago? Never!

There's this huge catalog of memories waiting to be enjoyed, but it doesn't happen because it would take too much time and effort to access them. However, if you could take the very best pictures and video clips, your absolute favorites from throughout your lifetime, and put them into a single collection in the form of a photo album, scrapbook, or video, then you would most definitely get to experience those memories again and again and again! This is what I recommend.

Before you can know which are your favorite pictures, you need to see what your options are first. You want to create as large a pool as possible from which you can then sift through and select which are your absolute favorites. Try to collect as many hard copy photos as you can get your hands on. Look far and wide. It might take a little detective work. After all, not everyone keeps their pictures in neat, well-organized photo albums. Many people have these treasures thrown in old shoe boxes, storage bins, or like one of my great aunts, they might keep their family photos in a garbage bag in the bottom of a closet!

My Mamaw Glenna had most of her family photos in a big open cardboard box that she kept on a high shelf in her laundry room. I remember one day taking an entire afternoon to sit down at the table with my Mamaw and sift through the box. I'll never forget her sweet voice laughing and crying as she shared the stories behind some of her favorite pictures. She told me about her childhood in the hollers of Kentucky, how she was saved and baptized as a little girl, how she met and later married my Papaw Mack at sixteen and went on to have eleven children, two of which died young, and how hard it was to support her family after her husband was paralyzed in a trucking accident. A lot can happen over the course of eight decades. What a privilege to hear the matriarch of the family tell me her beautiful story firsthand! It was one of the most fun and meaningful times we ever

shared together. I eventually scanned every one of those pictures and put them into a single folder in her own Google Drive account that we shared with the rest of the family. I then put the pictures along with some video clips into a tribute video set to music that we showed at her 80th birthday party and later at her memorial service.

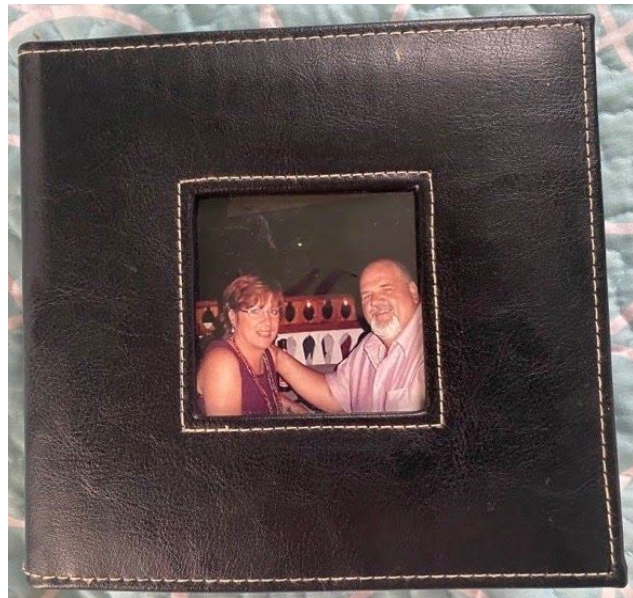
You might want to do the same. Start by making digital copies of your new prized collection of hard copy photos. You'll want to use a good scanner and scan at a resolution of at least 300 DPI. I recommend labeling each picture as you scan it in with a short, simple filename. I usually use the first name with a number. For example, I used wesley1, wesley2, wesley3, and so on. This will help keep the files organized and make them easier to find later. It will also prevent duplicate files.

I strongly recommend safely depositing all of your digital treasures into one legacy folder on a computer, thumb drive, external hard drive, or even a virtual drive online such as Facebook, icloud, Amazon Photos, or Google Photos. Of course, pretty much everybody has a Facebook or Instagram account, unless you've been living under a rock for the last ten years. Social media is a fantastic way of storing your digital library while also making it super easy to share with your circle of friends and family. Regardless of which way you store your files, my advice is to be sure to keep it organized and pay attention to what privacy settings you are using.

## **The Legacy Photo Album**

Once you've harvested a great collection of photos, you'll want to pick out your absolute favorites, those which capture moments of your life that you most want to be known and remembered, and put them into a single high quality legacy photo album or scrapbook. This can be a beautiful and efficient way of bringing a large collection of memories into one treasured volume so that you and your loved ones can easily experience some of the greatest moments of your life again and again.

A great example of this is my mom who remarried to my dad in 2011 after they were divorced for over twenty years. I am so proud of my parents for breaking this cycle of divorce going back several generations on one side of the family. Not only is this miraculous feat an amazing heritage in itself, but ever since then, my mom has been diligently logging their great memories in annual photo albums for each year spent together. She has written in detailed captions for every single photo to explain what each one means to her. The inside of each album cover is inscribed with, “Another year in the life of Steve and Maria. For our children years later, we love you!” My mom has put in a lot of hard work to remind herself and the rest of us about just how many great times we’ve been blessed to share over the years as a family. I’m so grateful for such a loving gift we can all enjoy forever.

