

YOUR Unforgettable

Life

only you can choose the legacy
you leave

LEADER'S GUIDE

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Introduction to the Leader's Guide:

After the release of *Your Unforgettable Life*, we heard from small group leaders who wanted to use this book as part of a group study. To support that effort, we've included a short leader's guide with some sample questions and activities to assist leaders in using the book with their group.

Perhaps the best suggestion we can make is that *Your Unforgettable Life* is well suited for multi-generational groups. The topics in this book are acted on—and have differing levels of importance—at each stage in your life. For example, making deliberate choices about fidelity looks different to a single person than it does to a married person.

To understand the fullness of each concept and to learn how these same issues can change or grow over a lifetime, we encourage you to use this book with a group of people that includes a variety of ages and life stages. This will help your group to have both deeper and wider discussions. There will also be opportunities for older members to model and mentor group members who are new to a stage of life such as marriage or parenting. If you can create this kind of atmosphere, it will be a richer experience for everyone involved.

One easy way to do this is for a young couples' group to join together with a group of seniors for a few weeks for the purpose of doing this study. Perhaps the seniors can even prevent younger couples from making some of the mistakes they made, while at the same time the seniors will be leaving a legacy with the next generation.

Of course, the material works well with any type of group so regardless of how you use it, we pray this Leader's Guide will inspire new thoughts, ideas, and questions to help make your study of *Your Unforgettable Life* an unforgettable study that draws you closer to Jesus Christ.

Book Background:

We wrote the book with a couple of questions in mind. You might want to pose these questions to your group as a way to stimulate thinking about legacies before you begin the reading.

1. *What is a legacy and who leaves one?*
2. *How do you leave a legacy?*
3. *There are verses in the Old Testament that say the sins of the father go on for four generations. Does that mean you are being punished for the sins of your father and your grandfather? What about my children, will they have to deal with my sin? How do you feel about this?*
4. *Is there anything you can do right now to affect your legacy?*
5. *How will people remember you when you move, change jobs, or die?*

This book is divided into four parts. Here is a brief overview of each section and what we're trying to accomplish in each part.

- I. A Legacy: Do We Have One?**—In this section, we discuss what it means to leave a legacy and then demonstrate that we all leave a legacy whether or not we do it intentionally. We invite the reader to make the choice to leave a deliberate legacy.
- II. The Legacy You Leave**—This section covers common ways to leave a legacy: through our time, money, integrity, fidelity, habits, discipline, and words.
- III. The Legacy We Inherited**—If we aren't intentional about our legacy, the one we leave might not be the one we intend to leave. Understanding how the legacy we've inherited affects our current behavior and choices can help us to gain insight into the discrepancy of what we're doing now and what we want to leave behind.
- IV. Changing Your Legacy**—If you want to change your legacy, we offer hope and encouragement through the use of scripture and examples of people who've changed their legacy for the better.

Chapter 1

We Have a LEGACY

(Whether We Want It or Not)

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to help readers see that they are leaving a legacy whether they do so intentionally or not. Often we think that a legacy means leaving a large amount of money to a university and having a building named after us when we die. But a legacy is built over years. It's the culmination of the small seemingly insignificant things that we do over a lifetime that people remember and take with them when we move, change jobs, graduate, or die.

Suggested Activities

1. Ask all the persons in the group to introduce themselves by describing the legacy they received from a parent, friend, or teacher. Ask them how they would be different if they hadn't received such a legacy.
2. Below is a list of famous names. Start your first meeting with a free-for-all discussion about the public legacy that each of these people left or is leaving. Feel free to add local celebrities, your pastor, or other persons of interest to your group to this list.

Imelda Marcos
Bill Clinton
Peter Jennings
Princess Diana
George Bush
Rosa Parks
Beethoven
Martha Stewart
John Lennon
Hitler
Mother Teresa
Kenneth Lay of Enron
Billy Graham
Franklin Graham
Your mother
Tom Cruise
Abraham Lincoln
Martin Luther King, Jr
Jesus Christ

3. Listen to Harry Chapin's version of "Cats in the Cradle."

Study Questions

1. Some of the people in the above list are still alive. Do they still have time to change their legacy? For better or for the worse?

7. What if you asked the same questions to your kids or your coworkers?

8. Are you the same person when no one is looking?

9. Can we really influence or control the legacy we leave?

Consider the lyrics to the Harry Chapin song when answering the next five questions:

10. What kind of legacy did the dad in the song "Cats in the Cradle" leave his son?

11. What kind of legacy is the son leaving?

12. Do you think either the father or son was intentionally trying to leave this legacy?

13. Do you think either has/or will have regrets about the legacy he is leaving?

14. What could they have done or still do to change the legacies they are leaving?

- B. Were both people making deliberate choices to get where they are now?
- C. Did their choices (intentional or unintentional) affect their current lifestyle and/or their legacy?
- D. Which legacy will get passed on?
4. If a sociologist were to investigate several generations of your family background, what trends and themes would they find?
5. Where did the trends start?
6. Are these trends something you want to continue or something you want to end?

