

DETERMINE NOW THE LEGACY YOU WILL LEAVE LATER

By: Robert J. Tamasy

Someone has said that in the early stages of their careers, business and professional people strive for success – achievements, promotions, material rewards, recognition. Then, in later stages of their careers they shift the focus to significance – seeking to make an enduring mark, to leave a meaningful legacy.

This seems true, although I have seen that many younger business and professional leaders today also have a keen interest in having a significant impact in their communities and in the world. At Leaders Legacy, the non-profit organization I have been with since 2001, we believe the test of a true leader is not accomplishments, wealth or status. The measure of a great leader is what is left behind after he or she leaves, whether through taking a new job, retirement, or death.

Recently I saw a very personal example of this when I attended the memorial service for my uncle, Joe Tamasy. He had enjoyed considerable success both as a corporate attorney and in his private law practice. His greatest impact, however, was accomplished in the lives of countless men, women and children through his generosity, tireless and often sacrificial service, and unconditional friendship.

In many ways, Joe had been like a second father to me, as he had been for his three sons-in-law. We all saw in him a consistent example of diligence, commitment to excellence, initiative and perseverance. He served his community in many ways, and was quick to come to the aid of people in need, even some he knew hardly at all. Most of all, he modeled what it means to cultivate a deep faith in God and take it beyond words, putting it into action.

True treasure. Speaking to his followers, Jesus Christ admonished them, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:19-21).

Gaining the world, forfeiting the soul? At another time, Jesus warned his followers, *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"* (Mark 8:36).

People like my uncle have come to understand the truth of these teachings. CEOs come and go, even at the most prestigious corporations. Lists of the wealthiest and most powerful people change each year. The most advanced cars and newest technological gadgets we can acquire become junk before we know it. But a life invested in another life never grows old, gets outdated, or loses value.

A pebble tossed into a pond makes an impact, creating a ripple that radiates outward. In a similar way our lives – if given away, poured out to enhance the lives of other people – will create ripples that will affect the lives of countless others for years to come, even for generations yet to be born.

Setting the right goals. There is nothing wrong with success. In fact, we all should strive to recognize and capitalize on the unique strengths, abilities and gifts we have. But if the goal of such success is self-gratification, we are shortchanging others – and ourselves. However, if we can maximize our talents, skills and experiences for the benefit of the people we encounter from day to day, then we have moved beyond success and into significance – and gone a long way toward building a lasting legacy.

Robert J. Tamasy is vice president of communications for Leaders Legacy, Inc., based in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. He is the author of Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace (River City Press) and has coauthored with David A. Stoddard, The Heart of Mentoring: 10 Proven Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential (NavPress).

CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Robert Milligan, President
1065 N. 115th Street, Suite 210 • Omaha, Nebraska 68154 • U.S.A.
TEL.: (402) 431-0002 • FAX: (402) 431-1749 • E-MAIL: info@cbmcint.org
Please direct any requests or change of address to: www.cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, is there a difference between success and significance? Which one is the primary focus of your attention and energy right now?

2. If you were to identify someone that you believe has left a legacy that has endured beyond his or her life, who would it be? Why would you single out this individual?

3. Jesus talked about storing up treasures in heaven, rather than treasures on earth. What do you think he meant by that?

4. At this stage in your life, what kind of treasures are you storing up? If your career – even your life – were to come to an end right now, what kind of legacy do you believe you would leave behind?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to consider some other passages on this topic, turn to the following:

Proverbs 11:24-26, 19:17, 22:9; Matthew 13:44-46; John 15:1-8, 15:16; Acts 20:35