



C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE

LEAVING A LEGACY

JIM PHILLIPS


CITY DIRECTOR, C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE – ANNAPOLIS



Once heard of a man on his death bed, surrounded by his family, including children and grandchildren. With his last conscious thoughts and words, he encouraged them to follow the teachings of Jesus. He explained that he was about to go and be with Jesus; he looked forward to the day when all the followers of Jesus would gather around His throne. Looking at each one individually, he said, “And I want you and you and you to be there!”

What would you say to your family, your children and grandchildren, if you had the opportunity to speak to them just before your death? There are many books and journals available that encourage us to “leave a legacy” for our children and grandchildren by recording favorite stories about our lives, family events, meaningful conversations.... But when I asked myself, “What legacy do I want to leave?,” it was clear that I wanted my children to know what I have learned about the teachings of Jesus, His Word, and its truths. Although I might hope for the opportunity to do this in person on my deathbed, I realized that most people are not afforded this accommodation; I should not presume to be one who would be. For me, it was clear that now was the time to collect my most treasured thoughts.

How about you? What truths do you value most? How have you communicated them to those you love? If you had only a few sentences left to speak, what would you say? Most likely if you are reading this, you have more than a few sentences left. Now might be the right time to collect and record your thoughts. But you say, “I am not a Bible scholar, not a recognized teacher of truth, who am I to do this?” If you are a follower of Jesus, you have a story to tell, beginning with how Jesus was at work in your life,



What is your story? How has Jesus made it possible? You have a responsibility to Jesus and to those you love to tell your story.



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bringing you to know Him even before you were actively seeking Him. From the moment you became a follower of Jesus, you have experienced circumstances where the enemy tried to discourage you and convince you to turn back and renounce your affection for Jesus. You have a story to tell!

I began to reflect on the truths of Scripture that had become dear to me, truths that were taught, implied, or woven into many of the stories of Scripture. I began to refer to these as megathemes: overriding truths of Scripture, great truths of God. I collected these as I read through Scripture each year and taught church school classes over forty-plus years. As I recognized their significance, I wrote them in the margins of my Bible. I asked myself, “What truths do you value most? What would you like to communicate to your family and those you love?” And the answer was clear: God’s megathemes!

As I reviewed my Bible for megathemes, I discovered I had made more than sixty applicable annotations. With further analysis, I identified twenty-one distinct truths under six major headings, as follows:

1. God and His Word Are Trustworthy
2. Disobedience (Sin) Is Destructive
3. The Gospel Is Good News
4. Christlikeness Is Our Goal
5. God Has Provided All We Need
6. A Follower of Jesus Will Face Adversity

Seeing this list, perhaps you understand why I suggest that “now is the time” to record your thoughts for your family. I cannot be assured that I will clearly recall all my findings when I am nearing death. Perhaps God will grant me such grace, but I cannot presume



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His favor in this.

After outlining the megathemes, I began to write about each and why they all have become treasured truths to me. Earlier this year, this project was published, thanks to WestBow Press and the encouragement and help of many friends and mentors.¹

What is your story? How has Jesus made it possible? You have a responsibility to Jesus and to those you love to tell your story. I have had the joy of placing copies of *God's Megathemes* in my grandchildren's hands. Each copy begins with a handwritten page expressing how much I love them and believe that they have been made for a Kingdom purpose, a significant purpose; I explained how much I want them to know that Jesus loves them and wants all of us to live together forever. It was a precious moment as I read to each child my personal message. I have never seen such attention in their eyes, focused on every word being spoken, as they received this gift from "Papaw."

You have a "gift" to give, a story to tell, a legacy to leave... now is the time! ■

NOTES

¹ Jim Phillips, *God's Megathemes: A Grandfather's Legacy* (WestBow Press, 2018).





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1

Why does Jim Phillips suggest that “now is the time” for you to record your thoughts for your family?

2

What story do you have to tell about Jesus’s work in your life? Who would you like to tell that story to, and when/how do you plan to tell it?



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A 1975 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Jim flew AV-8A Harriers with the U.S. Marine Corps before entering corporate life in 1981. He retired in 2018 from a 36 year career in information technology and lives in Annapolis, Maryland with his wife of over 40 years, Ann. He is a City Director for the C.S. Lewis Institute – Annapolis and a student at Saint John's College where he is studying the Great Books and their influence on western civilization. Jim and Ann have three children and five grandchildren.



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RECOMMENDED READING

Jim Phillips, *God's Megathemes: A Grandfather's Legacy* (WestBow Press, 2018)

Arranged under six major themes for your spiritual growth, these megathemes range from themes of the trustworthiness of God and his Word, the destructiveness of sin, and the goodness of the gospel, to what it means to live a Christlike life, how God provides for us, and what kind of adversity we face as followers of Jesus.

Knowing these truths will affect your deepest convictions about who God is, what God does, and why he does it. *Gods Megathemes* will help any who want to know God better to find the spiritual nourishment they need from uncovering the truths of God's Word.