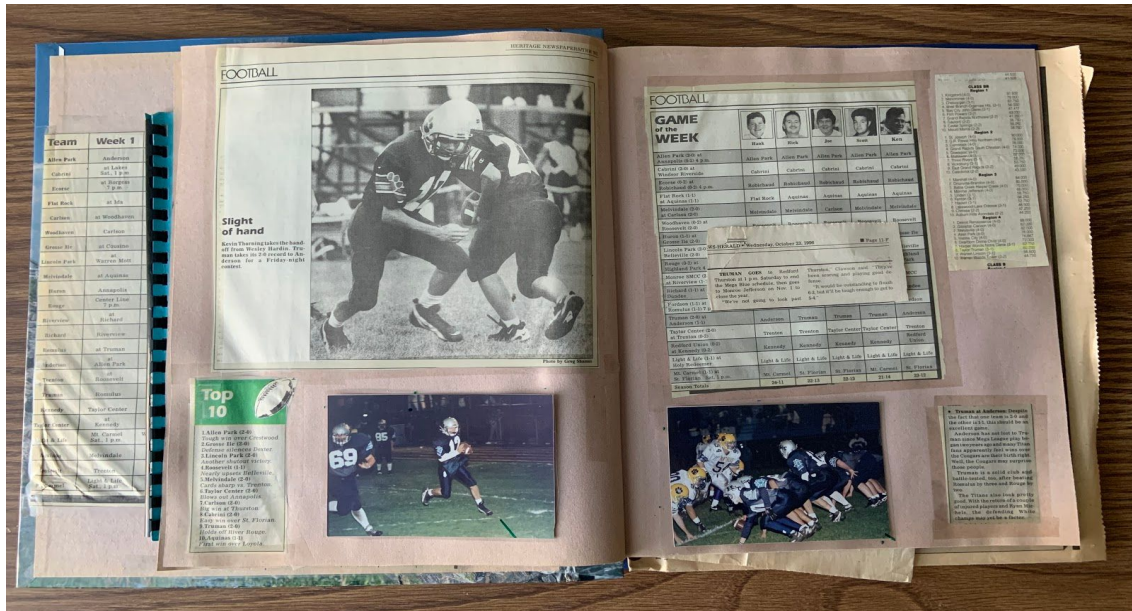


One of Mom's Many Photo Albums

## The Legacy Scrapbook

Another great option is to make a scrapbook which combines not only photos, but lots of little “scraps“ from meaningful events throughout your life such as ticket stubs, invitations, certificates, ribbons, awards, handwritten letters, cards, newspaper clippings, or whatever else can fit onto the page of a scrapbook. And don't forget you can also add photos of larger objects that you could never fit into the book. Some people also like to add

some flair to each page with headings and captions using stickers, stamps, or by simply writing or drawing them in with your own artistic hand. I have a big scrapbook my dad made for me about my high school football career a long time ago. It's filled with photos he took and clippings that he meticulously catalogued from every single time I was mentioned even briefly in a local newspaper. I love it. There's no question who my biggest fan was!



The Scrapbook My Dad Made for Me

## The Legacy Wall

Recently I was talking to my kids about their late great grandfather as it was his birthday, and I wanted to show them a picture but didn't have any at the time. I thought, how cool would it be if we had pictures of every extended family member from both sides all on display at the same time on a sort of legacy wall? So, my kids and I made it into a fun DIY project. We took a 6 foot x 4 foot sheet of plywood and covered it with 12 inch square pieces of cork board using rubber cement to make a sort of giant bulletin board. We then anchored it to the wall next to the breakfast table, put a nice white frame all around it, and covered it with a giant random collage of our most favorite photos of our family and our extended family going back at least four generations. Above it we have a beautiful sign which reads, "Every family has a story...welcome to ours." Now, every time we sit at the

table to eat we can look up and see literally hundreds of great memories we've made together over the years. It's a great conversation piece and a wonderful way for each of us and our guests to see our family legacy everyday.



Our Family Legacy Wall

### **New Ways to Use Old Video Footage**

What about that box of old 8mm film reels with the video footage of my grandpa taking his family to church on Easter morning, or the shots of my mom as a baby in a high chair? And then there's the bin of over seventy five VHS-C tapes I have from the late 1990's up until my camera died about ten years later. I've got old high school football highlight tapes, a recording of our wedding and honeymoon (not all of it), footage of our first two kids as newborns being held by great grandparents, lots of birthdays and holiday get-togethers with extended family, a bunch of hilarious fake commercials and skits we used to make, and many more great memories on tape.

Again I am confronted with the same dilemma as with the old photos. It's really tough to take the time and make the effort to watch these videos. Do you remember how long it takes to fast forward a VHS tape? About eight years of life you will sadly never get back! It's seriously painful. But that doesn't mean these gems have to remain buried forever.

Many people bring these old reels and tapes to the pharmacy to have them put onto DVD. This is expensive and honestly a little nerve wracking as you have to trust that they won't be lost or destroyed along the way. I have found the cheapest, simplest, and quickest way to digitize these videos is to just set up my smart phone on a tripod in front of the TV or projector screen and use the phone's camera to capture the very best clips I want from the videos. You can record the whole thing, or just your favorite few seconds. Just be sure to place the tripod at the right height, angle, and distance from the screen so that you capture the entire image and don't have to do much cropping afterwards. Now they will be in bite size clips that are easy to combine into one highlight video or just directly share with people by text or posting online.

It's a simple, effective, and powerful way to pull these old memories out of their dark prison on old unused media, and bring them back into the light, setting them free to work their magic and inspire again. I've used this process to capture priceless clips of my in-laws and grandparents to use in tribute videos at their funerals. I've used it to get clips of my nephews as they grew up to use for their high school graduation videos.

One time I had my grandpa set up his 8mm projector and we used the window shade as a screen to capture these ancient clips of my mom from throughout her early life. I got to see her being cradled by her parents as an infant, sitting in a high chair making a mess, running through the yard playing tag at a family picnic as a little girl, and standing in her Sunday best on Easter morning with her parents back when they were still together. My brother and I put these clips along with our favorite pictures of her into a musical tribute video, and presented it at her big 50th birthday party. I'll never forget watching the surprised look on my mother's face as she sat there watching the video with her family all around her. She was overjoyed and instantly moved to tears as she didn't know that old footage even existed. Let me tell you there wasn't a dry eye in the room!



