



## Living History

### FOCUS VERSE:

*“One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.”*

Psalm 145:4, KJV)

### LOOKING BACKWARD

Most people can only remember the previous two generations of their family lineage: their parents and grandparents. Some people might remember their great-grandparents. Unless people record their family history in some way, it is lost to time as descendants create their own history.

Genealogists dig into the past, searching for their roots. Archaeologists study ancient cultures looking for insight into forgotten ways of life.

Why are some people so interested in the past? The reason is that history provides context for our individual lives. The past is a link to the present.

### BUILT UPON THE PAST

To some degree or another, who we are today is the result of who our ancestors were yesterday. We are composites of former generations. Our lives are built upon the history of our predecessors. Even if we never met them, their values, morals, occupations, and choices of where to live affect us.

Many generations ago, my family traveled toward the western part of the United States to make a new life for themselves. According to family lore, one of the young girls fell and hurt her foot. The injury proved fatal, and the heartbroken family's desire to continue west dissolved. They settled right where they were: the Midwest state of Missouri.

Their decision had a long trickle-down effect, influencing my life. I grew up just a few hours' drive north of where the alleged tragedy occurred. Many components of my life were a direct result of the place

where I was born and raised. My education, friends, climate, food, and even my accent partly resulted from my ancestors' choices.

I would have had different friends if my family had settled somewhere else. The air might have been dry instead of humid. Perhaps I would have learned Spanish in addition to English.

## LOOKING FORWARD

At first glance, these differences seem insignificant. However, it is not only major decisions we make that determine the future, but also minor decisions. Choices that seem unimportant at the time can impact our futures and the lives of people following us.

We are small cogs in a giant wheel of humanity. Yet, we have the powerful ability to blaze the trail for those who follow. Just as our lives are built upon those of our predecessors, our influence can potentially affect our descendants. When we die, our influence will live on in the lives of others, such as children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. Even unborn great-grandchildren we may never know can be influenced by the choices we make today.

## GENERATIONAL PATTERNS

We inherit genetic traits such as facial features, height, skin, and hair color. We also "inherit" learned character traits, habits, and mindsets.

A good work ethic. Punctuality. Politeness. Thoughtfulness. Kindness.

We glean these positive traits as children and then carry them into adulthood.

Unfortunately, negative traits are what cause our lives to be less fulfilling and productive than God intended them to be.

Chronic criticism. Gossip. Addiction. Materialism. Stubbornness.

## BREAK THE CYCLE

Capitalize on positive characteristics in your family tree. Be grateful for the good traits handed down to you. But shed loyalty to any trait or behavior that is anti-Bible and anti-God. Separate the good from the bad. We must identify the negative family traits in us and be conscientious about changing them.

Regardless of your family's past, you can alter the course for generations following. You can't do anything about your predecessors' choices that adversely affected your life. But you can do something about today. You can influence the future. You do not have to pass negative traits to the next generation. With God's help, you can break the cycle.



### ***Life Reflection:***

*What positive family traits do you have?*

*What negative family traits do you have?*

*Do you have children or grandchildren? What family traits do you want to pass down to them?*

## **PREPARING AN INHERITANCE**

Inheritance is an ancient concept. In the Bible, inheritance was not usually measured in terms of money – as is generally the case today – but by land.

During Bible times, it was considered honorable for a person to prepare an inheritance for generations following. It indicated forethought and preparation. An inheritance tied a person to their past and kept them connected to their family.

Even in our modern society, an inheritance shows the deceased person was not just living for the moment. It reminds family members of the foresight of their loved ones.

You may not have a lot of money or a large estate to give to your children and grandchildren. But your relationship with God and godly character are much more important than material possessions.

Your predecessors gave you an inheritance. It is your turn. Prepare an inheritance that will inspire and equip upcoming generations to embrace God's perfect plan for them.

### ***Life Reflection:***

*What spiritual inheritance are you preparing for future generations in your family tree?*

*What do you want people to remember about you after you die?*

*As others follow in your footsteps, where are you leading them?*

## MEMORIES

Just as we did not know most of our ancestors, a few generations from now, our descendants will not know us. Apart from photographs, handed-down stories, and any history we have recorded, we will be forgotten.

