

Lessons I Learned From My Father

Jon Redmond

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For the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations and parenthesized Scripture references have been placed in italics.

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to my father, Charles Redmond. He's been my pastor for most of my life, and he's been my boss for over half of my life.

The thing I admire most about my dad is that he's the same at home as he is at church. He doesn't put on a show in public. With him, what you see is what you get. He's the real deal, and he's a straight shooter. You never wonder what he's thinking about something. He's never spent five minutes of his life trying to be politically correct. Instead, he has always sought to be true to the Bible, true to his convictions, and true to his family.

His priorities are simple: *God, family, church*. He has done a tremendous job through the years of keeping those priorities in order. I respect him greatly for that.

I love you, Dad. Thanks for everything!

Introduction

Heroes are hard to find. We look for them in the world of sports, entertainment, and politics. We want someone to look up to, someone to admire, someone to emulate. When I was growing up, some of my earliest heroes were Coach Tom Landry, Roger Staubach, Tony Dorsett, Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Reverend Billy Graham, and Dr. W.A. Criswell.

My main hero from Hollywood was Arthur Fonzarelli (“The Fonz”) from *Happy Days*. When my brother, Joel, and I were young, our parents took us on a trip to Washington D.C. While there, we toured the Smithsonian Institution. There we were with Orville and Wilbur Wright’s iconic airplane, along with hundreds of thousands of other items of great historical significance, and all I wanted to see was “Fonzie’s” leather jacket! After hours of looking for it, we finally found it. There I stood gazing at pop culture royalty. I was within a few feet of “The Fonz’s” jacket. This was a sacred moment. If only I could have grown up to be that cool!

As inspiring as those childhood heroes were to me, I’m not kidding when I say that my dad topped them all. From early on, he has always been in a category all of his own in my eyes.

Since I was very young, I have always loved to hear my dad preach. I remember going with him one night to a revival service in Knoxville, Tennessee. I don't remember the name of the church, but it wasn't the type of church service I was accustomed to because when he got to preaching, the people got to shouting. The congregation eventually got so animated that it frightened me. In fact, I got so scared that I went up into the choir loft and hid under one of the chairs during the sermon. That didn't stop anything, though. He kept preaching, and they kept shouting. Finally, after much time, the service mercifully ended. But I was there, taking it all in, listening to my hero.

My dad used to attend the Southern Baptist Convention every year. Sometimes our entire family went. Some years, though, either just my brother or I went with him. We rotated years. Knowing that young boys needed a little adventure to balance out the convention preaching and politics, he always planned something fun for us to do. I went with him to St. Louis for the convention on two separate occasions, and he took me to a Cardinals baseball game both times. Another time, when the convention was in Houston, he took me to AstroWorld. I also got to meet Billy Graham that week. I was only nine years old, but

meeting Dr. Graham made a strong impression on me. He had “a presence” about him.

In the late 1980s, when the convention was in Las Vegas, Dad took Joel to a Sugar Ray Leonard boxing match. I’m not sure if that outing was sanctioned by the Southern Baptist Convention, but he and my brother certainly enjoyed it!

When my dad was in high school, he was a Second-Team All-American football player. (At least that’s his claim!) He wore #47. When I was a junior in high school, I can still remember the day when we were selecting our jersey numbers for the upcoming season. When it was time for me to choose my number, I had two choices. I could either wear #27 or #43. I chose #43 because #43 was the closest number to my dad’s #47. I wanted my number to be as close to his number as possible.

In this booklet, I want to share twenty of the greatest lessons I ever learned from my dad. Some lessons were intentionally taught; others weren’t intentional at all. He didn’t even know that he was teaching them. But my brother and I were watching, and along the way we picked up on a lot of things. My prayer is that these lessons will help busy people with demanding schedules to keep things in proper perspective.

Lessons I Learned From My Father

1. There's no substitute for just being there.

A lot of “preachers’ kids” end up resenting their father (and the church) because they feel like their father put the work of the church and the needs of the people above their needs. They feel as though their father was more committed to the church than he was to them. Thankfully, Joel and I never felt that way.

In the 1970s, we lived in Lenoir City, Tennessee. Dad pastored the First Baptist Church there from 1973 to 1981. Lenoir City is a small town of approximately 18,000 people located about twenty-five miles from Knoxville. Joel and I attended Nichols Elementary School which was only a few blocks from the church. Some days my dad would drop us off at school on his way to work. On other days, my mom would. As a general rule, my mom picked us up after school, but on certain days my dad picked us up.

What Joel and I didn't know until many years later was that on the days my dad picked us up that, after he played football with us in the vacant lot next to our house (which we called “Redmond Field”), and after our family had dinner together, and after Joel and I went to

bed, Dad would go back to church and work for two or three hours on his sermons and on his office work. He made up at night the time he had given to us during the day.

As we grew older, he remained equally present in our lives. From 1981 to 1990, he pastored the First Baptist Church in Sulphur Springs, Texas. Dad was at every football game, basketball game, baseball game, and track meet. Sometimes he even showed up to watch practice. There might have been times when he was too present! But he was there, watching every bit of it, not because he had to be, but because he wanted to be. He was invested in our lives.