I could give many more examples, but in each case the viewers were extremely grateful to have a way to easily see so many great pictures and video clips all at once and relive some of their most precious memories. I strongly recommend taking the time to make this happen as it can be quite a special and meaningful experience.



Four Generations Setting Up the 8mm Projector

## Harvesting Digital Photos and Videos

As for harvesting digital photos and video clips, just as with the hard copy photos, you want to start by locating and downloading as many as you can into a single location. At first glance this might seem like quite an undertaking, especially since cell phone cameras have made it so easy to capture every possibly interesting moment of your life. As I write this I have 5,892 photos and 1,185 videos just on my phone. Like Jim Gaffigan said, “I have more photos of my kid than my dad ever even looked at me!” However, having done this myself for multiple people, I can tell you firsthand it really is a worthy task that won’t take nearly as long as you think. I usually follow a simple system that breaks it up into bite-size bits you could take a day at a time.

Start with the low-hanging fruit. Go through the pics taken on your cell phone, choose your favorites, and put them in a new album titled My Legacy. Then do the same for all the other devices in the house like your spouse's phone, tablets, etc. Look in text message and Facebook messenger threads for pics sent to you, save them to your phone, and then put them in the same legacy album. Next hunt for great pictures on your Facebook, Instagram, and other social media pages, as well as those of your closest friends and relatives.

Last, and perhaps most difficult, you'll also want to look for those files hidden away on digital cameras, SD cards, computers, and external hard drives. This is like cleaning the digital closets of your life. It's not so easy, but it feels great once it's done, and it's actually fun to reminisce as you dig! You might also call close friends and family and ask them to look for favorite pics of you that they have stored on their devices.

For the week leading up to my 40th birthday, I greatly enjoyed spending about fifteen minutes at the start of each morning with a cup of coffee in one hand and my cell phone in the other searching through the photos for my most favorite memories and putting them into an album on the phone. I still go in about once every couple weeks and make updates. It's a really great way to start the day off on the right foot. I begin with a heart of gratitude, remembering these great memories and thanking God for blessing me with such a wonderful life.

Again, I strongly recommend safely depositing all of your digital treasures into one legacy folder on a computer, thumb drive, or external hard drive with a backup in a virtual drive online such as Facebook, icloud, Amazon Photos, or Google Photos. Whatever platform you choose, just make sure it's easy to share the files with your loved ones.

## **Legacy Videos**

I make a birthday tribute video for each of my kids that we play at their birthday parties each year. Sometimes they act a little embarrassed in front of their friends, but then they end up watching the video again and again and again. They tell me how they look

forward to a new one every year. In fact, I'd be willing to bet that my kids think those videos are some of the most valuable gifts they've ever received.

I have also learned a lot about preserving memories from producing dozens of videos for graduations, vacations, missions ventures, as well as tribute legacy videos of parents and grandparents that have passed on. We all just love to sit down and watch these short videos together over and over again throughout the year. We always find ourselves laughing and crying as we relive so many of our greatest memories together.

I strongly recommend that you make an effort to create a legacy video of your own life, and perhaps also for your parents, children, or other loved ones. I think you will find the whole process to be quite valuable, giving you a chance to really think carefully about each memory and consider its context in your life. It also makes for a very meaningful and rich way to tell your story. And the good news is it's something anyone with a brain and a computer can do. It can take a little time and a bit of patience to get it right, but trust me, you can do this! Just like eating a T-bone steak, you gotta take your time and savor it one bite at a time. This is how you will create fantastic legacy videos of your own.

### **Choosing Background Music**

Imagine watching Star Wars without the trumpeting intro theme, or The Shawshank Redemption without the symphony soundtrack at the climax. Background music is absolutely essential to an inspiring motion picture! It's vitally important to carefully choose fitting background music to set the mood and pace of your videos.

Below is a list of great songs I have used in creating tribute videos for my loved ones. Remember, most of these songs are protected by copyright, so if you use them in your video, the video can only be for your own personal use to enjoy at home with your family. If you want to monetize your video, or share your video publicly on YouTube or social media, you'll need to obtain written permission or license from the owner of the song.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.miksmusic.com/how-to-legally-use-copyrighted-background-music-in-video/>

### **Female Birthday Videos**

Beautiful Child by Sara Groves  
Happy Birthday Beautiful by Innocence Mission  
Isn't She Lovely by Stevie Wonder  
These Are Days by 10,000 Maniacs  
Still That Girl by Britt Nicole  
Set the World on Fire by Britt Nicole  
Never Grow Up by Taylor Swift  
The Best Day by Taylor Swift  
Through Your Eyes by Britt Nicole  
Who I Am by Blanca  
All Good by Capital Kings and Hollyn  
Beautiful for Me by Nichole Nordeman  
Put Your Records On by Corinne Bailey  
He Knows My Name by Francesca Battistelli  
She's a Butterfly by Martina McBride  
Unwritten by Natasha Bedingfield  
My Little Girl by Tim McGraw

### **Male Birthday Videos**

Safe and Sound by Matthew West  
Prayers for This Child by Sara Groves  
Song for My Sons by Sara Groves  
Beautiful Boy by John Lennon  
Blackbird by Sarah McLachlan  
Slow Down by Nichole Nordeman  
Signal by Sara Groves  
Backseat Driver by TobyMac  
Godspeed by Dixie Chicks  
McQueen and Sally by Randy Newman  
Infinity and Beyond by Randy Newman  
You've Got a Friend in Me by Randy Newman  
Hall of Fame by The Script  
Father and Son by Cat Stevens