One generation fades away, and another takes its place. Ecclesiastes 1:4 says this: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (KJV).

This verse reminds us that our lives, which seem so permanent, are fleeting. It sounds depressing, and we could pass it off as a rambling of the Wise Man.

But it presents us with an amazing opportunity to make a difference. Your decisions matter, not just to you but to future generations. Even though your name and memory may be forgotten, your influence will live on.



## MAKING HISTORY

At the 1968 UPCI General Conference, Stanley Chambers, former General Superintendent, preached a landmark message. He repeatedly asked, “Can we survive the onslaught of history?”

He explained how many Christians laid aside biblical truths. They abandoned biblical principles and doctrines. As a result, they faded away and were swallowed up by history. Their identity was completely lost as they blended with the world around them.

He proposed that the only way we can survive is if we stay committed to the beliefs of the Bible. Rather than be absorbed by history, we will make history if we do not succumb to false doctrines and ungodly lifestyles.

Although I never had children, there are people with whom I have spiritual influence. They are my spiritual children. I want my example to live on long after my funeral is over. I cannot make decisions for those who will follow me. They will have to establish their own relationship with God. But I can make the path smoother for them.

### ***Life Reflection:***

*What kind of heritage do you want to give your spiritual sons and daughters in the Lord?*

*How can you prepare a spiritual inheritance for future generations of apostolic Pentecostal believers?*

*Who can you mentor in the ways of the Lord?*

## **PRAYING ABOUT YOUR FUTURE**

Especially when we are young, adventurous, and ambitious, we do not usually consider the far-reaching effects of our choices.

As you contemplate your life's direction, allow God to lead you. Don't minimize the importance of where you will live, which house you will buy, your career path, and who you will marry. Pray about these things.

Even more important than these life-path decisions are our devotion to God and the values we integrate into our lives. Little things that we think are insignificant can make a big difference later. Be careful about what you allow in your life.

Ask yourself, "Will this behavior or activity draw me closer to God or separate me from Him?" If there is a possibility that a behavior or activity might create a wall between you and God, don't go down that road.

Remember, the decisions you make are not just about you. As the saying goes, "What one generation allows in moderation, the next will allow in excess."

## **MEMORIAL STONES**

As the children of Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, they selected twelve stones. They made an arrangement of these stones. People who were not yet born at the time of the crossing of the Jordan River would later see the stones. They would ask why they were there and what they meant. God wanted the stones to "be for a memorial unto the children of Israel" (Joshua 4:5-9).

Picking up stones and carrying them, then making a memorial was not an easy task. But it was necessary. It preserved memories of God's greatness. Subsequent generations would know God's mighty hand guided and preserved their ancestors.

Deuteronomy 32:7 instructs, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" (KJV).

Psalms 48:12-13 says, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" (KJV).

We are obligated to leave memorial stones for those who follow us. As they walk through their own lives, they will notice stones we have erected. The stones will prompt them to ask, "Why are these stones here? What do they mean?"

We don't know what obstacles and difficulties will confront unborn generations. We don't know the kind of pressure their culture will put on them. Just as other people's memorial stones help us, our stones will also serve as a reminder of God's greatness and power.

The Word works for every generation, regardless of the challenges that may come their way. As people hear about yesterday's miracles, they will be fueled with faith, expecting God to also do miracles for them.

## GENERATION TO GENERATION

Throughout the world, buildings, forts, and cities are built by people whose names are unknown to us. The builders are no longer alive. Sometimes, their names are recorded in an obscure location, but usually, no one remembers them.

Yet, their work still stands. Their contribution was lasting and significant. They are gone, but their influence lives on.

It doesn't matter if people remember our names. What matters most is that we commit our lives to God and that He uses us to influence generations of people.

You may think your life is insignificant in the broad spectrum of history. But if you allow God to direct your decisions, your life will stand the test of history.

Pass the torch. When it comes time to retire from this life, let your light be burning brightly and clearly. YOU are living history!

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