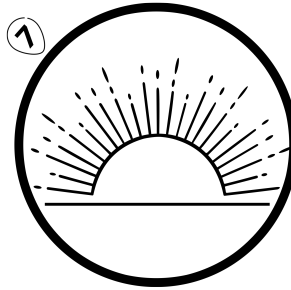




THE PATH

fellowship bible church

Stage 7 — Legacy Living



In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, “Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.” Isaiah 38:1, ESV

Legacy Living - Setting a life in order and leaving behind blessing.

Case Study

Julian is 83 years old and has had a successful career as a CEO of a supply chain startup. Because he prioritized his work over his family, his adult children are relationally distant. Though they are grateful for his hard work, they missed out on having dad at home. They confront Julian about this and he is left with unsettling feelings of needing to make things right with his children. Julian is in Stage 7.

Maria is 62 years old and was just diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer. She has been given 9 months to live. She knows she will go meet Jesus soon but needs to make sure her husband and children are taken care of. She updates her living will and testament, gives clear direction for power of attorney for medical reasons, and writes a series of letters that will live beyond her. Maria is in Stage 7.

Seth is a 34 year old father with 3 young children. He recently buried his own father and is beginning to think about his children’s children. Seth not only begins to intentionally disciple his children but he also sets up investment accounts for them that will grow to mature over time. He buys a new bible for each child that he will spend the year studying and journaling in order to pass them down. Seth doesn’t want to wait until the end of his life to prepare for the end. Seth is in Stage 7.

Overview

Legacy Living is the work of finishing something well — a life, a season, a role, a season of leadership. For many it arrives near the end of life. For others it arrives far earlier, when a diagnosis, a transition, or simply a clear-eyed look at their own mortality prompts them to start setting things in order and passing on what they have been given. Stage 7 is the stage when we are preparing to meet Jesus by

setting our lives, and deaths, in order. The Life of Legacy is a stage in our journey where we make things right and leave behind blessing. A follower of Jesus will make amends for the shortcomings of their lives, pursue healing of broken relationships, and leave behind a spiritual and material legacy that will bless the generations who come behind them. Because there is more life in the rearview, these saints have the ability to teach from their mistakes and failures and allow younger believers to not trip in the same places. It is important to note that while Stage 7 is primarily geared toward senior adults, those who are younger but facing the end of their life may also enter Stage 7 early. Those in Stage 7 are also setting up their family, cherished causes, and churches to be blessed long after they take their last breath. Dying well matters. Those in Stage 7 are living testaments of God's faithfulness seen through them repairing what has been ruptured and leaving a legacy by blessing others with their lives.

Those in Stage 7 have an incredible opportunity to live out the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:28: Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom of many. Those in Stage 7, particularly senior adults, should adopt the posture of being servants who leave behind blessing to future generations. Successive generations will be blessed from a mindset of service and blessing. And in a season where purpose can be difficult to find someone in Stage 7 can find deep and meaningful purpose in serving others. To die well looks like setting our affairs in order, leaving behind blessing, and serving others with our last breath.

Note: Stage 7 functions as a seasonal overlay rather than a sequential rung on The Path. It is not a stage you arrive at once you have completed Stage 6 — it is a season that can come upon a person alongside any Home Stage. One can be in the season of Stage 7 by age or life expectancy. One can also arrive there much earlier — through illness, through a hard providence, or simply through deciding that what is worth passing on should be passed on now rather than later. It can also come upon someone whose Home Stage is Stage 6 and who is looking ahead to leave behind blessing. Another way to think about Stage 7 is this: A Christian may live at Stage 3 but also be in Stage 7 due to their age. Another believer may be in Stage 2 but has received a dire diagnosis which prompts them to think about their loved ones after they are gone. Because Stage 7 is a seasonal overlay, it can be walked simultaneously with any other Stage. For this reason The Path Inventory does not score Stage 7 as a Home Stage; it surfaces Legacy Living as an overlay when a person's answers indicate they are in that season.

What You Carry Into This Stage

Legacy Living carries forward everything formed to this point, and it is that accumulation — not any single stage — that a person passes on.

You cannot hand on a stage. You hand on a life: what you came to believe, what held when it was tested, what you learned about God that someone else has not learned yet. That is why the work of this season is relational rather than administrative. What you carry is only inherited if someone receives it from you.

Biblical Examples

Moses was 80 when God called him to devote his life to the freedom of the Hebrew people. His unique mix of heritage, experience as an Egyptian, and a shepherd uniquely positioned him to serve others until his death.

Anna lived in the temple for most of her life. She served others while longing to see the coming of Messiah. In her old age she was granted the favor of seeing Jesus and declaring praise to God for him. Although advanced in years, she continued to look to God and serve others. One interesting verse in Proverbs gives us wisdom in not delaying too long to set our houses in order. Proverbs 27:12 says, “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” In other words, when there is an opportunity to take action and a forthcoming eventuality, don’t procrastinate. Take advantage of the day and do it today.



The Great Need of This Stage

The great need in Stage 7 is someone who will help you finish on purpose. Not reminiscence. A person willing to have the practical conversations and to receive what you are passing on.

Stage Steps

- 7.1 - Make Things Right
- 7.2 - Provision and Financial Blessing (Family and Church)
- 7.3 - Make Your Arrangements Clear
- 7.4 - Invest Deeply Now
- 7.5 - Pass Your Blessing

7.1 - Make Things Right

You may have relationships that have been strained, broken over time, or in need of repair. These include but aren't limited to spouses or former spouses, children, friends, or other people who you may need to either forgive or repair a relationship where there has been a break. A good rule of thumb is anywhere there is rupture — either on your end or theirs — there needs to be repair. Make things right before you go to meet Jesus. This will take time and most likely will include a series of conversations. Be both urgent in your pursuit and patient as the process takes place.