### **Funeral Tribute Videos**

The Real Hero by Alan Silvestri  
The Great American Napkin by The Summer Skinny  
A Far Green Country by Howard Shore

Finally Home by Mercy Me  
Mama's Song by Randy Waller & the Country Gentlemen  
Fiction by Belle and Sebastian  
Coming Home by Gwyneth Paltrow  
Married Life by Michael Giacchino  
So Long by Randy Newman  
No Hard Feelings by the Avett Brothers  
100 Years by Five for Fighting  
My Old Man by Zac Brown Band

### **Graduation Videos**

Memories by Panic! At the Disco  
Fun, Fun, Fun by Pharrell  
Then They Do by Trace Adkins  
So Long by Randy Newman  
Hall of Fame by The Script  
On Top of the World by Imagine Dragons  
Best Day of My Life by American Authors

There are also loads of fantastic pieces of music that are copyright free, royalty free, or public domain. You can find whole libraries of great tracks with a simple online search. Here are some examples of sites I've used:

[www.youtube.com/audiolibrary/music](http://www.youtube.com/audiolibrary/music)

<http://soundcloud.com>

<http://freemusicarchive.org/>

### **Putting It All Together**

Now that you have both a digital collection of your most favorite pictures and video clips, and have carefully chosen appropriate background music, you are ready to combine it all into a meaningful video. The following is a somewhat technical breakdown of what I consider to be the most essential things to remember when making a legacy video. If you don't find this info relevant to your legacy project, feel free to move on to the next section!

Choose a video editing program compatible with your computer such as iMovie for Macbook Pro. Upload your pictures, video clips, and background music files into a movie project file. Once they are loaded, you want to place them in a particular order according to some sort of structured theme.

Some people choose to make it chronological order, starting with baby pictures and progressing through the years to the present. I find songs without lyrics work best for this kind of video so that lyrics aren't distracting you from the memories the images represent. If you do choose songs with lyrics, you might choose to follow the lyrics of the song like a narrating template or lattice work to build upon, placing pictures and video clips where they seem to fit best with the words. Either way, I think it is very important to carefully adjust the timing of each picture and video clip such that they follow the theme, tempo, and mood of the song. This can make for a video that really moves the viewers.

I think it's a nice touch to crop pictures and video clips so that they fill up the entire screen when possible without a lot of margins, but only if an essential part is not cropped out. You can also use the Ken Burns function to slowly zoom in on a picture or video clip to highlight where a person is in a group or scene, and to add a sense of motion to still clips. Again, be careful to match the rate at which you zoom in with the pace of the music.

I like to look for little moments in video clips that contain meaningful or fun soundbites where someone is laughing, giving a punchline, or making a profound statement, and then place them in the instrumental interlude parts of the song where they can be more easily heard. This can be especially powerful when done well at the very beginning or end of the video.

Feel free to add overlaying text such as a title at the beginning, or even little captions that describe what is seen throughout the video. You might even put in some frames with one of your favorite quotes taken from your legacy journal or taken from Scripture. For example, in the life legacy tribute videos I have made, I always start with a title frame and end with a frame that says a few words about the person and oftentimes a Scripture.

When you finish your movie project, you want to save it and export it as a movie file onto your computer. I suggest you then back it up onto a thumb drive, external thumb drive, or online drive in the cloud for safe keeping. I also like to upload all my videos to my own channel on YouTube so that I can enjoy them anytime, and very easily share them with anyone. Don't forget to pay attention to copyright laws when sharing videos that contain licensed music or other media.

Again, you are going to be extremely pleased with the end product, regardless of the quality. Simply having all of the best images and video clips in one spot to review and enjoy quickly and easily with your family and friends is going to change your life. Take my word for it! Whatever you do, don't forget that you've only got one life, one chance to make a difference in this world before you move on to the next one. Now is the time to make a game plan, to take action, and to do something while you still have this wonderful God-given opportunity. Don't let your torch flicker out and go to waste. Let it shine and pass it on!

## STEP 3: Speak Your Legacy

*“There are questions to be asked, and it is time for you to do so.  
Here in this Fortress of Solitude we shall try to find the answers together.  
So, my son, speak.” – Jor El in Superman*

My grandpa was born the same year as Superman. In other words, the first issue of Action Comics featuring Superman came out in the summer of 1938. He reminds us of this with a big smile and his trademark chuckle every single birthday. What is he even implying? I’m pretty sure they never cast Superman as a short old Italian guy! He might be able to pass for Jor-el’s father with a good makeup artist. Anyhow, do you remember how Superman had his Fortress of Solitude? It was a huge, alien-looking crystal fortress he created way up in the arctic where he would often visit to get away from it all for some peace and, well, solitude. He had this collection of crystal pieces that were like a library of thumb drives. He would pick one out and insert it into something like an advanced alien computer port, and suddenly an interactive holographic image of his father, Jor-el, would appear to talk to him and share some wisdom.

You see a similar idea in Avengers: Endgame when those closest to Tony Stark were at his funeral watching a holographic video he had made of himself just in case the unthinkable happened. The speech is short, sweet, and very moving. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the theater when he looked directly at his adorable little daughter and told her, “I love you 3000.”

One more great example of this concept can be seen in the movie, Overcomer, when the blind and terminally ill man, Thomas Hill, teamed up with his daughter’s cross country coach to make a series of audio recordings to be given to his daughter to listen to during her big race for the state championship, as well as at specified major transitional times throughout her life since he won’t be there. It’s brilliant!

