

Preacher's Pen points

Start with the end in view!

Years ago I read Steven Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" and remember well his first "habit"—Start with the end in view. In order to impress upon the listener the importance of this habit, he asked that the listener envision a funeral service in which there were many people present and where there was a resounding sense of value among them. Then upon portraying that picture he urged the listener to walk to the casket and envision himself there. The point was obvious. If we hope to be remembered in a certain way, we must live that way now.

Last Wednesday and Thursday I personally witnessed the scene I just described. Well over a thousand people came to the funeral home to express their condolences to my family and to share their memories of my daddy's life. Their comments about Daddy were very similar. *"He was one of the best men I ever knew". "He was consistently kind and good". "He did so much for people."* It is hard to convey to you the comfort I felt in knowing what an impact Daddy had had on so many people through the years. And, as one of his sons, I knew exactly how he achieved this remarkable moment.

By the time I was a baby in arms my Daddy had become interested in the Scriptures. What exactly moved him and my mom to take those first steps to a congregation in Columbia I'm not certain; but in the course of time Daddy had learned about the Lord and obeyed the gospel. Immediately he began to grow spiritually and started becoming involved in the Lord's work. I remember one of his first sermons entitled "Trouble at the Gate" based on Rev. 22:14.

By the time I was twelve he had begun to preach each Sunday at two rural congregations in Maury County. He would do this for the next forty years. Over the years he influenced hundreds of people and baptized many of them personally. Each Saturday evening, after putting in a full week's work, he would sit at his desk and prepare a lesson to preach to the congregation the next day.

Daddy's commitment to the Lord was evident not only in His service to the church but also in his day-to-day life. Numerous co-workers acknowledged his exemplary work life and love for his fellow-workers. Sometimes they would tell about conversations that changed their lives. Many young men found in Daddy a "second father" or "mentor", a source of sound advice and counsel.

As Daddy grew in his skills as an electrician he not only became an excellent industrial electrician, he became the family repairman. Virtually everyone among our extended family and friends has looked to him for help when a household repair of that nature was needed. Daddy would go and gladly help, expecting nothing in return.

I say all of this to you to remind us all that the wonderful outpouring of love and appreciation for his life did not occur by accident. It was the result of God's love and grace. It was the result of a life of faith in the Lord and a life of love for others based on faith in the Lord. Daddy never read "Seven Habits"; but he was one of the most highly effective people I ever met. I hope that same thing can be said of us the day we leave this life!
—Johnny Felker

