

**A LEGACY OF A "WORTHY" LEADER**  
**EPHESIANS 4:1-3**  
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Introduction

1. I remember stating in my inaugural address following my election in 1989 as the MVNC president: Our mandate at MVNC is to shape servant leaders to make a difference in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - Building leaders has always been uppermost in the minds of the MVNC administration and faculty since the first year of classes in 1968. You will hear the school motto stated over and over again, "To seek to learn is to seek to serve." These are the kind of leaders we desire to send forth into the workplace following your graduation, or into the graduate schools across the nation.
2. Let me state our mandate in the form of a question: Approximately fifty years from now, when nothing but death is before you, and nothing but memories behind you, what will you need to see in order to say, "*My life was a success!*"
  - a. There is a problem with this question. We are not sure we will have fifty years to think about what we want written on our tombstone.
  - b. Tragically, several years ago, four MVNC students died in a 12-month period. Upper-division students have died from automobile wrecks.
  - c. MVNC senior, Clayton Meyer, collapsed in the chapel foyer and died that evening approximately six weeks before his graduation.

- d. We as a campus community are still grieving over the death a few weeks ago of our friend and faculty colleague, Tammy Bolender.
  - e. The Oklahoma City tragedy, airline explosions and crashes, train crashes, and the bombing of buildings, vividly remind us that not everyone lives to enjoy fourscore and ten years of life.
  - f. These are "wake up" calls to remind us:
    - 1) of the imperative to begin now reflecting on the values on which we stand,
    - 2) the qualities that characterize our life,
    - 3) the reputation by which we are remembered,
    - 4) the convictions by which we live and die, and
    - 5) the legacy we will leave behind.
  - g. Promise Keepers '98 theme reminded us that: "The legacy you leave is the legacy you live."
3. It is imperative today for each of us, in these Opening of School Convention services, to ask some fundamental questions about our lives, our influence, and our legacy.
4. A legacy is
- a. Something you leave behind after you leave company, a school, or after you have died.
  - b. Be assured that all of us will leave a legacy
    - 1) And our legacy will probably be summarized in one sentence of less than 10 words. Positively or negatively.

- 2) Example: Summarize your parents, your favorite teacher, your mentor, a boss, or a person who has influenced you greatly.
  - 3) I have a hunch your summary of these people could be in one sentence, in ten words or less.
5. My challenge to MVNC students is to prepare now to live a legacy of a "worthy" leader who is a Christian, a Servant, and a Spirit-filled Leader

Let me be more specific.

I. A "Worthy" Leader is a Christian Leader

A. Listen to Ephesians 4:2-3

- Verses 2-3 focus on "living" the truth in Jesus' name in the setting or context wherein God places us.

B. A poem was given to be by a student when Anne, Stephen, and I completed our work at European Nazarene Bible College.

*What mark will I leave behind?*

*How will anyone ever know that I have been here?*

*What sign will tell the future traveler that I've existed?*

*Shall I carve it on the door? "I am here! Today, I exist."*

*I believe the deepest impression is made*

*In those moments when I can say, "I care, I love."*

-- Leonard Nimoy

1. The calling to live as one who has accepted Christ is not just a calling for the Christian on Sundays.

2. The challenge of the Ephesians passage and the poem is to live this "worthy" life in the workplace on Mondays, and in our home in the evenings, in the classrooms during the week, in dorm rooms or apartments in the evenings, on dates, and in your free time.
- C. The chorus to a song written by J. Randall Dennis and John Mohr is familiar to many of us:

*To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission,*

*The spring from which our service overflows,*

*Across the street or around the world, the mission's still the same*

*Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name.*

1. Determine now to leave a legacy of being distinctively Christian...in your church, in your home, and on the job, regardless of your leadership assignment.
2. A "worthy" leader is a Christian leader.

## II. A Worthy Leader is Servant Leader

### A. Ephesians 5:19-21 reminds us that

- our words should provide encouragement,
- our attitude should express gratitude,
- our spirit should reflect mutual submission.

### B. Our words should reflect encouragement (v. 19). Let your conversation--your words--reflect your Christian faith and values. (More about this key thought tomorrow night.)

- Verse 19 tells us about our words, and verse 20 tells us about our attitudes.
- C. Our attitude should reflect gratitude...
1. Why is it that the world is full of "little people" ...
    - ...little people who always complain;
    - ...little people who always see the negative;
    - ...little people who always believe the only way to build themselves up is to tear others down;
    - ...little people who are ungrateful, always reminding you of what they don't have instead of focusing on what has been given to them.
  2. Little people are found in various assignments, positions, and even in college classes, and remain little with their thinking.
    - We have so much...and remain so little in our thinking in contrast to others who have so little and yet are profoundly grateful.
  3. One of the most moving spiritual moments I have every experienced was in Manila, The Philippines, in July 1989.
    - a. The occasion was a 4,000-strong Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. Delegates from 192 countries attended, including many Christians from third world countries like the Philippines where the annual per capital income is approximately \$700 per year.