In 1990, he became the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. I was already attending Baylor University by then, and my brother eventually joined me there. During our college years, our parents would often drive to Waco just to have a meal with us, watch a ballgame, and spend the night.

In 1992, I graduated from Baylor and began my master's level work at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth. The transition from college to seminary was difficult for me. I experienced a loneliness I had never known before. I'll never forget one

cold, wintry afternoon in 1993 when I was at my lowest low. I had finished classes for the day and was walking back to my apartment. I looked across an open field on the seminary campus, and I saw a familiar figure in the distance. It was my dad. When I got to him, I said, “What are you doing here?” He responded, “I was in the area, and I wanted to see if you would like to get something to eat.” He had flown from Houston to Dallas, rented a car, and driven to Ft. Worth. He spent the night with me in my apartment and returned to Pasadena the next day. But when I needed to see a familiar face the most, he was there.

There’s no substitute for just being there. My dad has always been there for our family. I encourage you to be there for your family. They probably won’t remember what you said or what you did, but they’ll always remember that you were there.

2. Look for creative ways to manage stress.

Stress is unavoidable. If you try to avoid stress, you’ll end up even more stressed. The stress you create by trying to avoid stress is often greater than the stress you’re trying to avoid. You don’t defeat stress by avoiding it. You face stress head-on by balancing it out

with something enjoyable. My dad figured this out back there somewhere.

When we lived in Sulphur Springs, we were eighty miles from Dallas. If church members had serious health situations, they often ended up in a hospital in Dallas. If they stayed long enough, a pastoral visit was usually necessary. Often times, my dad would drive to Dallas during the workday to make those visits. The time that took, though, was significant. Traveling one hundred and sixty miles roundtrip to visit a hospital is not always possible during a workday if you're preaching funerals, visiting nursing homes, leading staff meetings, or having appointments with people. So there were plenty of times our family would go to Dallas on Saturdays. Joel and I thought we were just going to Dallas to watch a movie, go to the mall, or eat at a special restaurant and that we were going to "stop by a hospital on the way." In reality, my dad really needed to visit a hospital, but he and my mom planned the day in such a way that it was fun and not stressful. We thought everybody visited hospitals. We thought that was just what people did on certain Saturdays. What else would you do on the way to a movie?

I have to give my mom a lot of credit here for not making my dad feel guilty about doing

his job. She was right there in the middle of it with him. We never felt the tension some pastors' families feel between "family time" and "church time." There were certainly set times for both, but there was also the sense that part of being a family is serving the Lord together. We didn't view making hospital visits in Dallas as something that took away from family time. We viewed making hospital visits in Dallas as something that we, as a family, got to do together.

You'll have to adapt this illustration to your own family context, but I encourage you to look for simple ways to add a little something fun to something that's stressful. Involve your family in your work as much as possible, especially when your kids are young. And look for ways to do church and ministry projects together as a family. Those outings don't take away from family time; they enhance it.

3. *A call to serve is a call to prepare.*

My father was twenty-seven years of age when God called him into the ministry. He was established in the business world at the time. He had managed a service department at a Dodge dealership and had been an insurance adjuster for Allstate. He was working for my grandparents (my mom's parents) at the time

God called him into the ministry. They owned a dry-cleaning company in East Point, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. He enjoyed his job there and was as content as he could be. My mom worked for Delta Airlines, so they were doing pretty well financially.

Other people noticed God's call on my dad's life long before he did. He and my mom taught a Sunday School class for young married couples in their church. She always said that he was a natural and that the people in the class loved his teaching.

One Sunday night after church, my parents invited their good friends, Fred and Patsy Funches, to their house for some refreshments. Fred was the assistant pastor of my parents' church. He said to my dad: "Charles, have you ever thought about entering the ministry? It seems like God might be calling you into that type of work." My dad said, "I just don't think that's God's will for my life." Fred responded, "I don't think you have a clue about God's will." My dad said, "What do you mean?" Fred said, "Take your Bible and show me where it talks about how to know God's will." He was unable to do so. Fred sensed God's calling on my dad's life, and he confronted him about it. To be honest, it kind of made my dad mad, but a seed had been planted in his heart. It wasn't

too long after that conversation that my dad, in 1967, surrendered his life to preach.

As he and my mom made that commitment together, they knew that eventually my dad would have to attend seminary. The problem was that years earlier he had quit college. In order to get into seminary, he would have to go back and complete his college education.

At about this time, Providence Baptist Church in Rico, Georgia (not far from Atlanta), invited my dad to supply-preach one Sunday. After that experience, the door opened for additional preaching opportunities there, and the church eventually called him as pastor.

So now, he was pastoring a wonderful country church and taking classes at Georgia State University. He was in a biology class one day, and the students had been given the assignment of dissecting a cat. He thought to himself, "I'm already pastoring a church. God hasn't called me to dissect cats. He's called me to preach." He walked out of the classroom, went down the hall, and called my mom from a pay phone. He expressed his frustration to her and told her that he was going to quit college again. She said to him, "Charles, God has called you to preach. Part of what's involved in that call is preparation. Eventually we've got to

go to seminary, but first you've got to finish college. Now you get back in that biology class and dissect that cat to the glory of God!" He wisely complied.

