

A legacy of love

Pete & Shelley Aarssen - February 2024

What better time to put a spark in your relationships than February and especially given Valentine's Day. Today, we want to turn your attention to the kind of legacy you want to leave to those coming behind you, whether that be children, other relatives, or your friends. While reflecting on this, we came across an obituary of a man we were happy to come to know. It said, "Dad was purposeful in leaving us with a legacy of humour and laughter. He was intentional in ensuring great moments and memories were being made." That's the kind of legacy we want to leave! That's a legacy of goodness not just goods. Notice we didn't say instead of goods. There's a place for that too but that's often easier to do because as we age, we accumulate things, some meaningful and others not so much. One elder we know in her late 80's has done a good job of decluttering her house and giving away things that she no longer needs nor wants her family to have to deal with after she's gone. That's an example of love too if you think about it. Another couple we know, also had this saying, "We'd rather give with a warm hand than a cold one!" That's also a very good way to live... helping out when the needs arise, and seeing our resources being used by the next generation when we no longer need them. It's freeing to be like this but here's the real question we want to consider in this article: "How can we hand on to successive generations something more valuable than goods?"

We can only give what we have so here's a list of some good qualities that we could try to grow in and gift to those we leave behind:

Tenacity—we don't live in a perfect world; families go through tough times and sometimes relationships are affected. A tenacious grandparent never gives up, whether first taking it to our Lord in prayer or simply trying to keep communication lines open. Wouldn't it be great to be known as someone who never gave up on their people?

Tenderness—this is not a sign of someone in decline but rather of someone who is kind enough to try to understand first, listening to a person before jumping in with quick fixes or with their own opinions.

Sense of Humor—someone with a good sense of humor first, knows how to laugh at themselves and get others to do the same. They are not easily offended and will often be able to use the off-comment as a way to laugh at the whole thing without damaging the relationship. They are witty and know how to read a situation to tell the best joke for that situation. People are naturally drawn to a humorous person and wonder if it is a skill they could get better at and yes, it is!

Cheerfulness - this involves being able to recover quickly from a bad day. It is the person who maintains optimism even when life throws us a curveball. A cheerful tone and pleasant facial expression speaks volumes.

Life-long learner—a curiosity for knowing people, ways of doing things or facts about the world around us. Did you know that Wikipedia has a featured article every day? It's a way of learning something you may not have even thought of looking up but will add richness to your own personal treasury of knowledge and may even trigger further study on the subject.

And the list could go on and on... some suggested reading on this subject is: "Aging, the fulfillment of Life" by Henri Nouwen and Walter Gaffney.