Chapter 3

Our CHOICES Matter

Purpose

In this chapter, we demonstrate that we all have choices to make and that these choices matter not only to us but also to those we live and work with. Whether we are choosing how to respond in a business or personal situation, or even how to respond to God, the choices we make have consequences. Our decisions are like rocks thrown into a still pond. Though the size and direction are different for each, they each create a ripple.

Suggested Activities

1. Think of a choice you made that doesn't have consequences.
2. Listen to Point of Grace's song "I Choose You," from their album by the same name. In the song, they suggest that we are all worshipping something. What is it that you are choosing to worship? How will this choice affect your life and your legacy?
3. Share an example of a choice you made that was the right choice morally, but still very hard to make. Share a time you made a decision that was easy to make but perhaps not the right one. Did it come back to harm you?

Study Questions

1. Do you think Adam and Eve's choice to eat the forbidden fruit had an effect on their sons? Why or why not?
2. Did Cain have a choice? Did he have more than one choice? Did Cain make the wrong choice? If so when? Or do you think Cain believed that he didn't have a choice?
3. Can you think of a situation where you didn't have a choice?

Chapter 4

Seemingly Insignificant DETAILS

Purpose

The point of this chapter is to help the reader understand that small things matter.

Suggested Activities

1. For one day this week be alert to the small things that make a difference. Jot down in a notebook or journal when something small changes you. Perhaps a car lets you in during traffic and that improves your mood. Maybe your spouse or your boss compliments you and that energizes you to do more. Perhaps your roommate or your child doesn't clean up and you have to do it. Keep track of how the small things that others do make a difference to you.
2. Often we don't notice how our behavior affects others, so for one day we want you to pay special attention to the effect your actions have on others by recording your observations during the day. Look for little ways you influence others. Do your words change someone's mood? Does your behavior or action cause them to change their behavior? Does raising or lowering your voice cause them to raise or lower their voice? Be especially alert for signs that you've made things better or worse by the small, seemingly insignificant things you do during the day.
3. Share an example of something small in your life that ultimately had big consequences.

Study Questions

1. Is every choice life altering? Why or why not?
2. How could small, seemingly insignificant things matter to our life or our legacy?
3. The small decisions made on September 11, 2001, made a difference in the lives of those who lived and those who died. What can we learn from this?

Chapter 5

To the FOURTH Generation

Purpose

This chapter demonstrates how we are all sinners. In it we explain how the consequences of our sins can affect our family for up to four generations. While God says that He will punish the children of those who hate him up to the fourth generation, a closer examination of the text suggests that we're only personally punished for our own sins, but the consequences of our sins can and does affect those around us.

Suggested Activities

Take an extended look at Ezekiel 18. Read it aloud. Divide up the verses with one person reading Ezekiel's questions and someone else reading the Lord's responses.

Study Questions

1. What are some of the things our culture idolizes?
2. The Israelites believed in one true God, yet time after time they worshiped false gods. How is this the same or different from our modern culture?
3. Do you ever say one thing and do another? Why? How do you explain the inconsistency?

Chapter 6

Minutes Make a DIFFERENCE

Purpose

We've heard all the clichés about using time wisely and ultimately that is what this chapter is about. But wisdom comes from God and using your time wisely means using it in the way that He would want you to use it. If your time and your priorities don't match up you will never leave the legacy that you desire to leave. You can't have more time, but you can spend each minute deliberately.

Suggested Activities

1. Listen to the song "Do You Even Know Me Anymore?" By Mark Schultz from his album *Stories and Song*. In the song, the wife and son react to the father's absence over the years. The son says he learned to live without his dad. What does that mean? Has that happened to you or someone you know? How is this Christian song like the Harry Chapin song at the beginning of the book?
2. There's an old Southern saying, "If the devil can't make you bad, he can make you busy." What does this mean? How does this apply to your life?
3. Look at scriptures in the Bible that refer to time. What can you learn from the Bible's view of how we should spend our time?

Study Questions

1. How do you spend your time? Do you procrastinate? Do you spend too much time on work? Not enough time with God?
2. Does your schedule accurately reflect your priorities? Why or why not?

Chapter 7

INDEBTED

(Whom Do We Owe?)