He graduated from Georgia State University, and in the spring of 1970, after almost three years at Providence Baptist Church, my parents and I (I was only seven months old) left all of our family in Georgia and moved to Ft. Worth, Texas, so my dad could attend seminary.

My dad received his theological education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for his master's degree and later at Luther Rice Seminary for his doctorate. He prepared. He did what he didn't want to do in the short term so he could do what God had called him to do in the long term. He made a sacrifice, and so did my mom. Well over fifty-five years later, by the grace of God, they are still actively serving the Lord together. The preparation, though, came first.

4. Be faithful where you are.

Not long after God had called my dad into the ministry, before we moved to Texas (and before he even became the pastor of Providence Baptist Church), a door providentially opened for him to speak to a group of ladies at the

Arrow Shirt Factory in Atlanta every Thursday morning before the ladies started their workday. It was an early morning service (they met at 7:00am), and there were about two hundred ladies present.

My dad took that assignment seriously. He prepared. He prayed. And he showed up on time. It wasn't a glamorous assignment. He was speaking in a shirt factory, not in a prestigious church. But it was an opportunity to preach, and he was faithful in that assignment.

I encourage you to be faithful right where you are. Walk through the doors God opens for you. Don't try to open your own doors, but if God opens a door, walk through it. Be faithful in that assignment. Your *future responsibilities* are directly linked to your *present faithfulness*.

5. Sometimes you have to leave what's familiar and step into the unknown.

When God called Abraham, He said, "*Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you*" (Genesis 12:1). That wasn't an easy thing for Abraham to do. Leaving the known and stepping into the unknown is never easy. If you've ever left your family, you know that moving is hard.

My parents experienced the pain of moving in the spring of 1970. They packed everything up and headed to Texas. It was time to begin seminary. As I mentioned, I was so young that I have no memories of that move. It was easy for me! But it was difficult for them. They were both very close to their parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Their lives had largely revolved around their families. Leaving them was hard. There were other seminaries closer to Georgia than Southwestern, but Southwestern was the one they felt led to attend.

In a very real sense, moving to Texas was one of the first “tests” my parents faced in the ministry. It would have been easier to stay in Georgia. They were already serving in a good church, and family was close by. But they knew in their hearts that the cloud of God’s guidance was leading them in a different direction.

Sometimes God does that. Sometimes He leads us to move. Perhaps God is leading you to leave the familiar and step into the unknown. Or maybe He isn’t. Moving or staying put is not really the issue. The issue is being obedient to God. Let me ask you this question: *Would you be willing to move if God told you to?* That’s the real question. If you say “No” to that question, there’s a problem. There’s a serious problem. There’s a *spiritual* problem.

We have to be open to God's leadership whatever that leadership might be. Sometimes the cloud of God's guidance stays where it is. Sometimes it moves. We have to follow the cloud regardless of its direction.

Make a commitment to live your life under the cloud of God's guidance and then let God determine the location of the cloud. You can't go wrong if you're under the cloud, and nothing will really be right if you're not under it.

6. *Where God guides, God provides.*

Not long before my parents and I moved to Texas, my dad's home church (the church he was a member of during his teenage years) invited him to preach one Sunday night so he could share what God was doing in our family's life. He preached that night and explained how God was leading us to Ft. Worth, Texas, so he could attend seminary.

In the congregation that night were two sisters who were traveling from Alabama to Ft. Worth for their niece's wedding. These were godly ladies, and they just wanted to be in church on a Sunday night. So they got off the interstate and found a church. There they sat, in

an unfamiliar church, listening to my dad share his testimony.

When the service ended, they introduced themselves to my parents, and they told my dad that their brother, Dr. James Coggin, was serving as pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Ft. Worth and that he was looking for someone like my dad to be his assistant. My dad thought the ladies were extremely kind, but he didn't think much more about it.

Not long after that, my dad received a letter from Dr. Coggin telling him how much his sisters had enjoyed visiting with him and with my mom. He also told my parents to come introduce themselves to him after a Sunday service at Travis Avenue once we arrived in Ft. Worth. Well, after moving to Ft. Worth, my dad actually supply-preached for a friend in Dallas for our first few Sundays in Texas. Then, finally, our family attended Travis Avenue.

After the service, my mom said to my dad, "We need to go up and meet Dr. Coggin." My dad said, "I don't feel comfortable doing that." The size of Travis Avenue (the sanctuary seated well over three thousand people) overwhelmed my parents. They were from much smaller churches, and my dad especially just didn't feel comfortable in that setting. Thankfully, though,

he listened to my mom, and they introduced themselves to Dr. Coggin who welcomed them and then said to my dad, “Boy, where have you been? I’ve been looking for you. Come to my office tomorrow at 2:00pm so we can talk.”

So, the next day at 2:00pm, my dad was in Dr. Coggin’s office. The legendary pastor said to my dad, “I’ve done some background checking on you. You’re just the kind of person I need to be my assistant. Charles, I have three daughters, but no sons. I want you to be my son in the ministry.” And just that quickly, my dad became the assistant pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church. He remained in that position throughout his two and a half years in Ft. Worth as a seminary student.

