

SHARING LIFE AT FIRST ON APRIL 30, 2017 BY PASTOR BOB BENDER
“LEAVING A LEGACY THAT LASTS” FROM NEHEMIAH 5:19
***LAUNCHING INTO LEADERSHIP* NEHEMIAH LIFE MESSAGE SERIES**

John Maxwell shares the following: We all ask questions about life; how we fit in and what our purpose is. Here is my explanation: On the first day, God created the dog and said: “Sit all day at the door of your house and bark at anybody who comes by. I will give you a lifespan of twenty years.” The dog replied: “That is too long to be barking! Give me ten years and I will give you back ten of those years!” and God agreed. On the second day, God created a monkey and said: “Entertain people, do monkey tricks. I will give you a twenty-year lifespan.” The monkey replied: “How boring! I am to do monkey tricks for twenty years? The dog gave you back ten years, so I think I would like to use only ten years and give you back the other ten.” God agreed. On the third day God created a cow and said: “Go out in the field, stand in the hot sun, bear calves and give milk to help the farmer. I am going to give you a lifespan of sixty years.” The cow, picking up on the dog and the monkey, said to the Lord: “That’s kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years; let me have twenty and I will give you back the other forty.” God agreed. On the fourth day, God created man and said: “You are to eat, sleep, play, marry, and enjoy your life. I will give you twenty years!” The man replied: “What? Only twenty years? I will tell you what, I will take the ten years the dog gave you back, the ten years the monkey gave you back and the forty years the cow gave you back making eighty years. The Lord said, “Ok, you’ve got a deal!” That is why during the first twenty years of our lives, we eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy life—just like humans. For the next forty years, we stand in the sun and support our family—just like the cow. The next ten years, we grab the grandchildren and do tricks to make them laugh —just like the monkey. The last ten years we sit on the front porch of our homes and bark at everyone who goes by—just like the dog! That is the explanation of life.¹ How can we get to the place where at the end of our lives we are not relegated to barking at everyone who goes by?

What kind of legacy are we going to leave? I have in my left hand my physical will—my last will and testament. “Being of sound mind” is a little bit of a stretch, but it’s all I have! It records the stuff I leave my family and church, as a percentage of my estate goes to FBC. I have in my right hand my ethical will—my life story on cd as it relates to my values and experiences that I have already passed on to my children and grandchildren. Which do you feel will last the longest? Our greatest legacy is not our stuff but our character that is passed on to someone else. We are called to outlive our lives. Shannon Alder wrote, “Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.”

As we journey through Nehemiah and its leadership principles “journey” through us, we come to Nehemiah 5:19 where Nehemiah—concerned about the legacy he was leaving—prayed, “Remember me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.” Nehemiah’s legacy was not primarily a physical legacy of city walls but a spiritual legacy in the lives he touched—the people he led out of exile, the poor, his leadership team, including his contemporary, Ezra. Because of his legacy, generations were blessed—including ours. Nehemiah’s prayer was answered because we are still talking about him this morning. Little did he know his legacy journal would be this long lasting as a part of the Word of God. All of us want to be remembered for good.

We, like Nehemiah want to fulfil the words of Jim Rohn; “All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we could only imagine.” You cannot control your lot in life but you can choose your legacy. We all are going to leave a legacy of some kind. What kind will yours be? Henry and Richard Blackaby write; “Ordinary leaders lead followers. Great leaders lead leaders. Extraordinary leaders lead

movements.”² Surely all of us in this room are at least ordinary leaders, leading followers and leaving a legacy that lasts—just like Nehemiah. Let’s see how.

God’s first command to this world was what? “Be fruitful and multiply.” God says, “I like what I see in you physically. I want more Adams and Eves!” Here is a picture of my in-laws, Bill and Barbara Atherton, on their wedding day, June 2, 1951. Here is a picture of what that union produced through last year—from 2 to 21 in three generations. That’s a legacy of reproduction. It didn’t happen overnight as it took 20 years to go from 2 to 4; 25 years to go from 4 to 10 and another 20 years to go from 10-21.

Jesus’ last command to His followers in Matthew 28:18-20 was; “Be fruitful and multiply spiritually by making disciples. I like what I see in you spiritually. I want more of you guys and gals!” We are born again to reproduce after our own kind spiritually.

