

Gains | The Legacy You Leave

Cal Jernigan | 2 Timothy 2

Alright, good morning Traders Point.

Greetings to all of you at whatever campus you are on. Greetings to all of you. I flew in from Arizona yesterday afternoon. We are no longer in Arizona, let me just say it that way. I texted Aaron when I got here and I just said, “Snow, Aaron? Really snow?”

And he had the audacity, this is your lead pastor, to show me a picture of the sun setting over the Gulf of Mexico from Florida. So I sent him a video of your snowstorm and we called it even.

Seriously, I love Aaron. I’ve become friends with him over the years and feel so blessed to know him. I’ve known of your church. I’ve been here a number of times. Again, I am so excited to be here today. Thank you for being here.

Hey, I want to take you on a journey through some pictures. Sometimes things happened that are so bizarre, you’ve got to notice. Something happened in Toronto, I doubt you’ve heard about this, but it was documented by pictures. So I thought, “I’ll just bring the pictures and show you what happened.”

So here is what happened. At 9 a.m. a man reported a dead raccoon on the sidewalk to the city. That’s no big deal, right? A dead raccoon. The city then responded that they would take care of it. So the raccoon was just kind of hanging out there.

Around noon someone decided they would attach a note to the raccoon. It said, “Rest, dear raccoon, help is on the way from the city.” Six hours later he was found with a flower, a card, and a framed photo. Someone gave the raccoon his own personal hashtag, #deadraccoonto. Around 8 p.m. he was still there, and the flowers began piling up.

One city council member offered, “You know what we ought to do in member of our friend? Leave the bins open.” So this is what they did, they opened up the bins so there was dinner for the other raccoons.

Almost 12 hours later, about 8:20 p.m. the raccoon was still there. Passersby decided to do more, so they started a candlelight vigil. I’m not making this up. Toronto’s animal services showed up around 11 p.m., you can see them. They are coming in the van. Even after he was gone, people still lit candles in his memory. Someone did have the foresight to say, “You know, we just need to remember him,” so they came up with this: FRIEND, NEIGHBOR, RACCOON.

I'm going to ask you a question. After you die, how are you going to be remembered? You're going to come up. They are going to talk about you. What are you going to be remembered for? What are they going to say about you in conversation? When your name is mentioned, what is going to be associated with your name?

I don't know if you have thought about that much. But I want to challenge you to think about it. In what ways are you going to be missed when you're no longer present? What are they going to say?

I want to tell you another story. Did you hear about the guy who died and then became famous? It kind of sounds like a setup for a joke, doesn't it? There is a guy. I'm going to show you a picture of him.

In fact, this is him right here. He died and his family wrote an obituary. The obituary went viral. I want to read it to you. It is four paragraphs, so if you indulge me, let me get through this. It's from his kids and his family. They wrote about their dad.

If you'll allow me. I'm going to tell you right now I've toned it down. I'm not going to read to you what they actually said. It's not appropriate in church. If you'll allow me, I'll try to keep the flavor of what they said.

Leslie Ray Popeye Charping was born in Galveston on November 20, 1942 and passed away January 30, 2017, which was 29 years longer than expected and much longer than he deserved. Leslie battled with cancer in his later years and lost his battle ultimately due to being the horses' behind he was known for (I modified that). He leaves behind two relieved children, a son Leslie Ray Charping and a daughter, Sheila Smith, along with six grandchildren and countless other victims including an ex-wife, relatives, friends, neighbors, doctors, nurses, and random strangers. At a young age, Leslie quickly became a model of bad parenting combined with mental illness and a complete commitment to drinking, drugs, womanizing, and being generally offensive.

Leslie enlisted to serve in the Navy, but not so much in a brave and patriotic way, but more as part of a plea deal to escape sentencing on criminal charges. While enlisted Leslie was Navy boxing champion and went on to sufficiently embarrass his family and country by spending the remainder of his service in the Balboa Mental Health Hospital receiving much needed mental healthcare services. Leslie was also surprisingly intelligent, however he lacked ambition and motivation to do anything other than being reckless, wasteful, squandering the family savings and fantasizing about getting rich quick schemes.

Leslie's hobbies included being abusive to his family, expediting trips to heaven for the beloved family pets, and fishing, which he was less skilled at than the other things previously mentioned. Leslie's life served no other obvious purpose. He did not contribute to society or serve his community, and he possessed no redeeming qualities beside quick-witted sarcasm which was amusing during his sober days.

