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[00:12](#) Hello and welcome to this episode of the St Andrew's Enfield podcast with me, Steve Griffiths. So we've recently started a new year, a new decade - it's January, 2020 as I record this and the start of a new year is often a time to um, look forward and think about our priorities for the future. And it may be an age thing too, because I'm in my early fifties now. But when we think about the future, we sometimes think about what sort of, um, legacy we want to create, what sort of legacy we want to leave behind when we've gone. Now, I don't mean that in any big egotistical sense, but just the fact that every one of us leaves an imprint on the world through all of our relationships and through all of our social interactions. And so we all create and leave a legacy according to how we handle ourselves in the world and with others. Every time we talk to somebody or email them or phone them, we're leaving a legacy.

[01:18](#) We're leaving an impact on their lives for good or for bad. I wonder what sort of legacy you want to leave, um, obviously when you die at the end of your life, but also when you reflect on your life on a daily basis. A wasted life or a life full of wasted opportunities is not what we want, is it? And that's exactly what Paul was thinking about when he wrote his second letter to Timothy. Paul was nearing the end of his life. He was under house arrest by the Romans and he was facing execution by beheading and no doubt Paul had plenty of time to look back over his life and consider all that he'd achieved for God. And his chief concern was to establish a church that would continue to thrive and to grow um, long after he died. And Timothy, who he was writing his letter to, was a fairly young Christian who Paul had been nurturing in the faith.

[02:16](#) And Timothy was responsible for running a church that Paul had established. So Paul then writes a letter to Timothy to encourage him to keep strong in the faith long after Paul, his mentor has died. And it's a beautiful letter, 2 Timothy, it's is a beautiful letter. It's full of encouragement and there's a lovely closing statement from Paul in chapter 4 verse 6 where he says, "the hour has come for me to be sacrificed. The time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance and I've kept the faith and now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me on that day and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear". Now, isn't that a lovely statement?

[03:15](#) It's a real sense of a life well lived and a good legacy left and how wonderful it would be for us to eventually die with that degree of confidence that we have lived life that well. And it's that confidence in our legacy that Paul is encouraging Timothy towards and encouraging all of us towards. So how can we leave a good legacy through our lives and in our daily interactions? How can we make a positive difference in the world? Well I want to think a bit about a passage from

Paul's letter, 2 Timothy chapter two verses one to 10, that give us four pointers to think about in this regard.

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Well, the first thing to say when we're thinking about what sort of legacy we're creating in how we interact with people in the world is to consider the place of grace in that legacy. In verse one, Paul writes this, he says, "As for you my son, be strong through the grace that is ours in union with Christ Jesus". Now, grace is common to all of us as Christians because it has to do with, um, showing kindness and compassion towards others because that's what we first received from God. And if we want to leave a good legacy with others in our daily lives or in our lives, in their totality, one of the greatest things we can do is to show grace towards others. The people who've had the greatest impact on my life are the people who have shown me the greatest amount of grace. For example, there's a man named John who ran the church youth group of which I was a part in the 1980s when I was a teenager.

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And to be honest, I was a pretty obnoxious teenager and I did give John a hard time as he tried to lead our group. But John showed me grace upon grace upon grace. Though, to be fair, he wasn't slow to challenge my unruly behavior either, but he always did so with kindness and compassion. And as his grace infiltrated my being, so he gradually introduced me into leadership and I eventually took over the running of the youth group from him and in his grace and kindness, he nurtured me and mentored me in the faith to the point of putting myself forward for the priesthood. And I wouldn't be a priest today had it not been for the grace of my friend John shown to me over many years. And perhaps you've got people like that in your own lives, people who have poured out grace and kindness and compassion on you and have nurtured you by their example to make you the person you are today.

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Grace is their legacy to you. But can other people say the same about you? Can other people tell their story and have your name appear in it as the person who showed such grace and kindness and compassion towards them that you radically impacted their lives for the better? Let's think about that for a moment. Isn't that the sort of legacy that you would want to leave behind? As Paul tells Timothy in his letter, "be strong through grace" and sometimes it's really hard to show grace towards someone, especially when it seems that they're taking you for granted and treating you poorly in return. But we need to be strong through grace because after all, that is the example that Jesus Christ has shown to us continually showing grace and forgiveness and kindness and compassion towards you and me. No matter how much we have taken his love for granted, no matter how poorly we have treated him in return. So do you want to leave a legacy that lasts? Well firstly then let your life be motivated by grace at all times.

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And then secondly, as we think about the legacy we are creating in the world, um, I would say consider the impact that your words have on others. In verse two of this passage, Paul writes this, he says, "the things that you've heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust, those things to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others". Now that's the way legacy works, isn't it? Uh, Paul taught Timothy, Timothy taught others what Paul had taught him, and those others passed on the teaching. And so it went down the generations. And here we are 2000 years later, still talking about the legacy that Paul has left through his words and his writings. How we use words is very important. Once something has been said, it can't be unsaid. The legacy has been created. So we need to think very carefully before we speak.

