

A Potential Beyond Yourself

Live Beyond Yourself

21.10.10 – Jeff Lockyer

If I asked you what the winningest sports team was of all time, what would you say? The UCLA Bruins basketball team under coach John Wooden? Any team Tom Brady plays for? The—ugh—Montreal Canadiens? In fact, the winningest team in sports history, with a win percentage of 87% over more than the past hundred years, is the All-Black rugby team from New Zealand. Next question: what made them that way?

When you become an All-Black, you receive a black, leather-bound book. On the first page is a photo of one of the earliest jerseys, from 1905. The next page shows another iteration of their jersey, from 1924. Page after page updates the iterations of the All-Blacks jersey, and then provides some information on the team's principles, standards, ethos and character. The second to last page is a photo of the current All-Blacks jersey, and then the final page is blank. The booklet—intended to be more inspirational than instructional, drives home the New Zealand All-Blacks core value: if you're an All-Black, *you leave the jersey better than you found it*. That's why they're the winningest sports team of all time, because you don't just play rugby for the New Zealand All-Blacks. When you put on that jersey, *you're there to leave a legacy*.

This teaching series has sought to serve, not just as a kick-off series for the fall of 2021, but in a sense as a re-launch of a church slowly coming out of a pandemic. So we've been going back to the most core basics of what a life following Jesus—both personally and together—was intended by Jesus to look like. And as we wrap things up today, it might surprise you to discover that the greatest potential in a life following Jesus is not even your life, because, like the All-Blacks, *you're there to leave a legacy*.

In chapter 3 of his letter to the Colossian church, the Apostle Paul writes this:

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your

life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

In this brief section, Paul basically does two things: he provides instructions to the people of this first-century church, and then he provides a basis for those instructions.

His instructions seem quite clear: to set their hearts and set their minds on things above. He repeats the phrase for emphasis, and combining heart and mind, he's describing someone's whole person—their whole perspective. And he provides even greater specificity to that perspective, not by way of repetition but by contrast, encouraging these Jesus followers to adopt a perspective “where Christ is” and “not on earthy things.” Clearly, Paul is appealing for them to live with an eternal perspective.

As you stare at this passage, the basis for that eternal perspective becomes clear too. He says that, when a person becomes a follower of Jesus, they identify with Jesus who died and, like Jesus did, die to their former life as well. Instead, their followership of Jesus focuses on Him, where He is, seated at the right hand of God. More to that, having died to your old life and adopting Jesus' Way of life, you will now experience the same destiny as Him upon His promised return to earth. You have the goal now of embracing Jesus for all eternity—that's why you should live with an eternal perspective. And, rather than this perspective resulting in a passive waiting for Christ to return, what Paul is hoping for is for Jesus followers to actively live the kind life that outlives them. That's the net effect of choosing to embrace an eternal perspective.

I'd say the New Zealand All-Blacks are on to something, because they understand one of the most powerful dynamics of a life on earth—the potential for leaving a legacy. What I hope we can appreciate today, though, is that, spiritually speaking, we have been given by God an immeasurably greater opportunity and potential. If the All-Blacks live in a way that outlives them, they get to leave their jersey better than they found it. In our case, for those who seek to follow Jesus, we don't just get to leave the world better than we found it; living a life that outlives us has impacts and implications that last *forever*—if only we'll seek to adopt an eternal perspective.

And we need to appreciate today that, above all the other core essentials to a life of following Jesus we've discussed this fall, this perspective matters most. In fact, embracing a Jesus-focused eternal perspective to your life on earth drives all the other core aspects to a life of faith we've reviewed. To fulfill the point of following Jesus, living beyond yourself so you're living *most for* the people Jesus was *most for*, relinquishing your privilege for those of less privilege, you need to value something more than just this life. (Otherwise, it would make no sense to relinquish it!) To experience a power beyond yourself, you've got to allow Jesus to provide the divine enablement to resource the very way of life He's invited you into. How can you embrace that spiritual reality without first adopting a spiritual perspective? To enjoy a people beyond yourself, you've got to see the spiritual makeup of the Trinity in community as the most basic building block of God's design—which, again, requires a perspective on things above. And to encounter a purpose beyond yourself, you've got to most want God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in Heaven, which first requires some attention towards Heaven. The Way of Jesus most depends on setting our perspective on the eternal realities of Jesus.