With Leslie's passing (last paragraph) he will be missed only for what he never did which was being a loving husband, father, and good friend. No services will be held. There will be no prayers for eternal peace, no apologies for the family he tortured. Leslie's passing proves that evil does in fact die, and hopefully marks a time of healing and safety for all.

Wow. This is the most pathetic statement in there: "He will be missed only for what he never did."

How would you like to be remembered for that? It seems like you can take somebody's life and capture it in a sentence. It seems like we just do that. You hear about this guy and you think, "How in the world does a guy live like that?" He will be missed only for what he never did.

There was a guy in the Bible, and you may or may not know of him. It wouldn't surprise me if you didn't. He was an important guy. He was a king. He was the King of Judah. I want to tell you about him because there is a line in the Bible that describes him that I believe is the saddest sentence in the Bible. I'm going to show it to you in just a moment.

Let me explain who he was though. The reason I want to show you this is this sentence. I pray nobody ever says this about you. I pray that nobody ever thinks to say this when you are gone. Because once somebody says it, it can never be unsaid. It won't ever go away.

To understand the sentence, I need to explain a little bit of the family history. This guy was the King of Judah. He inherited it from his father, who was the King of Judah also. His father was a guy named Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was a very good man. Jehoshaphat was a hero. He had laser-clear focus on God. Jehoshaphat led the nation really, really well.

So this guy's issue was not with his dad. His dad was a great example. This guy, his name is Jehoram, he has a son named Ahaziah. So I'm showing you three generations. Ahaziah was a mess. Ahaziah was aligned with Ahab and Jezebel. Ahaziah liked being in bad company and he prided himself on being that kind of a person.

Now we could blame Ahaziah for following the example of his father, but you can't blame Jehoram for that because Jehoram's dad was awesome. So let me show you this verse that sums up the life of the guy in the middle, this guy name Jehoram.

And this is what it says. It is 2 Chronicles 21:20. "Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings."

Now there is a lot in that sentence, did you catch it? Did you catch the sentence that summed up his life? "He passed away to no one's regret." What a horrible way to sum up a life. To no one's regret? Surely his wife missed him. Nope. Not at all. Surely his kids missed him. No. Surely his friends were sorry to see him go. No, not any friends.

He passed away to no one's regret. Nobody could care less that he died. Truth be known, they actually celebrated when he died. They were glad to see him go.

They were so glad to see him go that although the custom was to bury the kings in the City of David and they said: No, not Jehoram. He doesn't deserve to be buried with the other kings. So they said: We're going to put him out farther. He was never about people.

What does one have to do to die such an inglorious death? How does one have to live to be remembered like that? He died to no one's regret. You want to know why? Listen carefully. Because he lived to no one's benefit. That's why. He died to no one's regret because nobody benefited from his life. He made no difference to anybody.

He passed away, to no one's regret. He died to no one's regret because he lived to no one's benefit. And so when he died it was like, "Who cares that he is gone?" He squandered every leadership opportunity. And he was an incredibly powerful person uniquely placed and king over Judah.

Your legacy will be determined by how you give yourself away.

So when I say, "What will be said about you when you are gone?" the answer is all dependent on how you live your life for others and not for yourself. And the truth of the matter is we all have choices to make and your reality is going to be remembered. Did you live for yourself, or did you live for others?

Let me ask you a question. I did not come all the way here to depress you about death, trust me. But at some point, you've got to stop living and start thinking about living and why you are living. What are you living for? What difference is your life going to make?

At some point you've got to quit going forward and stop and think, because you're going to run out of days. There are only so many grains of sand and it's going to pass.

So who is benefitting from your life right now? Who is standing on your shoulders? Who are you lifting up right now? Who are you letting see greater heights because you are helping them? Who are you?

Is your husband being lifted up? Is your wife being lifted up? Are your kids being lifted up? Are people in your church being lifted up? What difference is your life making? That's what I want to talk to you about. And the truth is this stuff gets really, really personal.

I know you don't know me. I want to give you a little bit of the story of my life because you don't know me. Then I'm going to put it in the context.

I want to ask you to think about your dad. I know for some of you, you go, “Oh, my dad. My dad is awesome. I love thinking about my dad. I love my dad.”