I really love this whole idea of pre-recording audio or video of yourself speaking directly to your loved ones so that they might hear from you long after you're gone. Books



are great, but in some ways audio and video recordings are even better. Think about all you can communicate with your inflections and nonverbals, the option to add background music to set the tone, not to mention how much quicker and more efficient they are to produce. And let's face it, some people are just not good writers. You might not be able to type or spell well, but everybody has a smartphone, and anybody can make a quick audio or video recording.

Oh, how often I wish for just five more minutes to spend with my loved ones that have passed on to glory, to hear their voices, to see their faces, to gain insight, to get advice, to feel close to them by hearing how much we meant to each other! Have you ever felt this way? Wouldn't it be amazing to have your own Fortress of Solitude? What if you had your own thumb drive that you could insert into a USB port and suddenly see your father, grandfather, or even great-grandfather pop-up on the screen sharing wisdom and giving you words of encouragement during a tough time? Might a loved one of yours feel this way about you one day? Most definitely! What's stopping you from providing something like this for your future generations?

Not everyone likes the way they look right now. Some people might want to be remembered for how they looked in their younger or healthier years. But usually our voices don't change much throughout our adult lives. This is why audio recordings can be so powerful. Much like music, the sound of a person's voice can cut straight to the heart and transport you in an instant to another time or place.

The vast majority of people leave this part of their legacy up to chance, hoping that people will remember what they had to say. And often we do remember. But isn't it wonderful that we now live in the future when we carry these incredible technological marvels in our pockets that we can whip out, hit one button, capture any sound or any scene for hours on end, and then upload them to the cloud to be preserved indefinitely and enjoyed for only God knows how long. This really is an incredible advance in how we can impact our family and friends for generations to come!

I recommend you start by recording yourself reading the answers to the several questions from Step One. You might also make recordings of yourself sharing your

thoughts about your most precious photos and other memorabilia that you compiled in Step 2. You could explain what is happening in the photos or share how you feel about the people in them.

Another option for you could be to record reading some of your favorite passages of Scripture or praying for your loved ones. You might record yourself reading lines from a favorite poem such as “If” by Rudyard Kipling, or reciting lyrics to one of your favorite songs. The possibilities are endless! Just ask yourself, what would I most want to hear spoken from the lips of my parents or grandparents?

Recently, my parents came to stay with us in Florida to get a vacation from the cold Michigan winter. One Saturday morning I got out some old cassette tapes to play for my dad while I made breakfast. The tapes were recordings of my great grandfather, Papaw Glen Shivel, singing good old-time spiritual songs and hymns a cappella style with his four brothers. They were The Shivel Brothers, and legend has it they traveled all over Kentucky and West Virginia singing, preaching, and telling jokes at Baptist churches, festivals, and family reunions. I remember seeing them perform in concert once when I was very young and they were all still alive. Their music is treasured by the entire extended family, something we mention with pride when discussing the family legacy.

I remember we were talking and eating at the table when we noticed the music abruptly stop. I won't forget the look of surprise on my dad's face when he suddenly heard the voice of his own father, Papaw Mack, speaking into a tape recorder my aunt bought him for Christmas twenty years ago! Someone must have grabbed the first cassette tape in sight to try it out and recorded over the Shivel Brothers. My dad listened to that brief clip at least five times over breakfast. Then he recorded it onto his phone using the voice memo app so that he could enjoy it again later on.



The Prized Cassette Tapes of The Shivel Brothers

I have several audio recordings of my parents and grandparents that I've been carefully collecting over the years. For instance, I've got one of Mamaw Glenna telling the sweet story of how she got saved and baptized as a little girl, and another of her laughing and telling the love story about how she and Papaw Mack met. And then there's the recording of Mamaw singing "Jesus Loves Me" as she held my baby boy in her rocking chair one day, just like she used to do with me and every single one of her more than seventy grandchildren and great grandchildren. The last recording I made with Mamaw was of her saying goodbye for now just days before she went home to be with the Lord. She told me not to worry, but to trust God with my job and with my family, to wait and see how it's all going to be right in the end. She told me she loved me and all the rest of her children and grandchildren. I can't tell you how valuable these recordings are to me, more precious than gold!

It is so incredibly important to speak words of encouragement, love, and blessing directly to those we love, while we still have the chance. I am blessed to belong to a family that is very good at this. My Grandpa Longo just told me yesterday how proud he is of me that I work in medicine during the COVID-19 pandemic. I can't count how many times

my parents have said the same kind of thing. Their loving affirmations have been fueling my fire my whole life, lifting me upward and onward to be who I am today. And now I'm doing my best to pay it forward with my own kids. This is something we should all do with every opportunity we get because life is short and we never know when our time is up. Legacy audio and video recordings are simply a powerful way to extend the conversation and allow us to speak to our loved ones over and over again for years and years, even after we are not around.

Again, I strongly recommend you store these treasures somewhere safe in the cloud such as on Google Drive, icloud, Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, or as an attachment in an email message. Of course, you could also put them into a Kryptonian crystal! Whichever method you choose, you'll be blessing future generations with the ability to enter their own "Fortress of Solitude" where they might hear from you and receive the encouragement they need to face their own battles throughout life.

Remember, you've only got one life, one chance to make a difference in this world before you move on to the next one. Now is the time to make a game plan, to take action, and to do something while you still have this wonderful God-given opportunity. Don't let your torch flicker out and go to waste. Let it shine and pass it on!

