
How Much Is Enough?

◆ Issue #14 ◆ Douglas E. Reese

A Legacy of Stewardship

If you die tomorrow, what will you leave behind? You will no doubt leave many loved ones with the heartache of losing you.

What else will you leave? Perhaps a lifetime partner who planned on many more years of love and living with you, children who depended on you being here, family and friends, a business whose existence depended on your being here to lead a team and care for those you serve.

What else? Will you leave enough or not enough resources to provide for your family? To protect your business and those you work with? What about the debt you leave? A house payment? College bills? Credit cards? Did you plan for this day? Did your will provide the right decisions to settle your affairs? Were your records in order so your family could easily find things like insurance policies? Investment accounts? Tax papers?

If this introduction is unsettling, it may help to ask yourself, “If I die tomorrow, will I leave behind beautiful memories and a family well-provided for?” Or, “Will I leave grieving loved ones with the job of cleaning up my money matters which I created and did not take the time to deal with myself?”

If they closed out your book tomorrow and the last chapter is titled, “A Legacy of Stewardship,” how would it read? Would it read like the closing scene of a movie that left you saddened for the characters who remained? Or, like the final memorable chapter of a novel which left you feeling fulfilled -- a good conclusion to a beautiful story?

I’ve taken a brief detour from last month’s issue, where I left you pondering questions of your own stewardship influence. The questions were focused on lessons you learned about money from your parents and lessons you’ve taught your children regarding money. I asked you to spend a few days being consciously aware of your daily decisions involving money. That was mid-January.

Life changes quickly. On January 25th, I received a phone call I hoped would never come. My Grand-Dad had died.

My lifetime hero, a quiet man and beautiful storyteller, was gone. In a hospital room in the small Illinois town where I grew up, he quietly breathed his final breath, bringing to a close a lifetime of love, shared with his beautiful bride for nearly 70 years. He left three children and 25 grandchildren, a wonderful book of memories, and a very honest, true, and admirable legacy of stewardship. It spoke quietly of his genuine nature, his simple value for a simple life, and his great strength of character.

As a financial advisor, I am thankful to provide you one man's example of a genuine legacy of stewardship. As a grandson, I am thankful for the gift of my Grand-Dad.

I strongly believe in one of today's popular slogans, "Life's short, play hard." I would leave you with my own version... "Life's precious, plan well."

A Legacy of Stewardship

Where do you stand today?

- Do you have a written will? Is it up-to-date, reflecting your desired outcomes with your estate if something happened to you today?
- Do you have certainty that your heirs would be left without hardship, that their needs would be provided for in the event of your death?
- Do you have an understanding of what would happen to your family and your financial assets should you become disabled or lose your mental capacity?
- Do you feel adequately covered against loss of income? Loss of your home or autos? Your health? Do you know how much you are covered in these areas or how much the loss would cost you?
- Do you have your affairs in order so someone could put their hands on all necessary documents and make quick, knowledgeable decisions?
- If you die tomorrow, will you leave a legacy of beautiful memories or unfinished money matters?

“Life’s precious...plan well.”

A Legacy of Stewardship

Lester E. Reese

1907 – 1995

*A simple man with quiet strength,
his words withheld the bounty
of a wisdom known as honesty.*

*A farmer of 47 years whose hands
told the story of a lifelong love
for the seasons of the harvest.*

*He cultivated soil behind a team of horses,
shucking corn by hand, one after another,
living a farmer's life of decency.*

*He kept records second to none
every year he farmed,
every check he wrote.*

*His journal 1931 reads of the times
May 30th, simply, "Jim Born" (1st child)
December 31 "Wages + creme and eggs \$590.09."*

*And, after 5 decades of share cropping service,
with one month's notice,
he lost his farm.*

*Age 65, on a bitter cold November day,
he auctioned a lifetime of "things"
and bought his very first home.*

*There he lived his final 22 years of life
going to auctions, playing pool and cards,
and loving the visits of his family.*

*And, along with a lifetime of storytelling,
he left behind
a genuine legacy of stewardship.*

*A home paid for, no bills, and a modest
but ample savings to support
his lovely bride now 91 years wiser.*

*It took two days to settle his estate
and leave his loved ones with memories,
not money matters,
to cherish and hold in celebration
of a lifetime of love.*