Some of you when we talk about your dad have all kinds of stories to tell. And I hope you continue with more and more stories. I hope the thought of your dad brings a smile to your face.

Here’s the reality. It doesn’t for everyone. Some of you when you talk about your dad you go, “Why did you bring him up?” Let’s get real personal, alright? “Why did you bring him up?”

I don’t have any great stories about my dad. I’ve got none. In fact, my dad left when I was three months old. I am a father and when my kids were three months old, I had kind of an existential crisis. “How could you do this to a kid?” That’s my story. So my dad just left.

I’ve never been with my dad as far as I know. I don’t have any relationship with my dad. When I was growing up—and what I am going to describe is going to sound like I am making this up because it is such a different world than the world we live in today. When I was growing up in my neighborhood, everybody had a dad.

I know that sounds bizarre, because that is not the way it is now, but everyone had a dad. Everyone had a dad except me. In fairness, there was another kid who didn’t have a dad. He had a dad who went into the service and got killed in Cambodia. And we all agreed it was an honorable death. His dad was missing, but that was honorable.

My dad was just AWOL. People would come over to my house and say, “Where is your dad,” because it was weird not to have my dad. I go, “I don’t know.”

“What’s your dad like?”

“I don’t know. Come here and I’ll show you.” There was a picture in the hallway of my dad, and I would show them the picture of my dad. I would go, “That’s my dad.”

“Well, where is he? When is he coming home?”

“I don’t know.”

He never came home. I need you to understand that to understand why I am telling you this. When you grow up without a dad you start to realize you are missing something. I felt like I was missing something.

Now, I want to explain something. This is crucial that you understand. I was a Boy Scout in a troop at a church. I would go to Boy Scouts, but then we moved. We moved so far away that I couldn’t get to the Boy Scout troop that was my connection.

This is how I was becoming a man. I was learning stuff, but then we moved and for whatever reason these men who led this Boy Scout troop decided they would loop way out and get me and bring me to the scout meetings. I don't know why they did that. I have no idea, but I am beyond grateful that they cared enough to bother to get me.

There were painful moments growing up without a dad. If you know anything about Boy Scouts, there is this thing called Father and Son Campouts. The Father and Son weekends. All the guys were so stoked. "This is awesome, I'm going with my dad." Except I didn't have a dad. I would wrestle with that and invariably some other family would go, "Let's take him this time."

Now, I don't think this ever happened, at least it didn't happen in front of me. But here is what I think happened. I think the guys got together and said, "Hey, Cal doesn't have a dad. You take him."

"No, we took him last time. It's your turn."

I never heard that, but I was that kid that nobody wanted. Every time there was a Father and Son campout, I got adopted in. I got to go. And I remember it being awkward and painful, but I was included and that was really, really cool.

I know all of this affected me deeply, and I'll tell you how I know it. When I became a high school kid I got invited to a church, a different church. In that church they started talking about God and they started talking about your Father in Heaven.

Timeout. I wanted a dad. Please believe me, I wanted a dad in the worst way. Here is the deal. From the first time I told that story to the last time, there were men who came and went in my mom's life, lots of men.

In fact, she married four different times. Every one of them was dad. They all came busting in. I remember going, "This is not right. This is weird." So I had lots of issues.

When they told me, "You become a believer in God, you get a heavenly Father thrown in," I'm like, "That's a deal breaker. I don't need another one of them. I don't need any more of that." It was really hard for me to understand.

Now listen, your heavenly Father might be very different than your earthly father. You might be so blessed and have an earthly father very similar to your heavenly Father. I don't know. Mine wasn't so I had to overcome all of that. It's been a struggle.

Now, if I try to sum up my dad, I would have to use these words: "He just went missing."

Where did he go? I don't know. He just went missing.

I want to show you something. I hauled this with me on the airplane so I could show you this. This is a book. This is the only thing I've got to connect me to my dad other than genetics. This is it.

When I was five, six, seven, somewhere in there in my life, my dad sent me this book. You can't see it. I know that. It says, *The Treasury of Hunting*.

The reason I wanted to show you this book is that when I was a kid I spent endless hours underneath the covers with a flashlight looking at these pictures imagining what it would be like to be hunting with my dad because this is all I had to touch bases with my dad.

I know these pictures by heart, I have stared at them so many times over the years. This is all I've got of my dad right here. This is it, nothing else.