7.2 - Provision and Financial Blessing (Family and Church)

If you are financially able to leave behind money and/or assets for family, friends, church, or other charities make those desires clear today. You are likely realizing that we can't take any of our worldly possessions with us before we die. Maximize the gifts and talents you've accumulated in your life and bless others with it. If your local church, a particular church, or churches have blessed you consider leaving behind a gift that will live beyond yourself.

7.3 - Make Your Arrangements Clear

Plan your funeral and make your last requests clear. This includes last will and testaments, power of attorney, any allocation of assets, and a service plan for your funeral. If your family and friends have a plan to execute for your funeral, they will be freed up to celebrate your life and not burdened by trying to coordinate every aspect. When people can honor your last wishes in the way you'd like for them to, not only will you be celebrated but they will not be encumbered with a mountain of details.

7.4 - Invest Deeply Now

You still have plenty of gas left in the tank so use it. You have much to offer to others and you still have breath so invest deeply into others while you still can. Retirement from work does not mean you retire from investing in others. Find your purpose, meaning, and potentially longer life by seeing your days as opportunities to climb into someone else's world to help them become all they can be for the glory of God

7.5 - Pass Your Blessing

You have a lifetime of experiences, wisdom, and God's blessing that he has given to you. You recognize that so much of who you are and what you have is attributed to God's grace. Just as patriarchs in the Old Testament blessed their sons and as God blessed Jesus at his baptism, pass a symbolic blessing to the next generation. For you to speak words of life and encouragement over your children and their children or your spiritual children will be a spiritual lodestone for them. Lay hands on them and pass the blessing of your life onto them.

Guides

Stage 7 asks for more than one guide, because finishing well runs along three lines at once and no single person carries all three.

A community committed to one another's care

Not a program — a group of people who have decided in advance that no one among them will do this alone. In practice it means people who will show up, drive you places, sit with you, and be present to your family when you cannot be. Most of us assume this will materialize when the time comes. It does not. It is built years earlier, by being that kind of person to someone else first.

A pastor

Two conversations here, and both are gifts to the people you leave behind. The first is your funeral — plan it. Say what you want read, sung, and spoken, so your family is not guessing during the worst week of their lives.

The second is harder and matters more. Let your pastor help you say the things that still need saying: I am sorry. I forgive you. I love you. Almost no one regrets having said these. A great many people regret not having said them, or not having heard them said to them.

A financial coach or advisor

Get the dispersal of your assets clear, documented, and known. This is not about the size of an estate. It is about whether your intentions survive you or become an argument. Ambiguity here does real damage to families, and it is entirely preventable.

"Being" Milestones Of Stage 7

Stage 7: Domain Milestones

Spiritual - Walk with God closer than you ever have to prepare to see him.

Relational - Repair, heal, invest, and bless those close to you.

Emotional - Own your mistakes, regulate your inner world, and practice gratitude.

Intellectual - Fight loneliness and purposelessness by investing in others.

Physical - Stay active outside (walking, jogging, bird watching, gardening.) and be grateful for your body today — not your body of the past.

Exercise: On A Scale of 1-10, what score would you give yourself for each of these domains? What lesson from the life and ministry of Jesus will help you take a step toward holistic health?

Spiritual -

Relational -

Emotional -

Intellectual -

Physical -

“Feeling” Milestones Inventory of Stage 7

1. Where can you extend grace and forgiveness to yourself and others for past hurts?

2. How can you cultivate peace in your heart and mind in these last days?

3. How has life humbled you? What core lessons can you pass on to others?

4. Has your life reflected God’s kingdom? If so, how? If not, how can you change that?

Taking Your Next Step

Leave a Legacy of Blessing and Provision

You’ve watched God do things in your life that can only be attributed to his kindness towards you. You’ve seen him use you in the lives of others and watched him prove himself to be faithful. Now, you are in the position to be God’s provision and blessing to those who will outlive you. Repair what has been ruptured relationally, set your affairs in order, and leave a legacy of blessing by investing in others and giving your family and friends the gift of clarity.

Growth Step: Set Your House in Order and Pass Your Blessing

Finishing well is mostly practical, and the practical parts are the ones people avoid. Make the arrangements clear. Repair what can still be repaired, and say plainly what you have left unsaid. Then find the people who will receive what you are passing on and give it to them while you are here to watch them take it. A blessing left in a document is a smaller thing than a blessing spoken to a face.

Owning Your Growth

Relationships to Repair:

My Last Wishes Are Clear : Yes _____ No _____

I Will Invest In _____'s Life.

Questions for Stage 7 Analysis

1. What is the Gospel and how can you be sure to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant"?

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2. In what ways can you live a spiritually distinct life, free of the anxieties of the world around you?

3. Define humility and write what you've learned about it over the course of your life.

4. Considering the time between your salvation and today: How has Jesus conformed you into his image over the course of your life?

Resources

- Finishing Our Course With Joy - J.I. Packer
- Aging: The Fulfillment Of Life - Henri Nouwen
- Talking With God In Old Age - Missy Buchannan
- Rethinking Retirement: Finishing Life For The Glory of Christ - John Piper
- Aging With Grace - Sharon Betters
- Not Old, Not Young, Not Done: Following Jesus In Your 50's and 60's - Christopher Ash