

WHAT KIND OF LEGACY WILL YOU LEAVE?

Reluctantly, I learned how to open a restaurant menu by using a QR code. Quick Response optical barcodes -- those ubiquitous, little black and white squares mysteriously embedded with information -- were once optional shortcuts for the technically inclined. Now, they have become mandatory gateways for anyone wanting to open certain websites, access user manuals, browse the burger choices, and more. Apparently, it is not enough that this cyber-portal has wheedled its way into our daily lives; it can even accompany us to the grave.

A headstone company now offers the option of a QR code to accessorize a final resting place. (I am not making this up.) Any friend or stranger passing by can scan the code and get to a website with information about the deceased, which can even include a video, so the person can virtually speak from the grave. Is this a good thing?

Perhaps it appeals to those who like having the last word, or who relish an extended opportunity to convey their legacy. What might your legacy be? How would you like to be remembered after you die?

Being a funeral director's daughter, death has always been more normal than spooky to me. But make no mistake, I am not on good terms with death. It is a horrible, heartbreaking occurrence, and anathema to God, the giver of life. It was unleashed as a

tragic consequence of man's sin (Genesis 3:19). With the eventual new heaven and new earth, "There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:1,4). Hallelujah! But until Jesus comes again, death is our predictable earthly end, and is therefore well worth pondering. "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

I do not dwell much on how I will be remembered, aligning instead with the 18th century Moravian missionary Nikolaus Ludwig, count von Zinzendorf, whose philosophy was simple: "Preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten." Granted, that sounds a bit curt! But he has obviously not been forgotten, and I think he meant that our life's work should speak for itself -- that the only lasting legacy is how well we reflected Jesus while we lived. As John the Baptist said, "He/Christ must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Building that kind of Christ-honoring legacy is a mystical joint venture between God and us. To start with, God stirs our heart and gives us the unmerited gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8). He calls us to follow Him, and equips us to serve Him in the work He calls us to do (e.g., John 10:27; Judges 6:14; Ephesians 4:12; Hebrews 13:21). He empowers believers with his Holy Spirit, who transforms us from within, producing observable fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

We can trust that God is at work to conform each receptive soul increasingly into Christlikeness, and that "he who began a good

work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

But we have an active, supporting role in God's legacy-building project, too. Peter, Jesus' righthand man and later martyr, explains it: "make *every effort* to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are *increasing*, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8, emphasis added).

By induction, then, developing godly character through God's work and ours makes us effective and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the essence of a life well-lived.

So, when we ponder how we might be remembered after we are gone, let's look past earthly attachments and any temporal claims to fame of which a headstone QR code might boast, and find daily focus and enduring peace in cultivating this everlasting legacy: child of God, good and faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With love in the Lord,
The Rev. Christine Maddux