I have a dream that I have shared with you before—hundreds of children, youth, college students, and adults gathering in Jesus’ name; growing in God’s grace and going on life’s mission—some across the seas and all across the street. That’s the “what” of our church’s vision. What’s the how? The first part of that vision statement: “We live to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by . . .” Who is the “we” in this statement? The pastors or “hired guns?” No. the “we” is “thee!” You are to be involved in leading others spiritually. Dan Rather states, “The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth.”

If we were to take Jesus’ command seriously and win one person to Jesus, disciple them for one year and then the both of you win and disciple another that year and so forth. Do you know how many people you would have left a lasting legacy in by year 30? (see inserted chart).

YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
you +	2	4	8	16	32	64	128	256	512	1024
YEAR	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
you +	200	400	800	16,000	32,000	64,000	128,000	1/4 million	1/2 million	1 million
YEAR	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
You +	2 mil	4 mil	8 mil	16 mil	32 mil	64 million	128 million	256 million	512 million	1 billion

If you add 3 more years to this chart, you would have won the world to Jesus in 33 years and all you did was disciple 33 people. James Jones wrote; “The little bit you and the little bit me might change the world. It wouldn’t show up until a hundred years after we were dead. We’d never see it. But it would be there.”

How then can we be spiritually fruitful and multiply by making disciples? How can we make the main thing the main thing? Well, first of all, we have to be a disciple, right? It takes one to know one. It takes one to make one. We reproduce after our own kind whether we like it or not.

Matthew 28:19-20 records for us both the product of a disciple and the process of discipleship. What then is a disciple? Let’s review Jesus’ five-fold characteristics of a disciple, or one of His followers, straight from His own words. What is our product as a church? Very important question. If we are unsure of our product, we will not succeed.

Disciple: A Five-Fold Product (all of these verses state a condition of being a disciple)

1. A disciple loves Jesus Supremely (Lu. 14:25-26). Our love for Jesus is to so outshine our love for others that our love for others will be seen as hate in comparison. Jesus asks you the same question He asked Simon Peter, “Do you love Me more than these? Feed My sheep.” Who are you feeding?

2. A disciple follows Jesus Sacrificially (Lu. 14:27-33). We take up the cross of sacrifice and death sacrificing pleasures (v. 27), people (vv. 25-26), and possessions (v. 33). We also

sacrifice time, our talents, and our treasures in order to invest in the lives of others.

3. A disciple abides in the Word continually (Jn. 8:31-32). To abide is to “come to live with/ to make our home in.” Are you at home with the Word of God that makes you free? Freedom is not the right to do what you want to do; it is the power to do what you ought to do. And that freedom comes from living in the Word.

4. A disciple loves God’s children supernaturally (Jn. 13:34-35). Love covers (failures); love confronts (faults); love comforts and love challenges. Do you love God’s kids—your spiritual family?

5. A disciple bears fruit for God’s glory liberally (Jn. 15:8). Much fruit is borne through a disciple. Christianity is simply Jesus received, Jesus realized, and Jesus reproduced. An apple produces another apple. A Christian produces another Christian. Anyone can count the number of apples on a tree (addition). No one can count the number of trees in an apple (multiplication). Jesus is asking, “Where’s the fruit?”

Now let’s consider the process our church is using to accomplish this goal of making disciples. **Discipleship (becoming a disciple): A Five-fold Process (we see each component in Matthew 28:19-20 as lived out in Jesus’ ministry).**

1. Explore (“Go/Come and See” (Jn. 1:39). As we go, we encourage folks to check Jesus out and come and see for yourself. This stage is the pre-Christian one as they consider the claims of Jesus.

2. Connect (“Baptize/Follow Me” (Mt. 4:18-19). Now they are converted and are connected to Christ, His church—a community of faith as well as His cause.

3. Grow (“Observe/Be With Me” (Mk. 3:13-15). Here we are trained and equipped in character and competency. In these first three stages, we are **marked as disciples**.

