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ESV.*  The word the Lord gave me this year for our family Christmas sharing, was legacy. I felt to encourage all of us, but especially my grandchildren, that they are actually developing their legacy right now.  When most people think about leaving a legacy, they think about money and possessions. But as a believer, we have an opportunity to leave an even greater legacy. This legacy can influence many, not just our own families. I discovered in my biological family missionaries went in the 1800's to what is now Senegal, very close to where Darryl and I ministered in Ghana! Did they pray for future generations to influence the region? We won't know till we get to heaven.  We found out that some of our relatives founded a college for freed slaves. They also established it for their children. It is now Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina! Their heart was for education. I wonder if my heart to teach came from this DNA? Is it a coincidence that our oldest grandson graduates in May, with an education degree?  I just finished watching some of the memorial service for our 39th president, Jimmy Carter. What a legacy he and his wife left, not only for our nation, but also for the Kingdom. I admit, Darryl and I were so isolated (no TV, no radio) that when he ran for president, we had no clue who he was! We realized we weren't being good citizens at that point. How could we pray for our country if we didn't even know what was going on? There is a stigma upon "one-term" presidents that they somehow "failed.” He did not let that stop him from living an impactful life. He left office at 56, in 1981 and by 1982 they founded the Carter Center which continues touching lives all over the world. He came from a small town in Georgia and continued to champion small towns and villages around the world. Each speaker mentioned his faith. He was a man of character. He not only verbally shared his faith with others, but he lived it. I found myself praying for those in attendance, that they would embrace this man's faith and change their world.  So my friends, if you are reading this, you are still breathing. If you are still breathing, then you are still forming your legacy. One of my last conversations with my father involved money. He said, "Martha, you and Darryl will never have any money.” I said, "when did you teach us?" We are open to anything you want to share. He said, "Well, stay in the lane God has given you. I only lost money when I tried to step out in areas God did not anoint me to do (like oil or gold mines)". So we took that to heart and stayed in God's calling, ministry.  I have tried to be wise with my finances, so my children will not have to care for me. But I admit I am more concerned for my spiritual legacy. I want to exemplify what it means to love the Lord. Serving Him is the best life you can lead. It is my heart that they discover their own relationship with Him. Jesus instructs us in Matthew not to store our treasures on earth. Instead, we should lay them in heaven where moths and rust cannot destroy. There is a balance we need in stewarding our finances here on earth, while focusing on heaven as well. God give us Your wisdom, please!  Oh my friends, another area of legacy is our character. Are we gracious? Hospitable? Or are we difficult to please and get along with? Do we seek to let the fruit of the spirit be tasted by everyone, or only those we deem worthy? Are we short-tempered and focused on ourselves? If you are in a later season of life, it may be difficult to change your financial legacy. But, we can always change our spiritual and character legacy. It is in our control.  Paul exhorted all believers in so many of his letters about behavior issues. *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. Romans 12:9 Let all bitterness,* *wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32. Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Colossians 3:12-14.*Many people read over these verses (at times, me included) without applying them to their own lives. Even after such an encouraging and uplifting memorial, the commentators quickly judged and criticized. They focused on the difficult relationships the current living presidents have with each other. I don't know if they realized they were sowing seeds of division. This happened right after listening to stories about how the man they were honoring sought to bring people together!  Thinking about my own life and those who have impacted me the most, are those who have applied Paul's exhortations. They took the time to be gracious and kind. They encouraged me to seek our Savior even more. My parents taught me the logistics of hospitality, but I learned the heart of hospitality from a home church I attended as a student at the University of Washington. I am still learning how to do this. It's not easy to change, but with His help we can.  Cartoons make fun of the grumpy old men and the "Karen's" of this world. Unfortunately, they are based on reality but this should not be the case with us believers. Christians get mocked in the media because of hypocrisy. Let's not give them fuel for the fire. President Carter, according to his grandchildren, lived a genuine Christian life, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, so can we. Thank you, Jimmy Carter for your legacy that we can learn from.  *Father, help us leave Your kind of legacy, but we need your help to do it. Show us our short comings, and help us* make any change necessary. Forgive us for messing up. We are so grateful your mercy covers a multitude of sin for us, let us make sure we share that mercy with those we meet. In Jesus' Name, amen. | |