God’s provision wasn’t just seen *vocationally*, though, it was seen *financially* as well. My dad’s uncle, Parks Towns, was a CPA in Athens, Georgia, for many decades. Each year during tax season, Parks would drive to the Atlanta area and do my parents’ taxes. A couple of months before we moved to Texas, he finished doing their taxes, and he said this to my dad: “Charles, I think you’ve lost your mind to leave Georgia and go to Texas. You’ve got a baby. You have no family out there. How are you going to live?” My dad said, “Well, we’ve got enough money saved to live for one

year. That will give me enough time to adjust to seminary life. Then I'll get a job at a grocery store or somewhere else after that."

Parks asked him *where* we would live. Dad explained that there was seminary housing across the street from the seminary campus. Parks inquired about the cost. My dad said the apartment rent was \$95 a month. Parks said, "Well, I really do think you've lost your mind, but I admire you for doing what you think God is leading you to do." And then, on the spot, he wrote my dad a check and said, "This will pay for your first year's rent. I'll send you an additional check for the remaining rent at the appropriate time." And he did just that. A financial burden was lifted. The apartment rent was paid in full.

A few Sundays before our family moved to Texas, a man named Mr. H. H. Holton and his wife, Dot, attended Providence Baptist Church to hear my dad preach. Mr. Holton owned the Dodge dealership where my dad had worked.

After the service, Mr. Holton gave my dad an envelope. He said, "Open this, Charles, when you get to Texas." When Dad eventually opened the letter, he found six black-eyed peas enclosed. Then he read the letter which instructed him to mail Mr. and Mrs. Holton two

black-eyed peas immediately and then two black-eyed peas each year for the next two years on New Year's Day. So, Dad curiously mailed them two black-eyed peas. Not long after that, my parents received a check from the Holtons for \$2,000. This was repeated the following two years. Each pea was worth \$1,000. In the course of two and a half years, the Holtons gave my parents \$6,000.

In a very short amount of time, God had given my dad a job that far exceeded his expectations, paid for our apartment rent for the entirety of our time in Ft. Worth, and given my parents \$6,000 for living expenses. These are just some of the stories that I grew up hearing. And these experiences helped me to learn at an early age that *where God guides, God provides*.

7. Be a giver.

God provides for us not just so *our* needs will be met, but also so we can help meet the needs of *others*. My dad graduated from Southwestern in December of 1972. The next month, he became the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lenoir City, Tennessee. When we lived in Ft. Worth, my mom drove a Dodge, and my dad drove a Volkswagen. As graduation approached, my dad sold his Volkswagen to a seminary friend for a very low price. Another

seminary friend wanted to buy the Dodge. My dad said to him, “I’ll make a deal with you. If you’ll drive us to the airport in Dallas so we can catch our flight to Atlanta so we can go home and visit our family, we’ll give you the Dodge.” The man happily made that deal and drove us to the airport. Once there, the car became his. The four of us (my brother was born in Ft. Worth) flew home to Atlanta. And my dad’s friend received a free car.

Giving has always been a big part of my parents’ lives. They give of their time and of their resources. Dad always taught Joel and me that you can’t outgive God. There is something about giving that blesses *the giver* as well as *the recipient*. And there is something about giving that puts us in position to receive even more. The Bible says, “*A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed*” (Proverbs 11:25, NIV).

Interestingly and unexpectedly, when we arrived in Atlanta to spend a few days with our family before moving to Tennessee, my mom’s parents gave my parents a car. It was a Chrysler. It wasn’t a new car, but it was newer than the Dodge my parents had given away. You simply can’t outgive God. When He leads you to give something away, He always has something even better in mind for you.

8. Be enthusiastic about your work.

Our years in Tennessee were wonderful. My first memories in life were formed there. God blessed those years in unbelievable ways. The church tripled in attendance. Many were saved. And there was a sweet, sweet spirit in that place.

My dad was thirty-one years old when he became pastor there, so youth was definitely on his side. But not all thirty-one-year-olds are as enthusiastic as he was. He preached with enthusiasm, pastored with enthusiasm, witnessed with enthusiasm, and led our church with enthusiasm.

Over fifty years and two pastorates later, he still has that same enthusiasm. He may not have youth on his side anymore, but he still has enthusiasm and energy. He's excited about what God has called him to do, and he's enthusiastic about the opportunities he has to serve others and lead the church.

When my dad was in his early twenties, he used to go to the First United Methodist Church in Atlanta a lot on Sunday nights to hear their pastor, Dr. Pierce Harris, preach. Dr. Harris had been a semi-professional baseball player. My dad was drawn to Dr. Harris because he was a

plain-spoken man. He wasn't an orator, but he spoke from his heart. One night he preached a sermon about how to never work. He said this: "Find something you enjoy doing so much that you would do it for free. Prepare yourself so well to do it that somebody will pay you to do it. That way, you'll never have to work."

Dr. Harris talked about how most young boys (himself once included) like to play baseball. He said that as kids they would play all day long in the summertime out in an open field somewhere. They played until they either broke the bat or lost the ball. Major league players love to play baseball, too, he explained, but they have prepared themselves so well that people actually pay them to do it. Dr. Harris encouraged those in attendance that night to be like those major league players...to find something in life they enjoy so much that they would do it for free and then to prepare themselves so well that they could make a living doing what they love to do.

For my dad, it wasn't baseball. It was pastoring a church. He loves what he does, and he does it with all of his heart.