4. Invest (“Teaching them to observe/Bear fruit that remains” (Jn. 15:16). Now we are investing our lives in others. We ourselves not only observe; we are teaching others to observe as we **make disciples** at this stage.

5. Multiply (“Making Disciples/Harvest workers” (Mt. 9:38). Notice the five spiritual generations at work in 2 Timothy 2:2: Jesus-> Paul->Timothy->Faithful men-> Others also.

I can simply summarize this process by stating that all of us who are serious about fulfilling Christ’s command to make disciples go through three stages: **marks of a disciple** (five-fold product as we move through the first three stages of the process); **making disciples** (process, stage 4—invest); then **multiplying disciples** (process, stage 5—multiply). Please see insert for overview of this biblical process.

How are we doing as a church? As your staff evaluates all the activities of our church, we are stuck between 2nd and 3rd gear (see process #s 2 & 3 above.) To illustrate that assessment, who are you investing your life in? Name them. I am not speaking of a large group or even a small group meeting, but personal discipleship?

Fred Bender, Paul Robbins, Abe Deustchendorf, Andy Antonson, Jim Burkett, Gene Warr, and Dr. Roy Fish are names that might not mean anything to you but they mean the world to me. These men led me to Jesus and led me to my fullest potential in Jesus, fulfilling Jesus’ command to make disciples. I would not be here were it not for them. Who are you here because of ____? And then another more poignant question—who is here because of you? What’s your spiritual legacy? Hebrews 5:12 is a challenge to all of us who have walked with the Lord for any length of time, “**For by this time you ought to be teachers**, you have need again for someone to teach you.” So, we have some work to do.

Would you like to know how to...?

- Leave a legacy that lasts?
- Share Christ effectively?
- Experience greater victory over sin?
- Follow up a new Christian?
- Have a vision for reaching the world?
- Developing friends for a lifetime?
- Helping others grow in Christ?
- Gain a greater grasp of the Word of God?
- Have a more balanced life?
- Disciple others?

Do you have an interest in these things? I pray you have a hunger for God for these things for that is a sign that you have the new life of Jesus in you. Ray Bradbury wrote; “Everyone must leave something behind when he dies. It doesn’t matter what you do, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that’s like you after you take your hands away.” God has placed that desire to change something or someone in all of us. Would you see it fulfilled today by beginning the great adventure for which God created you and saved you? To do so is to leave a legacy that lasts.

What are we asking you to consider doing today? I am going to ask Bob Trautman, FBC’s Director of Discipleship, who has been making and multiplying disciples for over 45 years, to come forward and share with us his discipleship vision is for our church and how it includes you. See insert for specifics.

George Whitefield and John Wesley were the two finest evangelists of the early/mid 1700’s and leaders of the first great awakening. George was the better preacher and saw far more conversions. But John did something with his converts that George did not do. He put them into small groups for discipling. It was his “method” of discipleship. John has a denomination named after him— “Methodists.” George, on one occasion, found that “many of my spiritual children ... will neither hear, see, nor give me the least assistance: Yes, some of them send threatening letters that God will speedily destroy me.”³ The difference? Discipleship.

We are asking you to consider taking seriously Jesus’ command to make disciples by joining us in making yourself available to first be disciplined by being a part of a group or individually which will use our church’s signature discipling tool—*Growing In God’s Family*. We have a dozen men and women who have been through this training and are ready to lead you into the next chapter in your spiritual growth. At this point, just register your interest without any solid commitment so we can move forward and you can be assured of a legacy that lasts. Sign up on the interest card, see Bob in the atrium to sign up as well and for more info or register on the web. I promise that it will be the most enriching stage in your spiritual experience as it has been for so many here.

¹<http://randalldsmith.com/an-enduring-legacy-team-building-101-nehemiah-3/>

²*Spiritual Leadership*, p. 212.

³<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-38/wesley-vs-whitefield.html>

Central Idea of Text (CIT): Nehemiah prays to be remembered for a lasting legacy.

Big Idea of Message (BIM): We all desire to leave a legacy that lasts.

Major Objective (MO): Commitment

Specific Objective (SO): I desire my hearers to leave a legacy that lasts by being disciplined to do so.

Primarily Addressed Need (PAN): How can I leave a spiritual legacy to those behind me?