## STEP 4: Share Your Legacy

*“What do you leave to your child when you're dead?*

*Only whatever you put in it's head.*

*Things that you're mother and father had said, which were left to them too.*

*Careful what you say. Children will listen.*

*Careful you do it too. Children will see, and learn.”*

— Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*

“This doesn’t seem right, are you sure this is the way?” My wife was starting to get anxious. This trail was supposed to be the easier of the two paths up Beehive Mountain in Acadia National Park. We decided last minute to check it out on the advice of a man with two little girls who was on his way out. “I could swear that guy said it was to the right. Let’s just keep going a little further, it probably starts to get easier.” But it didn’t get easier. In fact, soon we were climbing over large boulders and up steep steps that appeared to be hewn for a giant. We passed a sign that said “One Way, No Climbing Down” and I knew there was no going back. We would have to keep pressing onwards. Very quickly the terrain became quite treacherous, with slick worn walkways on the sheer edge of a cliff with no guard rail, and spots where you had to literally cling to the side of the mountain holding onto iron bars that had been pounded into the rock who knows how many decades ago.

Amazingly, my seven year old son, Jack, was scaling the mountain like Spider-Man. We had to keep telling him to slow down. He stopped to say, “Dad, this is seriously so awesome!” It probably didn’t hurt that we went to see “Spider-Man: Far From Home” the night before. My eldest, Hannah, was doing okay, but I could hear the subtle signs of anxiety in her voice as I know her so well. My middle child, Melody, has asthma and was only nine months out from having achilles tendon surgery. She was bravely trying to keep moving forward but was obviously starting to have a hard time, so we stopped to regroup the next chance we got in this spot that was like a giant cleft in the rock where we could huddle up while other hikers passed us by. We heard some children in the distance starting to cry and then I could see mine about to do the same. My wife wanted us to turn around

and try to climb back down. Honestly, I did too; I was scared for my family. People have died falling off the side of Beehive Mountain! We all wanted to go back as soon as possible, but there was only one way back and that was forwards.

I suddenly remembered the old hymn, Rock of Ages, and started to sing it outloud. I told the kids what the lyrics meant, about how God protected Moses in the cleft of the rock, and how He was protecting each of them right now. We prayed together, asking God for strength and courage, and decided to keep moving onwards with someone on each side of Melody to push and pull her along. We started to recall some of the many Bible verses the kids had memorized in their Sunday School classes and we spoke them out loud as we all climbed higher and higher.

It took us a while, but eventually we reached the top of Beehive. Let me tell you, the view was truly awesome! At first we stood there gazing with wide eyes and open mouths, then we hugged, cried, and laughed out loud at the incredible feat we had just accomplished. We literally pulled together as a family to overcome this gigantic, crazy, and terrifying challenge. It was a fantastic lesson for all of us on how to overcome fear with faith and family, and not one of us will ever forget it.



## Creating Legacy Moments

Our vacation in Acadia National Park was truly epic, and thanks be to God, we've shared many more great adventures along the way hiking into canyons like Zion Canyon, the Grand Canyon, and Antelope Canyon, and climbing mountains like Stone Mountain, Kennesaw Mountain, Telegraph Mountain, and others. We love to venture out into the great outdoors away from all the technology, noise, and distractions, where we can focus on each other and make memories together.

How about you? Looking for some inspiration to create legacy moments with your loved ones? Here are some ideas that come to mind from my life. I hope you will steal some to use for passing your own torch.

- Restore a classic car together. My dad and I completely restored a 1953 Chrysler New Yorker when I was 15 years old. Those were some of the best times I ever had with my dad. We used to take it to all the local car shows and to the Woodward Ave Dream Cruise in Detroit every year. My dad used that project to teach me how rewarding it can be to hard work and see a big job through all the way to the finish.
- Attend a daddy-daughter dance. I got to take my daughters to one of these at our church when they were little. We got dinner, dancing, and a professional photo shoot. They felt like real princesses, and I felt like the luckiest guy in the world.
- Train together for a race that supports a good cause. Every year my family dresses up in costumes to run the Superhero 5k with Bridge-a-Life to support foster kids. It's a fun challenge and great excuse to spur one another onwards all the way to the finish.
- Go camping somewhere unforgettable. I once went camping with my 81 year old grandpa, my dad, my brother, my son, my nephews and their other grandfather at Zion National Park. Four generations! It was truly incredible. We shared a real adventure getting the Jeep stuck in the mud, driving UTV's in the sand dunes, zip-lining, rock wall climbing, sightseeing, eating huge amounts of sugar, beef and bacon. And the best part was the conversations we shared on the long hikes and around the campfire, they were some of the greatest we'll ever have.

- Take a weekend road trip to see a concert or show in a nearby major city. My wife took the girls on a weekend getaway to see *Wicked* in NYC as a way to celebrate coming of age. It was a fun and meaningful way for them to have the “big talk.”
- Go workout at the gym together. I’ve had a ton of great conversations with my dad, brother, nephews, and close friends while hitting the weights.
- Play a round of golf or hit some balls together at the driving range. My brother recently took my younger two kids to a local course for their first time. They still talk about getting to drive the golf cart.
- Try Kayaking or Canoeing. I’ll never forget when we took the kids canoeing down the Manatee River in Florida with alligators swimming alongside us. We stopped along the riverbank for lunch and hoped we wouldn’t be on the menu!
- Go fishing at a local pond, river, lake, pier, or take it off shore if you know someone with a boat! I have a great picture of an outing we did with my dad, my grandpa, and my nephew. I used the fishing knife I inherited from my Papaw Mack.
- Ladies go get your hair done together or get pampered with a spa day, massage, makeover, manicure, or pedicure. While I don’t know from experience, I can imagine a lot of great conversations take place there.
- Go grab some soft pretzels and frappuccinos at the mall. Sit in some massage chairs and talk. My kids are always down for this!
- Go ice skating or roller skating together at a local rink. I’ll never forget my mom taking me out for a special night to the same roller rink that she visited as a kid.
- Go get crazy and play some video games at a local arcade like Dave & Busters. My dad and I like to do this with my kids when he’s in town.
- My wife has made little treasure boxes for our children which contain highlights from each school year.
- Plant a tree in someone’s name. You might also place a plaque or sign that tells others why it’s there. This is something I plan to do someday soon with my kids.