Here is my question. Why do I still have this book? Why am I holding this book up right now? Why am I telling you this story? Because we all need a dad, we need somebody there. And not all of us have somebody there.

I love to hunt and fish. People in my church go, "Why do you love to hunt and fish so much?" I don't know.

"Did you do a lot of hunting and fishing when you were a kid?"

"Nope. No one to take me. I just grew up loving it."

And to this day I spend all my free time hunting and fishing. It's what I love to do. Does that book have anything to do with it? I don't know. I don't know. I just know I love to hunt and fish.

Could it be possible that such a little investment could change someone's life so dramatically? I don't know. The book probably cost 25 dollars in its day. I don't know. Why do I still hold it?

I want to take you now to the Scripture that really applies to what your church is working through right now, this whole idea of gains. And I want to take you to 2 Timothy 2 and I only want to show you the first two verses. It says it all to me in those two verses, what I'm trying to communicate.

"Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." There is so much in there. Let's just kind of slow that down.

Paul is saying to Timothy: My dear son, Timothy. Now listen, Paul was famously single. He was not married. This was not his biological son. This was a son by choice. This was a young man Paul had taken under his wing. He had invited him into his life. He had basically said: Come run

around with me. I want to raise you. I want to help you grow. I want to be somebody there for you.

“Be strong through the grace that God gives you,” what does that mean? Timothy, take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to you.

Could it be possible, no matter what has happened in your life that the grace of God’s hand has been on you? Even though you didn’t know it. You didn’t understand it. And yet you were the recipient of it?

Could it be God has been watching over you all along, because he loves you that much? Because he maybe is really different than your actual father, but you just haven’t come to understand that yet. Could it be possible?

I want to show you something, if you didn’t catch that in 2 Timothy 2:2. “The things you’ve heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust the faithful people also.”

I want to show you what just happened in four generations. Paul is saying: Timothy, I’m going to hand you some stuff. I’m going to give you some stuff. And Timothy, I want you to find faithful people. What I am giving you, you give it to them.

And when they get it, you encourage them to give it away as well. It’s like this. It’s like a race, it’s a relay race, a baton. You’ve been given something, give it away. Hold it while it is your moment to hold, and then let go of it.

If you know anything about relay races, it’s the pass that the race is won and lost in. Hand it off well. Find somebody to hand it off to. It could be your children. I hope it is. I hope you are there. Hand it off to your children.

But it doesn’t just have to be your children. It can be more than your children. It can be somebody else’s children. Hand it off. Give it away.

If you read the next chapter, I’m getting a little ahead of you here. In 2 Timothy 3, he explains what he gave him. Let me show you.

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured.”

Timothy, you know all about me because we did so much life together. You and I ... You were there for all the highlights and all the low moments of my life. All the good stuff, all the bad stuff, we did it together. Timothy, what we’ve done together, give it away. Make sure somebody else gets it.

I don't think it would be possible for Paul to describe his life and not tell you about Timothy. I don't think he could ever describe who he was without going: Oh, by the way, I've got to tell you about my son Timothy. I've just got to tell you about him.

I don't think Timothy could ever tell you about his life without talking about his dad. No, not that guy. We don't know anything about that guy, but we know about Paul who handed the baton to him and said: It's your turn now son. Run. It's your turn.

Why am I here? Why in the world did I come to the frozen tundra of Indianapolis from Arizona of all places? I plead with you church, don't waste your life. Don't waste your life and don't waste your influence. Don't waste your moment with the baton. Because it will come to an end.

If you waste your influence, you waste your life.

It starts in your home. It starts with your kids. Be there for your kids. Pass the baton to your kids. But church, you've got to understand something. It can't end there. Because if it ends there, all the people like me won't be here later. You've got to open your heart. You've got to open your heart, your house, and your life up to other people.

I stand here today because I was adopted into the church. I stand here today and it's not from my family, but it's from my family who welcomed me in when I was a high school kid. They said, "You belong here. You're one of us."

"I'm an outsider."

"No, no, no you're one of us."

And I want you to stop just a moment. I want you to think, church. Think about all your kids. Not your kids, but all your church's kids. We are living among wrecked homes, lives, and we've got all kinds of issues going on. There are all kinds of young kids growing up with nobody who cares about them, nobody.