I encourage you to do the same. Spend your life *enjoying* your work, not just *enduring* it. Do what you do with enthusiasm and energy.

9. Deflect attention away from yourself.

When we were in Tennessee, my dad led our church to build an all-purpose building. It had a basketball court, a walking area, a game room, and classrooms to meet in. In today's churches, buildings like this are common. But in the 1970s, that wasn't necessarily the case. What the church in Tennessee built was truly state-of-the-art for its time.

We paid for that building by selling bricks. Each brick cost \$500. Many years later, Dad would lead the First Baptist Church in Pasadena to pay for our Worship Center by selling seats. The seats were \$5,000 each. From \$500 bricks to \$5,000 seats. Inflation has taken a toll! Anyway, the bricks were all sold, and the all-purpose building was paid for.

There was a group of leaders in the church who wanted to name the new building in honor of my dad. While he was touched by that gesture, he refused. He has never wanted his name on any building. About this time, a very respected and godly man in the church died. His name was Harvey Sands. My dad preached his funeral, and in the funeral message he said, "We need to name our new building: 'The Harvey Sands All-Purpose Building.'" After he said that, there was no question about whose

name would be on the building. That all happened when I was really young, but the fact that my dad wouldn't let that building be named after him made an impression on me.

We, too, should learn to deflect the attention away from ourselves and onto the Lord and onto others. My dad was aware of the fact that pastors naturally get enough attention as it is; he wasn't trying to drum up any more. Neither should we. Be content to let somebody else be the center of attention. Deflect the attention away from yourself. Let the building have someone else's name on it.

10. *Work hard. There's no excuse for laziness.*

As I mentioned earlier, we should enjoy our work...but we still have to actually work. Laziness is an abomination to God, and I think my dad feels the same way about it. I've heard him tell staff members: "If you run out of something to do, get a baseball bat and knock out the glass in your window. Then replace the window." He didn't mean that literally, of course, but the point was made.

My dad is a hard worker. He's up early, and he works late. I guess I began to notice this during the 1980s when he pastored in Sulphur Springs. We had a wonderful experience in that

church and in that town, and I was old enough by then to be able to notice how hard of a worker my dad was.

While we were there, we built a house. An electrician in town, who was also a faithful member of our church and a dear friend of our family, Charles Mahaffey, told my dad that he would wire the house for free if my dad would drill the holes. My dad agreed to do that, and he was up even earlier than normal to get to the construction site and drill those holes while it was still dark...long before Joel and I even woke up. Then he came back home to help my mom prepare breakfast. (He's always been very active in the preparing and cleaning up of meals.) After that, his workday began.

The Lord blessed the church there with phenomenal growth. The church was, in many ways, the hub of activity for the town. It was an exciting time. And I guess since I was a young teenager, I was beginning to learn something about work myself.

My dad explained to me that as a young man I needed to start working. So, before I was even old enough to drive, I started mowing yards. I would load the lawnmower in the trunk of my mom's car, and she would drive me to mow someone's yard. An hour or so later, she

would pick me up. When I turned sixteen, I got a pickup truck, and my brother and I mowed yards all over Hopkins County for the next several years. If the rain got us behind, my dad would help us get caught up on Saturdays. Work is something that was modeled for us, taught to us, and expected of us. I'm grateful for that.

11. *Doing right is not always easy, but doing right is always right.*

In 1990, our family moved to Pasadena. I would have to say that this was a difficult move because Joel was a senior in high school at the time. My dad moved to Pasadena in January while my mom and brother stayed in Sulphur Springs until June so Joel could graduate. A lot of commuting back and forth took place during those months, but the move had nonetheless been made. I was already at Baylor, so the move wasn't as hard on me as it was on the rest of the family.

I think the concern my parents had was that Joel and I wouldn't really have a hometown or a home church to come home to. We were entrenched in all aspects of life in Sulphur Springs, so this was just a new beginning in a more challenging season of life.

The people in Pasadena were extremely welcoming of us. They went out of their way to express kindness and love to our family. We felt like this was our new home, and we were getting established in our new surroundings.

Not too long after my dad had become pastor, the church elected a Long-Range Planning Committee to study what the church should do in the future. Should the church remain at its current location, or should it one day relocate to the southeastern part of the city where much new growth was taking place? That was the “million-dollar question” at First Baptist Church in the early 1990s. The church voted to relocate, but the vote wasn’t unanimous. There were 67.6% of the members who voted to relocate, and there were 32.4% who voted not to. Thankfully, many who voted *not* to relocate stayed in the church and are still very active in the church to this day. Others left. And that’s okay. People have to do what they feel God is leading them to do.

Our family’s move to Pasadena wasn’t easy, and the church’s move across town wasn’t easy either. But God has affirmed and reaffirmed over and over again that both moves were His will. And I learned a valuable lesson through those two moves: *Doing right is not always easy, but doing right is always right.*

12. Criticism is the inevitable mark of leadership.

Nobody likes to be criticized, but criticism is inevitable...especially for leaders. Early on in the relocation, my dad received his fair share of criticism, and some of it was painful. One night, he said to my mom, "This relocation is overwhelming me. We have opportunities to serve God in other places. I think we should move because this stress is going to kill me." She said, "Well, if it kills you, you'll die doing what God told you to do. Listen, Charles, God sent us to Pasadena, and we're not leaving just because of a little criticism. You're stronger than that." She encouraged him to get his focus off of the criticism and back onto the Lord. As he began to do that, he found a new strength, a greater peace, and a renewed determination.