- b. Throughout the conference we would join hands and sing the chorus that is one of my favorites, *Give Thanks*.  
*Give thanks with a grateful heart,*  
*Give thanks to the holy One,*  
*Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son; (repeat)*  
*And now let the weak say I am strong,*  
*Let the poor say I am rich*  
*Because of what the Lord has done for us.*  
*Give thanks. We give thanks.*
4. Determine now to be a grateful person wherever God places you to lead and for whatever he provides for you.
- D. The Ephesians 5 passage talks not only about our words and our attitude, but commands that our spirit should reflect mutual submission (v. 21)
  1. Our roles and responsibilities are different in the workplace
    - a. I am an MVNC administrator; you are an MVNC student or faculty member.
    - b. Different roles, different responsibilities, different assignments.
    - c. Yet the spirit with which we fulfill our unique roles, responsibilities, or assignments must reflect a spirit of mutual respect.
    - d. We relate to each other--regardless of the attitude of the other person--believing that the person with whom we speak and work is God's own creation, a person for whom

Christ died, and a person on whom we could have profound influence for Christ.

2. Living out these biblical principles of encouragement, gratitude, and mutual submission is not easy.
  - a. But for the servant leader, there is no option.
  - b. The late Dr. Harold Reed, former president of Olivet Nazarene University, captured the spirit of servanthood in our leadership roles when he wrote, (quote in booklet) "Leadership is known by the personalities it enriches, not by those it dominates or captivates.... The proof of leading is in the qualitative growth of the led."

I. A "worthy" leader is a Christian leader.

II. A "worthy" leader is a servant leader.

III. A "Worthy" Leader is a Spirit-filled Leader

A. Read Eph. 5:17-18 tells us to know what the will of the Lord is... *Be filled with the Spirit.*

B. Some of you may remember my testimony given in chapel during the past several years.

- In my testimony, I didn't, however, tell you about Burt.

My closest friend in high school was the senior class president named Burt. When I returned to high school for my

senior year following my Christian conversion experience during the summer, I told Burt about my new-found faith.

Burt and I remained friends during my senior year, but we parted ways on issues of Christian faith and Christian conduct. In my yearbook Burt reflected on our friendship and then concluded with the words I will never forget, "But as for your future, I just don't know."

Something happened in my sophomore year at Trevecca Nazarene College. The date was January 17, 1962. We were in the middle of revival services on campus. I remember the speaker. I remember the singer...a good friend of mine even today. In some way the revival services touched me. I remember going to my dorm following the evening service. I made an altar out of a box. I really believe I was filled through and through with God's Spirit that night. I came to the point of saying to God, "If I am going to be a Christian, I want to be the best Christian I can. I don't want to play games. I don't want to go halfway. Here I am. Here's my life." Something happened to me that night that I, nor Burt, could have anticipated.

- C. In broad New Testament perspective, a Spirit-filled leader is a maturing Christlike and Christ-led leader.
- Being filled with God's Spirit means that we have entered into a vital, dynamic trust-relationship with God--in which the Spirit of



Christ indwells within us--takes up residence and comes to live...in us.

a. With this vital, dynamic trust-relationship, there is a singleness of purpose and a purity of motive.

b. Our plans,

priorities,

values, and

leadership assignments

are now viewed from God's perspective, and lived out in light of His presence, anointing, and blessing in our homes where we live and in the offices where we work.

D. The only way we can be truly Christian leaders and servant leaders is to be Spirit-filled leaders who possess and are led by the Spirit of Christ within us.

E. A "worthy" leader is a Spirit-filled leader.

### Conclusion

1. Each of us must wrestle with this question:

a. "What will it mean for me to be a 'worthy' leader at MVNC...

...when misunderstandings are frequent,

...where expectations are intense,

...where rejection is obvious,

...where the mature and the immature,

the Christian and the non-Christian,

the saint and the hypocrite

may work or study along side each other...

and I/you have the responsibility for leading them, caring for

them, listening to them, praying with them?

- b. Risks? Yes! Hurts? Yes! Pain? Yes! Disappointment? Yes!
  - c. But with this theology and style of emerging leadership comes also God's blessing, anointing, presence, and wisdom.
  - d. And there will also be friends--some "Burts" in your lives—at home, or on this campus--who will question if you really have what it takes to be a leader...the kind of leader about which I have spoken this morning.
2. Let me conclude by returning to the questions I asked you at the beginning of this sermon:
- a. What do you want written about you on your tombstone?
  - b. Five or fifty years from now, what will you need to see to believe your life has been a success?
  - c. What one sentence will describe your legacy?
3. This is my deeply felt challenge everyone in this auditorium, including myself:
- a. Begin this school year at MVNC with a passion to live a legacy of an Ephesians 4:1 "worthy" leader. A "worthy" leader...
    - who is a Christian,
    - a servant,
    - and Spirit-filled.
  - b. A legacy like this will live on long after you or I have departed this life, regardless of the number of years, few or many, God gives us to live.

4. Please stand. If you accept my challenge, please join me in singing again the theme chorus for the Opening of School Convention. Study each word carefully even as you sing the chorus.

May it be so, Lord. Amen.