- Give a cooking lesson to your kids or grandkids. Teach them an old favorite family recipe. My Italian mother has done this with my wife and our girls. Mangia!
- Make a time capsule together, fill it with fun family treasures, and bury it in the yard.
- Work together on a legacy quilt made from meaningful articles of clothing you might have saved over the years.
- Go to a painting party and come home with a masterpiece. My grandma used to do this with her daughters. She gave each of her paintings to her kids and grandkids.
- Go hunting for hogs, ducks, bears, or bucks. I'll never forget when my dad took me hunting for the first time. We met a bunch of guys at a cabin up north in the middle of winter, didn't get any deer but we did kill some time and shoot the bull together.
- Play board games or cards together. What I enjoy most is not so much the particular game we are playing, but the fun conversation we end up having while we play!
- Attend a workshop or class together and learn something new. Local community colleges have a lot of fun and interesting offerings such as ballroom dancing, fencing, or martial arts.
- Shoot hoops or play catch. This is such a great way to lighten the mood and have a little fun together. I can't tell you how many times I've enjoyed doing this with my dad, brother, cousins, nieces, nephews, and so many others over the years!
- I've always wanted to host a family reunion that includes a variety show where great stories and jokes are told, songs sung, poetry or other personal writings are read aloud, achievements are celebrated, and made up fun or meaningful awards could be given. Can you imagine how special and fun that would be?

A thousand more examples could be given. The idea is, find something that would be fun and interesting for each of you and do it! Whatever you choose to do together, be present, interacting with one another, really listening and communicating what you think and feel. This is where the magic happens. When you live with legacy in mind it can add meaning to every moment and significance to every second. Even if you don't get the opportunity to spend a lot of time together, you can make up for it with the quality of the

time shared. Think about how Jesus got to spend only three years with his closest friends, but it was enough. Just look at what an incredible impact He made on their lives in that brief time!

### **Put It On the Books!**

We need to be intentional about scheduling in time to share what we have with the people we care about. Just like we need a budget for our money, a planned agenda or schedule is essential to getting the most out of our limited budget of time. And just as we should budget some small amount of money for leaving a legacy with our earnings, so we ought to schedule regular times for leaving a legacy with our learning, telling our loved ones how much they mean to us, and speaking words of encouragement they desperately need to hear.

Birthdays are excellent times to take advantage of and use for creating legacy moments. This is a great way to really focus on one person and make them feel they are a special priority in your life. It's a time when they might even expect to get a little extra attention, so it wouldn't be real strange for them to hear from people that they might not otherwise. And it's not so weird for them to hear sentimental things from their family and friends about how much they mean to them.

The same could be said for weddings, anniversaries, graduations, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and other special days. You don't have to memorize everybody's birthday or anniversary, but you should write them into your agenda or calendar, so that you can count on making a connection with the person on their special day and not forget. You can use Google Calendar, Microsoft Office, Facebook, or even a written calendar, but clearly lay out and schedule opportunities to share something special with each person in your legacy circle. Remember, you are NOT taking any of this time with you. You can't multiply it by investing it, and you can't save it up for later. So make sure to use it all up and spend it lavishly loving people and helping them to know The Author of Time.

Write down ten activity ideas you plan to do very soon with your loved ones.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Handing Down Material Possessions**

Three very close relatives of mine have passed away in the last two years. The days surrounding the funerals were spent at their houses with several other family members sorting through their things, trying to decide what to do with them and who should get what. There is inevitably a sort of free-for-all run on whatever can be scrounged up from the personal possessions left lying around the house. At times there was this awkward tension you could feel, the jealousy, the temptation to covet building up inside each of us. Praise God that no family feuds started, but there were a couple heated arguments and tears shed over what was supposed to be “my fair share.”

People just assume that the kids and grandkids will be fine managing for themselves. But what often ends up happening is a first come, first served, finders-keepers disaster. Leaving things to chance and human nature virtually guarantees some important people will

miss out on getting what they deserve and what you might want them to have, especially in larger families.

There are two things I recommend doing to avoid such mishaps. First, follow the example of Alfred Nobel and take some time to create a detailed will and testament to make sure there is no confusion as to what your wishes are with respect to your material possessions. Of course, the ideal is to have this properly prepared with the help of an attorney. However, even a handwritten document that you do all by yourself is certainly better than nothing. I'd make sure to sign it in ink, have an adult witness sign it, seal it in an envelope, and mail it to yourself. You might also write on the outside, "Not to be opened until I'm no longer here to open it."

Second, I recommend ceremoniously handing down some of your most precious mementos in person while you're still able to do it. This kind of thing really could mean the world to the one on the receiving end. Whether it's something as big as a house or as small as a red paperclip, I suggest you consider each of your heirlooms as priceless treasures, and instantly multiply their values by handing them down in a special way. You can dress them up with your words and use them as opportunities to tell your family members how you feel about them or to teach them an important lesson.