Purpose

In this chapter, we want the reader to recognize that God is really the source of everything. What we have doesn't belong to us—it is just on loan from Him. Understanding this concept should change how we hold and spend our resources.

Suggested Activities

1. Study the Bible for the difference between owners and managers. What does the Bible say about ownership?
2. Conduct your own miniexperiment modeled after the Kingdom Assignment at the Bellesi's church. Recruit a volunteer but don't tell what he or she is volunteering for. Give the volunteer a paper cup and ask him or her to go around the group and collect the loose change from everyone's purse or pockets. When finished, ask the volunteer to count the amount of money in the cup. Now challenge the volunteer with investing this in something outside of the church and report back to the group with the results. (One woman in our Sunday School class collected \$2.63 and turned it into thousands of dollars in donations for a local shelter.)
3. Ask everyone to open their wallets and consider taking what is in it right now and using that amount over the next week to do something for the Kingdom.

Study Questions

1. Do you see your stuff, your car, your house, your job, etc., as yours or as God's? Do you deserve what you have?
2. What's the difference between owning something and just having it on loan? Do you treat things that are loaned to you differently than things that you own? Why or why not?
3. Do you tithe? Do you believe you're called to tithe? What are you willing to do to deliberately investigate and act on this belief?

Chapter 9

Conscious FIDELITY

Purpose

There is more than one way to compromise your fidelity—cheating isn't done through a sexual affair alone. But the only way to protect your marriage is to do so deliberately. In this chapter we try to help the reader understand that the small things have potential to become big things and likewise the small things we do to protect ourselves from temptation can have big results.

Suggested Activities

1. Sit down with your spouse and talk about what the two of you can do to proactively protect your marriage. Consider rules about what is acceptable and what isn't for both of you. Discussion topics might include:
 - 1) When is it okay to be alone with a member of the opposite sex? Is it permissible to go out to dinner with a member of the opposite sex? To ride alone together in a car? To travel together? To have a drink in a bar together?
 - 2) What kinds of movies, videos, and television shows do you both think are appropriate or inappropriate to watch? Is it okay for one spouse to watch movies while on the road? What kinds of movies?
 - 3) What kinds of conversations should be limited to spouses only? Is it okay to discuss marital dissatisfaction with family, friends, or coworkers? What about your sex life? What about your hopes and dreams?
 - 4) Should there be limits on your Internet access? What is acceptable for you to look at? For your kids to look at? Do you need filters on the Internet? Does one spouse need to be accountable to another for what they do while surfing? For tools to help in this area visit the resources page of www.yourunforgettablelife.com.

After agreeing on the rules, look to scripture to see which ones are based on scripture and which ones are done to honor the fidelity of your marriage. What happens when someone breaks the rules?

2. Brainstorm a list of ways that you and those around you could be hurt if your fidelity is compromised. Consider what would happen if you were caught. Who would it hurt and why?

Study Questions

1. Are you easily flattered? Do you look for compliments from the opposite sex? What precautions do you take so that you aren't seduced by the compliments and praises of others?

Chapter 11

Give 'Em SOMETHING to Talk About!

Purpose

Part of leaving a legacy is leaving something worth remembering. For some of us that comes naturally, it is who we are and we do things without thinking. But for others we have to be deliberate about taking risks. In this chapter, we encourage readers to step outside of their comfort zones and try something that they've always wanted to do and by doing so become encouragers and role models for those around them to do the same.

Suggested Activities

1. Listen to the song "Time That Is Left," by Mark Schultz from his *Stories and Songs* album. Discuss what you want to do with the time that is left and the time that has past.
2. Make a list of 100 things you want to accomplish before you die.
3. Commit to doing 5 of them this year.

Study Questions

1. What would you like people to say about you after you are gone? What steps can you take toward that now?

2. What do you want to be known for? Why?

3. What regrets do you have? What can you do to change those regrets?

4. What risks would you take if you weren't afraid?

5. Did Jesus take risks? Give examples.

6. How did He handle risk? Can you apply this to your own life?

7. Does fear hold you back? What does the Bible say about fear? How can you remind yourself of these verses the next time you're afraid?

Chapter 12

WORDS

The Good, the Bad,
and the Ugly

Purpose

Our words do more to hurt or help people than probably any other single thing. Ugly words and sentiments, whether whispered to a friend or gossiped in a group, reflect more on us than the subject of the conversation. Likewise, the encouraging words we say to others cannot only change their days but their lives. You are beautiful. You have talent. I am proud of you. You can do it. But perhaps even more important than the words we say to each other are the words we speak to God through our prayers.