Criticism is discouraging. And it hurts. But don't let it stop you from obeying God. And remember: *Criticism is only temporary, but the blessings of obedience last forever.*

13. God leads us one step at a time.

In hindsight, the church's relocation was obviously of God. It's as clear as a bell now, but things weren't always that clear. One of the things that made the relocation so difficult was

that there were more questions than answers. And the questions were good questions. People wanted to know what would happen to our current buildings. And once we started having services at the new location in June of 1994 (in addition to our services at the downtown location), people wanted to know if we would always have two locations. Those were good and fair questions. The problem was that we didn't have the answers. We just didn't know.

I remember when one of my dad's biggest supporters said to him, "Pastor, if you'll just tell the people what the ultimate plan is then everybody will stop asking questions." My dad said, "I would love to tell them, but I don't know. I know God has led us to begin a new work on the corner of Fairmont and Red Bluff, but I don't know much else."

For five years, we had services at two locations. We had multiple locations before that became the cool thing to do! In 1997, a growing, Spirit-filled Hispanic church, La Iglesia Del Pueblo, under the leadership of Pastor Roberto Villarreal, approached First Baptist and asked if they could buy our downtown facilities. Our church voted to sell them the buildings. For the next two years, we shared the downtown church buildings with that great Hispanic church. It was a sweet and

exciting time. Then, in June of 1999, all the members of First Baptist were at our new location together. The relocation was complete. Today, almost twenty-five years later, La Iglesia Del Pueblo is doing wonderfully well in our former church buildings, and First Baptist is being greatly blessed at our new location.

I tell that story to make this point: *Only God knew how all of that would work out.* If you wait until you get all of your questions answered before you take a step of faith, you'll never go very far in life. But if you'll follow God one step at a time, He'll lead you every step of the way.

A godly pastor, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, once said: "Following the will of God is like following the beam of a flashlight on a forest trail. One step must be taken before the next step is illuminated." I learned that truth from Dr. Peale, but I saw it lived out in Pasadena as my dad, as pastor, and the people of the church followed God as He led us...one step at a time. And in the process, a special bond was formed between our family and the members of First Baptist. That bond means more to us than all of our church's beautiful new buildings. So if God is leading you to take a step of faith, take it. Tremendous blessings await you and others on the other side of your obedience.

14. Don't second-guess your decisions.

My dad is more decisive than I am. He's able to work himself through a process, make a decision, and move on. My tendency would be to second-guess a decision after the decision has been made. I recognize this is a weakness, and I'm working on it. I'm a reflective person, and with that reflection comes some second-guessing. We all have our issues!

Jesus warned about the danger of “*looking back*” (Luke 9:62). While He was warning against “*looking back*” after making a commitment to follow Him, second-guessing in general isn't good. Second-guessing prevents us from moving forward. It clutters our thinking. Decisiveness, though, clears the mind.

There is something liberating about making a decision and then moving on. It really is a better way to live, and it's been one of my dad's secrets to a long life of pastoral leadership.

15. Always remember that you represent God.

When my dad was on staff at Travis Avenue, one of the things Dr. Coggin taught him was that as a minister he always represents God. When visiting a hospital, preaching a funeral, visiting someone in their home, leading a

meeting, officiating a wedding, or doing anything else, he must always remember that he is there as a representative of God Himself.

This is true not only for pastors, but also for all Christians. We are God's representatives. We are the body of Christ on earth (*see I Corinthians 12:12-27*). We are His hands to help others, His arms to pick people up, His feet to pursue those who need God in their lives. We are His ears to listen, His voice to speak, and His eyes to see people who are hurting and hopeless. Whether we are at home, church, work, in the community, or anywhere else, we represent the Lord Jesus.

Whatever your assignment in life might be, I encourage you to remember that you are God's representative to those with whom you come in contact. In your appearance, your attitude, and your work, try to represent Him well. And when you fall short, own up to that. Confess that. Be humble. Be willing to apologize. In those ways, you represent Him well, too.

16. Keep your focus and the focus of the church on Jesus.

I strongly believe that the devil's main goal is to get our focus off of Jesus. If he can get us distracted by causing us to focus on our

problems, needs, worries, opposition, or on our imperfections and sinfulness then he has us where he wants us. The Bible says that God will keep us “*in perfect peace*” if we will stay focused on Him (*Isaiah 26:3*). So the devil does everything he can to get us to focus on anything and everything other than God.

What’s true individually is also true for a church. If a church stays focused on Jesus, that church will experience peace. If the focus, though, shifts elsewhere, that peace will begin to diminish.

My dad regularly says to our church on Sundays, “We’re a Jesus church.” What does he mean by that? He means that we’re going to *unite* ourselves around the Person of Jesus Christ instead of *dividing* ourselves over other issues. Jesus has always been my dad’s foundation. The Bible has always been his authority. Evangelism (sharing Christ with others) has always been his main emphasis. Thus the focus of the church has always been clear: *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!*

There’s no biblical issue he hasn’t addressed. But he refuses to let any political movement, cultural fad, denominational controversy, or anything whatsoever usurp Jesus as the focus of the church.

