

Feb. 1, 2016

Dear Grandkids,

This feels weird! I'm writing a letter not to be read by any of you for several years – and to at least one of you I've never even met. What's even stranger is that as you read this, I'm not even sure I will be alive at that time.

It's February 1, 2016. Payton and Eden, you guys are now eight years old and the youngest of you (yet to be born or named) is due in about two months.

As each of you turn 12 years old, I will give you this letter to read (assuming I am alive). If I am already in heaven, I have asked your parents to give it to you on my behalf. Included with this letter you will find a packet with several resources I want you to have. I have explained these resources in detail. Without these resources, I would be writing a letter so long you would never finish reading it.

I hope I have been a good Pops and have made our times together fun. As a preacher, many think I must be serious and somber all the time. I hope you have known me other than this.

When Matt was a little boy, I was laying with him on his bed one night just talking. I asked him a very serious question. "If I were to die and you were then to make a new friend who asked you to describe your dad in one word, what would it be?" I had in my mind numerous adjectives, any of which I would have loved to hear. And then he answered. "Oh that's easy. 'Nutsie!'" Instantly, the wind was taken out of my sail. But then CiCi gave me a different perspective. She explained why that was a great compliment – probably suggesting that I was a fun dad. That later became my goal with you guys – I'm sure less successful than I have hoped but nevertheless, somewhat of a fun Pops.

I've enjoyed "chase", "Hide and seek" and "touch the headboard" on many occasions with most of you. Your Pops as "monster" has almost lost his voice on numerous occasions as a result of growling when chasing you. I have tickled some of you until you could take it no longer.

Extra-curricular activities are just now beginning for some of you. I proudly watch your activities, seeing myself as the most blessed man alive.

I've traveled to over 40 countries of the world, been with many world famous people and received numerous honors, but nothing outside of my faith compares to the joy and blessing of having CiCi as my wife, your parents as my kids and you guys as my grandkids.

I truly hope that my family is my greatest legacy. And I know my legacy (as will be yours) is only as good as its roots are deep in spiritual maturity.

CiCi and I pray for you, beyond all other things, that you will make your greatest aim in life to know and love Christ.

In this regard allow me to leave you with the best counsel I can give you. Know that life is complex and often overwhelming. You can't do everything and certainly can't do everything well. But you can do a few things well.

I am more convinced every year of my life that there are three priorities which, when faithfully practiced, lead to an unusually prosperous and blessed life (not necessarily without much pain and hardship). I am yet to meet the exception.

Be faithful with these three priorities and I will promise you that at an old age of life, others will look at you and say, "That's the life I wish I had."

So here they are:

1) Be a Sincere Worshipper

Make it your practice to meet with God each day in a time of personal worship. Keep it simple and honest. Read or study God's Word. Or memorize some Scripture. And talk to God as you would with your best friend. And also worship corporately (with others) every Lord's Day. Don't buy the modern and popular lie that the Lord's Day commandment is no longer one of the 10.

2) Be a Faithful Disciple Maker

By this I mean follow the great commission of Jesus found in Matthew 28:19-20. Always be mixing it up with non-Christians with the intent of leading them into a relationship with Jesus. Get equipped with a helpful tool to prepare you and to give you confidence to do this. (You may want to one day check out the tool I use explained in my "Express Your Faith" training).

Remember, you can't keep your faith strong without giving it away. And note, I didn't say "fruitful" disciple maker. I said "faithful", though if faithful, you will be fruitful to a certain extent. But you don't have to be extremely fruitful in order to be faithful. God will determine the extent of fruit.

3) Be an Effective Disciple Trainer

Disciple making is taking someone from unbelief to belief. Disciple training is taking someone from belief to maturity. While you are young, find an older person in the faith who will take you under their wing and mentor you spiritually. Let that person lead you as a coach. As you mature and come out from under your coach's wing, find a few folks younger in the faith than you and labor in their lives in order to take them to greater maturity.

As I have previously said, you can't keep it unless you give it away. I know this from experience. As a 9th grader, I was invited to be in a discipleship group led by an older Christian. After two years, he told me I needed to disciple a few kids younger than me. I reluctantly did so. And now 49 years later, I am about to begin my 50th consecutive year of laboring in the lives of a few men.

If I were told I would have to give up either discipling a few men each year or pastoring Perimeter, which I started and dearly love, it would be an easy decision. I would resign Perimeter within seconds. I would do so not because my enjoyment of discipling is greater than pastoring Perimeter. It would be because discipling a few year after year, who in turn disciple others, will in the long run make the biggest impact.

Always be training a few to train others. This is the plan Jesus used.

Well, I've gone on way too long. I can't tell you how much I love you guys. If I'm in heaven now, I'll be talking to Jesus about you all, asking Him to bless you like crazy. If I am old and decrepit (look it up!) and out of my mind, know that I still love you (even if I can't express it).

I'm finding it hard to write right now because I am crying too hard – tears of joy to be privileged to be your “Pops”, and tears of sadness because I know it is quite possible that even as some of you read this letter, I won't get to see you grow up to be great men and women of God.

So let me just say it one more time – I love you!!

Pops