We've got teenagers in your church, teenagers on the cusp. They can go one of two ways. If they've got somebody who believes in them, it could turn and be good. Or if they feel like, "The church is like everywhere else..."

You've got room in your heart for a kid. You've got room in your heart for a student. You've got room in your heart to lead a group of people who desperately need a direction.

How do you die to no one's regret? You simply live to no one's benefit. And when you're done, nobody cares because you aren't going to be missed anyway because you made no contribution. If you waste your influence, you've wasted your life.

You know what was so cool about Jesus? He chose a handful of 12. He said: Just hang out with me. Just kind of do life with me. What did that ever amount to? Well, they changed the world. That's what it amounted to. We're here today because they hung out with Jesus.

What world is going to change because you hung out with Jesus?

I want to close this message. I want to tell you two quick stories. The first involves Samuel Johnson. Samuel Johnson is a lot of things, a British play write, a writer, a poet. He was involved in lots of stuff. Anyway, he had a biographer. It's his biographer I want to tell you about.

His biographer was a guy named James Boswell. James Boswell is famous in his own right, but James Boswell was the biographer of Samuel Johnson.

Boswell tells the story of how his life changed one day, one day. He was like, "I'm crystal clear. I know that one day that everything changed for me."

When people asked him, "What was the day?" He said, "It was the day my dad and I went fishing. We went fishing together and we talked. It was awesome. He was there. We just shared. I asked him questions. It was the greatest day of my life."

Someone later had the where-with-all to think about Boswell's father, who also kept a journal. They said, "We should find out what Boswell's father had to say about that day that changed his son's life." They knew exactly the day. They looked it up and this is what his journal said, "Went fishing today with my son, a day wasted."

So, let me bring this back. My dad died about four years ago. I found out about my dad's death about a month after he died. Welcome to my dysfunction. That's when I found out about it.

And I didn't know what to feel when my dad died. I knew I should feel something, but I didn't feel much of anything. I didn't feel much. That's kind of what happens when no effort has been made. You don't feel much.

But my wife came in one day right after he died and she said, "Did you read his obituary?" I said, "No," and she goes, "I looked it up and you should read it."

"I'm not interested."

You know how your wife gets you? You're interested. So my wife looked it up, and I read it. You know what I discovered about my dad? More things that make a big mystery in my life.

Here's what they said about him in his obituary. He loved to hunt and fish. And he taught the Bible to the Sunday school class at his church. And I just went, "What?" Yeah, he loved to hunt, and fish, and he was a Bible teacher.

I also discovered when he died, and again, I don't have a box to put this in. I'm his only biological son. He remarried a long time ago. I thought he had lots of other sons. He didn't. I'm the last living Jernigan in our family. Now, there are more.

How in the world did this happen? How in the world did you check out so badly? As I summed up my dad's life, I first told you he just went missing. Now, in a lot of reflection, you know what I thought about? A different line:

What could have been?

Someone's got to initiate a relationship. Folks I plead with you on behalf of your church, on behalf of your kids, your students, the groups in your church. Be the person who steps up. Don't die to no one's regret. Don't live your life to no one's benefit. People in this church desperately need your influence. Show up.

Could it be as simple as a day fishing? Could it be as simple as a gift one time in a life that changes a life? Yeah. It's a lot easier than I think we think it is. Give yourself away. You will never regret it, and people will talk about it long after you die.

Your legacy will be determined by how you give yourself away.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for Paul and Timothy. Let's start there. We all need somebody like that, somebody who is lifting us up, somebody who is opening doors for us and putting us on their shoulders to help us see what is possible.

God, as we stop now and reflect, we've got to think about whose shoulders are we standing on. How would we be where we are without that person, those people in our life? Who are those people? God, have we communicated to them how much they've mattered to us?

Help us to do that. But as we think about this God, I just pray for us as a church. I pray for this body. I pray that everybody here does a self-evaluation. Is there any room? Any room around the dinner table for some kid? Not theirs, just somebody.

Is there any room in a van to and from school? Is there any room to pick somebody up and care about them? God, we are living in an ever-increasingly broken world. When we say that all we are saying is, "Families are falling apart." So many kids are falling off the edge.

But, in this city, you placed a church, a good church led by a great leader who can make a huge difference. So help us to put it all in perspective and realize what all we've been given to get the baton in our hand and hand it off to the next generation. And may we do this in a way that glorifies you only. We do this in Jesus' name: Amen.