Suggested Activities

1. Day 1: Write down every bad or ugly word you say for 24 hours. Day 2: Make a conscious effort to use only words that encourage, edify, or inspire. Write down what happens. Evaluate: Were there any differences in how you felt, how others reacted to you, or the mood in your home? Did anyone notice a difference?
2. Write down three people you can encourage with your words and then do it!

Study Questions

1. Can you think of words that your parents, a teacher, or other influential person spoke to you that still influence your life today?
2. What's the best compliment you ever got? Why do you remember that?

Chapter 13

A LEGACY of Prejudice

Purpose

Racism, intolerance, and bigotry exist in our society. If we want to truly leave unforgettable legacies, we need to take stand against prejudice whether in our communities, our families, or our own hearts. To start, we need to learn to trust people who are different from us.

Suggested Activities

1. Read historical accounts of prejudice and think about how things have changed or haven't.
2. Develop and cultivate relationships with those who are different from you. Invite them into your home for a meal so that your kids will see your actions, not your words.

Study Questions

1. The church on Sunday mornings is one of the most segregated places in America. Why is this? What can be done to change it?
2. What would happen if your current pastor were replaced by a new pastor of a different race?
3. Do your actions line up with your words? Why or why not?

4. Do you have the same compassion for everyone regardless of race or nationality?

5. Do you give some people the benefit of the doubt but not others?

6. What secret prejudices do you harbor?

7. Would others say you are prejudiced?

8. List three things you can do to discover your own prejudices and begin to change.

Chapter 14

Unhealthy LEGACIES

Purpose

We can't control our genetic inheritance but we can control how we respond to it. In this chapter, we try to understand how we are to find peace and joy in our physical suffering. We want our readers to believe in their beauty as God created them and to learn to be content in all situations by realizing we're not in control. God is.

Suggested Activities

1. Pretend a friend has come to you for advice. Write down a few key things you would tell your friend about diet, exercise, weight, seeking a doctor's advice, dealing with symptoms and warning signs, and preventative treatment.
2. Look at the list above. Do you follow your own advice?

Study Questions

1. Do you take care of your body as if it was on loan to you and you had to return it and be charged a fee for anything other than normal wear and tear?
2. Do you complain about your health but do nothing to make it better?

Chapter 16

Dysfunctional LEGACIES

Purpose

Family secrets, embarrassing experiences, and dysfunctional families all affect who we are. To break negative influences for future generations, it is important that we spend time examining the negative legacies we've inherited. We need to understand how the consequences of previous generations' choices affect us now. To leave a different legacy than the one we received we have to understand our past influences and consciously make different decisions.

Suggested Activities

Everyone has dysfunctions in their family and often these same patterns are repeated generation after generation. Create a dysfunctional family tree of your family. What dysfunctions have been present in your family? Have you inherited any? Are you passing them on to the next generation?

Study Questions

1. What family secrets do you have and how are you dealing with them?
2. What is dysfunctional in your life and how would you identify it?
3. Why are so many people reluctant to get counseling?

4. Is there an area in your life that would benefit from counseling?

5. What dysfunctional legacies have you been exposed to? What are you doing to ensure you don't pass these on?

Chapter 17

A Change for the Better

Purpose

In this chapter, we want to encourage readers that it isn't too late to change. They can overcome their pasts, their past behaviors, and the consequences of their previous choices by choosing differently now. We use the example of Jesus, who inherited a questionable legacy yet overcame it to leave the most incredible legacy of any man in history.

Study Questions

1. Do you understand your life's purpose?
2. Do you have a purpose statement?
3. Do you believe you can deliberately create your own legacy or do you believe it just happens? Has this changed your outlook from what it was when you started the book? Why or why not?

4. Based on what you've read, what three things do you want to change?

5. What three things do you want to do more of?

6. Are you willing to get directions to create a roadmap of where you want to go? Where will you get these directions?

Chapter 18

LOVE for a Thousand Generations

Purpose

If we had to sum up in a few words how to have an unforgettable life, it is to love God first. The Bible tells us if we do that, our legacy will go on for a thousand generations.

Suggested Activities

Discussion: We started this book by asking everyone to tell us about legacies they received. Now tell us the legacy you would like to leave.

Study Questions

1. How does God say one's legacy goes on?
2. What's the difference between a legacy that goes on for four generations and one that goes on for a thousand generations?
3. Give examples of people who have been deliberate about their legacies? What was the result of each? Did they leave the legacy they desired? Why or why not?

4. What happens when we are deliberate about our legacy? Are you deliberate about your legacy?

5. Do you recognize that the decisions you make have multigenerational impact.

6. Which legacy in the book inspired you the most? Why?

7. Based on what you've learned, prayerfully go before God and ask Him what changes He would like to help you make to your legacy. Record your thoughts and prayer here.