In this way, even a handkerchief, an ink pen, or a coin can become priceless to a person if it is given to them with some great purpose. Perhaps this was the handkerchief your wife gave you when you started courting, or the pen you used to write letters to your sweetheart while you were away at war, or the penny you found on the ground the day you asked her to marry you 50 years ago. It's your lucky penny, and you've kept it all this time, and now you want it to be theirs! Like the widow's mite, the value comes from within. You might put it in a special box or turn it into a charm on a necklace and present it with flair and passion.

We are so blessed to have received some mementos from loved ones who've since passed on over the years. I have the Jew's harp my Papaw Shivel used to play, and an old fishing knife my Papaw Mack gave me. My wife has a scarf knit by her Grandma Christine and paintings her Grampy George made with his own hand. These things might not be

very valuable as far as material things go; probably wouldn't sell for much on Ebay, but their sentimental value to us is absolutely priceless.

Of course, if you've completed any of the first three steps in our Game Plan, then you now have something tangible and extremely valuable to give to the next generation! You might consider putting your new legacy portfolio items onto a thumb drive that you hand down just like a torch. In fact, I actually designed a thumb drive in the shape of a torch to store my files on so that I can literally pass my torch to the next generation.

Whatever it is you plan to hand down, try to find some tangential way of relating the object to the person, to their character, to some event that you shared together, or to some lessons that you learned about life that you want them to know. Use it as an opportunity to bless them, pray for them, and inspire them. Don't forget, you've only got one life, one chance to make a difference in this world before you move on to the next one. Now is the time to make a game plan, to take action, and to do something while you still have this wonderful God-given opportunity. Don't let your torch flicker out and go to waste. Let it shine and pass it on!

## Leaving a Legacy

*“I want to leave a legacy. How will they remember me?  
Did I choose to love? Did I point to you enough  
to make a mark on things? I want to leave an offering,  
a child of mercy and grace who blessed your name  
unapologetically, and leave that kind of legacy.”*

- Nichole Nordeman, *Legacy*

I can't help but smile as I think about my loved ones in Heaven. I can picture them all smiling and seated around a great big table set for a glorious wedding feast with Jesus at the head. I can see Mamaw Glenna and Papaw Mack seated next to their parents along with Uncle Al, Little Dave, Baby Sally, and Sammy Glenn. Grandma Dolores is sitting next to her parents and Uncle Jimmy. Of course, Don and Nancy are there too holding hands. I know beyond the shadow of a doubt they are all there right now and without a care in the world, at perfect peace, patiently waiting for all of us. And I'm sure they are in no hurry with plenty to say to each other, especially Grandma Dolores! They can rest now as their race is done, but mine, not yet.

Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world. He that follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of Life.” (John 8:12) As a Christian, the Light of the world lives in me. And this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, but not like a weak, flickering candle on a birthday cake snuffed out by the slightest breeze. No, I want the Light of Christ in me to shine out like a glorious blazing torch burning so brightly that my loved ones see it lighting the way even in the middle of life's darkest hurricanes! And as I run my race through to the finish, I'm going to do everything I can to pass on this torch that has been handed down to me from my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, so that this legacy of faith will never be lost or forgotten, but will shine on in the hearts of those I love, forever.

I desperately want my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to see Christ in me. I want them to know about the incredible things He's done in my life, the victories

we have won together, and the many wonderful things He's taught me, even through the mistakes I have made, so that they may be blessed. I want them to know my story, not for my sake, but for Christ's sake, so that they might have an easier time following Him.

This is why I'm building my own legacy portfolio using the game plan laid out above, so that I have something tangible in place, prepared and ready to pass down when the time comes. It gives me peace of mind to know there will be no confusion about what I hope people will remember about my life story and why. Not only this, but as I strive to live with legacy in mind, it helps me to live better in the present. I notice myself being more thoughtful and intentional with the use of my time. I focus on the people in front of me and my conversations take on greater significance. I give more hugs and kisses, and tell people how I feel about them. I live with more passion and purpose, and with less regrets.

May this little booklet help you to do the same. Remember, you've only got one life, one chance to make a difference in this world before you move on to the next one. Now is the time to make a game plan, to take action, and to do something while you still have this wonderful God-given opportunity. Don't let your torch flicker out and go to waste. Let it shine and pass it on!

## Need a Hand?

Maybe you think creating a legacy portfolio is a good idea, but you just don't feel gifted in this area. You'd like to do it, but you don't think you have the skills or tools to pull it off by yourself. Remember, Jesus assembled a group of close friends to walk alongside Him, to watch His life, to listen to what He said, and to share it with the world. One of the disciples Jesus chose was Matthew, a tax collector who was naturally talented at noticing details and keeping written accounts. Of course, Matthew went on to write the first of the four Gospels. Likewise, you can recruit friends, family members, or even a legacy coach who might be naturally gifted at organizing, logging, and collecting information to help you share your story with the next generation.

And then for many of us, we know what it is we want to do, but often we just don't follow through. Instead we yield to the tyranny of the urgent and let the busyness of life get in the way. How many New Year's resolutions fizzle in February? How many life-changing projects never make it past the planning? The truth of the matter is we are all human and need someone to walk alongside us, to pick us up when we fall down, to cheer us onwards, and celebrate with us as we cross the finish line. This is what makes coaching so extremely valuable, and why many of the most successful athletes, movie stars, business executives, and world leaders got where they are today because they had a coach in their corner every step of the way to the top. Just like a good sports coach or financial advisor, a legacy coach can be right there to give you helpful tips, encouragement, and accountability with regular reminders of what you need to do to make a maximum impact on the next generation. If you would like more information on working alongside a legacy coach, visit [legacyhelper.com](http://legacyhelper.com).