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And the Bible has got a lot to say about words. One of the most challenging parts is in the letter of James when he talks about the tongue and how it shapes our speech, the words we say. The tongue is a very small part of the body, but it has great power and James compares it with a fire. One spark can cause devastation and utter ruin. James compares it with a bit in a horse's mouth, controlling a wild beast and sending it in the right or wrong direction. He also compares it with the rudder on a ship though it's small, it can control a large ship and turn it in a good or bad direction. How we choose to use the tongue, how we choose the words we speak can either bring healing or hurt. It can be positive or negative. Our words can build people up or they can break people down and if we want to leave a good legacy, we need to consider the words we use and the things we say. There's a really wise saying attributed to the Buddha who said, "Before you speak, ask yourself, this is what I'm about to say helpful and is what I'm about to say true? If not, retain your silence". Is it helpful? Is it true? If you can't answer both of those questions with a "yes", then it's better not to say anything at all.

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So to leave a good legacy first, consider the place of grace in your life. Secondly, consider the words you use towards others. And thirdly, stay focused on your task in life. It's so difficult to stay focused, isn't it? Perhaps more so than ever before in history because the pull of social media and forms of communication are so strong. Apparently there are over 5 billion web pages out there, maybe more than that now. And when I'm bored at work or feeling distracted, I find it very easy to surf my way through as many of those as possible or to check my mobile phone or put something on my Instagram account or watch one of the 200 or so TV channels available to me or watch a Netflix movie or whatever. Staying focused is extremely hard, but staying focused is key to leaving a good legacy. Decide what is important in life, focus on it and work on it with all your being.

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And of course, nothing is more important, nothing requires more focus, than our relationship with God. Our careers end when we retire. But our relationship with God is eternal. Our money and our possessions, uh, will pass over into the hands of others when we die. But our relationship with God is eternal. So decide

on the importance of that relationship, focus on it and work at it. And in this letter to Timothy, Paul draws on three examples for us. Uh, he says firstly in verse four, he compares our Christian life to that of a soldier on active service attempting to please his commanding officer. Secondly, verse five, he compares the Christian life to that of an athlete in training, devoting hours, months and years to getting fit, uh, for a race or a sporting event. And in verse six, he compares the Christian life to that of a farmer putting in the hard work so that there'll be a fruitful harvest. These are really good metaphors for us as we try to stay focused on our spiritual disciplines and our walk with God. And the more disciplined we are, the closer we walk with God and reflect his life to others, the greater our legacy will be.

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So consider the role of grace, consider your use of words and stay focused. And then finally, um, consider the need for wisdom. In verse seven, Paul writes this, he says, "Think about what I'm saying, because the Lord will enable you to understand it all". Now, wisdom is not the same thing as knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to know what to do with the knowledge that we have. And that's a completely different thing. We just need to look around us at, um, world politics today and the interaction of nation state with nation state. There, there are a lot of world leaders who have plenty of knowledge but completely lacking in wisdom. Uh, they misuse the knowledge they have with terrible consequences for us all. Uh, so wisdom, if you like, is the, is the completion of knowledge. And if we want to leave a good legacy behind us, then we need to use wisdom to know what to do with the knowledge we have. A wise person doesn't always act on their knowledge. A wise person doesn't always speak. A wise person knows when to speak and when to remain silent. And acting out of wisdom is the key to leaving the greatest legacy of all.

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So no matter what stage we are at in our lives, we need to think about our legacy. Uh, if we're in the later stages of life or if we're in midlife or even if we're just wanting to live our lives daily in such a way that we are a positive influence making a difference in the world. Uh, the issue of legacy is profoundly important to us all. Uh, so consider how you can fill your life with grace towards others. Um, consider the words that you're about to say before you speak. Consider what's important and stay focused on it and then consider how to be wise with the knowledge you have. And in these four ways, um, I think we will create a legacy that will have a hugely positive impact on others, a legacy that will outlive us all, as it shapes the lives of those with whom we interact. And then they pass that legacy on to others, uh, for generations to come. So we can make a positive difference in the world. We can leave a wonderful legacy, but let's be sure to be mindful of what we say and how we act so that we can shape the world to be a better place.

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So I hope this has been a useful podcast for you. As always, um, it's lovely to hear from you if you've got any thoughts or comments, just email me: steve.griffiths@london.anglican.org. And I hope that you have a great day and that all your interactions with other people will go towards creating a legacy, a spiritual legacy, of which you can be proud. So have a great day. Bye.

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