



## WHAT KIND OF LEGACY ARE YOU BUILDING?

This weekend my father and step-mother celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. My siblings and step-siblings had a party to honor them and the legacy they have left us. We became a blended family in 1963 when there was no word in our culture to describe two divorced single parents trying to merge as one family unit. There were no books, manuals or videos on how to blend families or how to be a smart step mom or dad.

Yet we made it through. Our family is intact, and together all of my siblings and I honored a mom and a dad who loved God enough and loved us enough to work hard to glean every ounce of wisdom they could from God's word. Their work was tireless, uncompensated and often unappreciated and unrecognized. Yet their reward is priceless.

Whether or not you want to or even realize it, you *are* building a legacy that will impact and affect later generations. How will your grown children describe your marriage, family life and home atmosphere? Will they remember mostly kindness, mercy and love sprinkled with lots of laughter or will rule-keeping, strict adherence to family or biblical beliefs and blind obedience to authority fill their memories? Sadly, some will only remember guilt trips, cruelty, indifference, abandonment and abuse.



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A fiftieth anniversary is always a time for celebration, but it's also time for personal reflection. How am I doing in my marriage and family? What needs to grow? What needs to go? Here are four things you can do to build the legacy you want.

**Be Reflective:** Most people do not take the time to think about what kind of legacy they are building or the kind of legacy they want to leave. They just live without pressing pause to reflect on their choices, behaviors or the direction they're heading. If you never stop and ask yourself the question *Am I living on purpose and with purpose*, you will probably miss both. It's too easy to allow the busyness of life to zap all of our time and energy. Take some time to slow down and evaluate your closest relationships and your character. Ask others how they see things too.

**Be Intentional:** If we get lost while driving, we must be intentional if we want to find our way out in order to move toward our destination. We can pull out a map, program our GPS or call someone for help. In the same way, things that are broken or not working well don't fix themselves. If there are some things in your marriage or family life that need attention, rejuvenation or repair, be intentional. Do the work, make them a priority, and set some goals.

**Be Teachable:** My parents didn't have a lot of materials on step-parenting or blended marriage, but they were good learners and willing to receive feedback, even from their children. No one is so wise or smart that they don't have something to learn. If things aren't going the way you'd like, ask for help, go to a conference, pick up a book, or scour the internet for practical and wise help to be the kind of parent or partner you want to be.

**Be Quick to Apologize and Make Amends:** Every family contains sinners who sin against one another (James 3:2). Therefore, all relationships require regular repair. Sincerely apologize, seek forgiveness and make amends when you're wrong so that the person you've hurt sees your repentance and desire for reconciliation.

These four steps take discipline and may seem difficult at first, but you can either live with the pain of discipline or you will live with the pain of regret. Proverbs warns us, "At the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin." Proverbs 5:14

Friends, choose life and live.