One of the reasons I love First Baptist in Pasadena so much is because of its strong focus on the Person of Jesus Christ. If I weren't already a member, I'd join on Sunday just because of that. It's the reason our church is being blessed, and it's the reason there's such a wonderful peace in our fellowship.

17. *Never stop learning.*

Someone has said, "Leaders are readers, and readers are leaders." There's a lot of truth in that. My dad is an avid reader. He loves to learn.

When Joel and I were at Baylor, he used to love to go to the library when he visited us. He also loved to spend time in the library at Southwestern when he visited me at seminary. He always said that libraries were sacred places to him because they contain so much truth.

As the world of technology has advanced, he has stayed current on all things related to computers and electronics. He lives in today's world. And, as you would expect, he reads his Bible and prays a lot. That's the most important part of his life. In a typical week, he normally asks me two or three questions or shares two or three insights about something he has read in the Scriptures. He's fresh. He's not stale. He

prepares new sermons instead of preaching all of his old ones.

Studies abound on the importance of continuing to learn as we age. I encourage you to try to learn something new every day. Stay relevant. Keep learning. Use the mind God gave you. Be a lifelong learner. There's much yet for us to learn about God, the Bible, our world, ourselves, and each other.

18. *Hold up God's standard of truth, but be a person of grace.*

We live in a world of extremism. We see it in politics, but it's not limited to that arena. Extremism has worked its way into the church.

There are some who, in the name of *truth*, use the Bible as a weapon to beat people up who have sinned. The Pharisees did that in Jesus' day. There are others who, in the name of *grace*, refuse to call sin by its name. Their idea of grace is that nothing is really wrong. Grace, to them, means if it feels good then you're free to do it because there is no absolute truth. These two extreme views of *truth* and *grace* are dangerous and destructive.

We must remember that part of truth is grace. Similarly, we must remember that we

wouldn't even need *grace* if we hadn't fallen short of God's standard of *truth*. The Bible is clear, "*The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (*John 1:17*). We need to be people who emphasize *grace and truth*, not just one or the other. My dad has always emphasized both.

I urge you, let God's *truth* be the standard, and let God's *grace* lead you (and others) to Jesus for forgiveness, cleansing, and a new beginning when a sin has been committed.

God's *grace* doesn't allow us to do what God's Word forbids, but it does forgive us of all of our past sins and failures. We owe everything to God's *grace*, and we should seek to live our lives by God's standard of *truth*. If we emphasize *truth* without *grace*, we will have a harshness (even a meanness) about us. If we emphasize *grace* without *truth*, we will have a shallowness about us. But if we emphasize *grace and truth* together, we will have a reverence, a warmth, a graciousness, a tenderness, and a kindness about us.

19. Take care of others, and God will take care of you.

When Dad was pastoring in Tennessee in the 1970s, there was a church not far from First

Baptist that had an older man serving as pastor. Some in the church thought it was time for a change, so they forced the aging pastor out. When my dad learned about that, he met with the discouraged pastor to try to encourage him. Well, long story short, Dad hired that man to be on his staff. Reverend A.A. Carlton and his wife, Mildred, began to head up the Senior Adult Ministry at First Baptist in Lenoir City, and the people loved them. He and my dad had a wonderful relationship, and they did much ministry together. My dad had given Brother Carlton a staff position, and Brother Carlton passed on a lot of wisdom to my dad.

Towards the end of our time in Tennessee, Brother Carlton said to my dad one day, “Brother Charles, you, as a young man, have been very good to me, as an old man. You have given me a place to serve the Lord. You have been kind to me in every way. One day, you’ll be an old minister, and God will provide someone to do for you what you have done for me.” My dad didn’t think much about that at the time, but he never forgot what Brother Carlton said.

Well, many decades later, my dad is about the same age Brother Carlton was then. In fact, he’s a little bit older. And God has indeed surrounded him with a lot of wonderful people

to help him at this season of his life. And I think part of that goes back to him hiring Reverend A.A. Carlton when the other church thought he was too old.

Jesus said, “*Do to others as you would have them do to you*” (Luke 6:31, NIV). That verse is known as “*The Golden Rule*,” and it’s a wonderful principle to live by. What goes around comes around. So always do everything within your power to be helpful and kind to people...especially to those who are in a tough spot.

20. *Keep showing up...God is counting on you, and others are depending on you.*

If I could only choose one word to describe my father, it would be the word “faithful.” He’s been faithful in every aspect of life.

He’s been faithful to my mom for almost fifty-nine years of marriage. He adores her. When she went through chemotherapy for lymphoma in 2019, it almost broke his heart. I had never seen my dad weep uncontrollably until then. But he didn’t just cry, he showed up for that battle, and he was there with her every step of the journey. He helped her through the treatments, and he celebrated her healing.

He has also always shown up for me and my brother in every imaginable way. When Joel was in high school, he raised and showed chickens. Dad helped Joel feed, wash, and even blow-dry those chickens. (No wonder eggs are so expensive!) He brought Joel to Houston to show those chickens at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in the late 1980s. And he loved their time together.