And I know as soon as I say that—especially as so many of us still reel through the trauma of a global pandemic—there are going to be people who say or feel, “Yeah, but what about... today?” What about my needs, or my struggles, right now? What about the relationship breaking my heart or the abuse I'm trying to escape, right now? What about the bills that need to be paid, right now? My credit card company doesn't accept “eternity” as a timeline for making payments! Adopting an eternal perspective doesn't mean you live with your head in the clouds—ignoring all the responsibilities and challenges of today. Jesus wants to meet our needs, but only as we seek to follow Him and not approach Him like a vending machine seeking to meet our needs. Ask yourself how you're looking to relate to Jesus. Are you seeking God's Heavenly blessing on your earthly focus, or are you allowing God to provide earthly blessing to your Heavenly focus? Perhaps, put more simply, Jesus described it this way in Luke chapter 9:

“Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”

It's as we focus on eternity that we experience God working on earth as it is in Heaven.

If you're wondering what that looks like practically, especially as we kick off more than just an annual ministry season but re-launch a church, let me leave you with three simple ways that every single one of us can live lives that outlive us. The first is by including future believers. As we embark on the adventure and challenge of following Jesus—and closing that “Gandhi Gap” the world sees between Christ and Christians—other people find that compelling. Rather than trying to convince your friends and family, co-workers and classmates, teammates and neighbours about Jesus, include them in the life you're devoting to and let Jesus convince them and affect their eternity!

Another way we can all live lives that outlive us is by inspiring future generations. Whether it's formally committing to serve in our church's Family Ministry or informally playing a big sibling or mentor role, as I once heard a pastor say, “Your greatest impact may not be in something you do, but someone you raise.” How could you inspire an emerging generation in ways that will create ripples of impact for all eternity?

Then, a third way involves investing in future impact. This is a delicate one, because the scriptures are clear that the things of this earth—especially brick and mortar-level things—we can't take with us into the next life. But like the scriptures also demonstrate, there are special projects—like the low-income housing and new shelter projects we'll be sharing about in our ‘Hope Lives’ series in November—that get built to serve people in such a trajectory-changing way that the projects themselves have the potential to make an eternal difference, and rather than storing up our treasures more on earth where Jesus says they'll just waste away, we can store up financial treasures in Heaven by investing in these game-changing larger-scale projects together.

One project I've been involved in getting off the ground in recent months is a leadership development ministry here at Southridge called Leaders' Village. Aside from raising the profile of leadership development here at Southridge, Leaders' Village also serves to provide a greater degree of leadership development as Southridge into the surrounding faith and church community—sharing our innovations and approaches to ministry with other churches and leaders. And then, if that wasn't enough, Leaders' Village also exists to partner together with other churches, leaders and ministries to do these two objectives better together than we can alone. Follow us on **@leadersvillage** or check out our new website, leadersvillage.ca to learn more about what God is doing.

The cool part about Leaders' Village is that it provides a landing point for anyone inspired by the book I wrote—that we've been making available at Welcome Centres for everyone to take during this fall kick-off series. So, the story of our lives together can have legacy through *Finding Our Way*, and *Finding Our Way* can stimulate legacy through Leaders' Village, and Leaders' Village can make legacy investments into the cause of Christ across the country and around the world! And to me, what has undeniably been the greatest feedback from the book I've received so far, was when one friend of mine finished it and said, "The most exciting part is that it's not finished!"

At the dawn of more than a new ministry season and re-launch, you can start participating right here and right now in the next chapters of legacy that God is writing in His story of our lives together. But to do that, you have to be clear—and I hope all five of these weeks have made this message unmistakable—that the Church of Jesus Christ is not something that's for you. The Church is the incarnation of Jesus who is the incarnation of God and the incarnation of love and fundamentally exists for the Matteo's more than the Glenn's. Jesus never said, "Come to me and let me serve you to the ignorance of people who need me most." He only, ever, always, said, "Follow me!"

"Follow me!" means embracing the Way of Jesus to a greater degree—with His power, as His people, for His purpose. "Follow me!" means we look past enhancing and upgrading our own privilege and increasingly adopt the way of Jesus to live *for* the people Jesus, when He lived on earth, was *most for*. And to do that, to live out the point of all this—to live beyond yourself—most fundamentally requires a perspective beyond yourself of a potential beyond yourself. We are invited into nothing less than affecting people for all eternity, if we can adopt an eternal perspective to *live lives that outlive us*.