I probably should have shown chickens myself, but my high school years were devoted to football. I played inside linebacker. My parents showed up for every game. They had season tickets on the 50-yard line. Dad used to keep up with how many tackles I made, how many tackles I missed, and other key plays on the program which he had purchased at the front gate. After the game, he would give me an assessment of my performance. “You played a good game tonight,” he would say, “but keep your head up. You could have made that tackle when the running back got by you. And don’t get down when the team is behind. The game’s not over yet.”

When I started preaching, he continued to evaluate me. He went from a football program to a church bulletin, but he did everything he could to teach me how to preach. One Sunday night after I preached a much-too-long-sermon,

he put his arm around my shoulders as we walked out of the sanctuary together. He said, “Jon, I enjoyed *both* of those sermons tonight.” He made it funny, but he made his point.

In more recent years, he has shown up for my niece and nephew at their ballgames, track meets, and school performances. He and my mom love it when they spend the night, and they always do everything they can to make it special and fun for them.

And, at the church, through the highs and lows, by the grace of God, he has never stopped showing up. He’s always answered the bell and shown up for the battle. He’s been faithful through it all, and I admire him for that.

My dad’s desire is to finish well, and the honor of my life has been and continues to be to do everything within my power to help him do just that.

My relationship with my dad reminds me a lot of a relay race. If you’ve ever seen a relay race, you know that at the beginning of the race the first runner runs, and the next runners just stand there and watch. Then, at a certain point, the first and second runners both run together as they prepare for the passing of the baton. Then, the baton is passed, and the second

runner runs by himself. At this point, the first runner drops out of the race and just watches the second runner run.

For the first many years of my life, I was like the second runner at the beginning of the race. I watched proudly as my dad ran his leg of the race, carrying the baton. For the last many years, we've had the opportunity to run together. These have been my favorite years. To me, it's the best part of the race. And while we never know what the future holds, if the normal order of things takes place, there will come a day when his race will end, he'll hand me the baton, and from heaven's portals he'll watch me run the remainder of my race.

Again, only God knows the future, but more than likely that day will eventually come. I just pray that God delays it for as long as possible. I'm enjoying the fact that we're still running together.

My Greatest Memory of My Dad

As I have shared in this booklet, I am blessed to have had a lifetime of happy memories with my dad. Not everyone has that experience with their father, and I don't take it for granted.

My greatest memory with him took place on April 27, 2004. It was on a Tuesday...a Tuesday afternoon. That was the day my dad led me to the feet of Jesus where I, as a sinner, confessed my sins to God, asked Jesus to save me, trusted Him to do it, and entered into the full assurance of my salvation. In my heart of hearts, I believe I was actually saved many years earlier as a child, but it was on that Tuesday afternoon that I got it all settled.

As we come to the end of our time together, let me ask you a question: *Is your salvation settled in your heart?* If it isn't, I want to say to you what my dad said to me on that Tuesday afternoon: "You have to come to Jesus as a sinner. If you'll do that, He'll save you."

If you've never done that, or if you're just not sure, I encourage you to pray a simple prayer. You can pray it now and know for certain that you're forgiven, saved, and heaven bound. Knowing that all is well between you and God will give you a peace that the Bible says "*surpasses all understanding*" (*Philippians 4:7*). And having that peace will change everything about your life. If you would like to know for certain that you are saved, just pray this prayer now and trust Jesus to answer it:

“Dear Jesus,

I’m sorry for my sins. Please forgive me. I believe You died on the cross to pay for my sins and that You rose from the dead three days later.

I ask You right now to come into my heart, forgive my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it.

Welcome to my heart, Jesus. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, welcome to the family of God! I encourage you to share your decision with a friend and then to make it public in a good Bible-believing church soon.

May these lessons that I learned from my earthly father be a blessing to you going forward. May they help you to grow in your faith and to become more like Christ in your character so that one day the Heavenly Father will say to you: *“Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).*

That is my prayer for all of us.

Booklets by Jon Redmond

- *How to be a Happy Christian*
- *Riding Out the Storms of Life*
- *Finding Freedom Through Forgiveness*
- *Never Alone*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home (Spanish)*
- *When God Says, "Wait"*
- *How to Have a Peaceful Heart*
- *In the Twinkling of an Eye*
- *Angels Among Us*
- *What Happens at the Moment of Death?*
- *Discovering God's Will*
- *The Lord Is My Shepherd*
- *How to Lead a Child to Christ*
- *On Eagles' Wings*
- *Living on the Edge of Eternity*
- *The Problem With Procrastination*
- *The Lord's Prayer*
- *Lessons from the Lions' Den*
- *How to Survive a Satanic Attack*
- *Lessons I Learned From My Mother*
- *Lessons I Learned From My Father*
- *When My Heart is Overwhelmed*

- *Don't Take the Bitter Pill*
- *The Judgment Seat of Christ*
- *When Life Gets Interrupted*
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- *Prayer & Fasting (3 Days of Seeking the Lord)*
- *The Life of Christ (As Depicted in the Chapel Windows of First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas)*
- *Bible Reading Plan (6 Different Plans are Available)*

Most of these booklets can be read online at www.fbp.org. All of the booklets are available at First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas.

Jon Redmond

Jon Redmond is the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served on the church staff at First Baptist since 1995.

A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.