

What We Leave Behind

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I came so that they could have life — indeed, so that they could have life to the fullest.

JOHN 10:10 (CEB)

I love Montana for more reasons than I could ever count. There are the majestic mountain peaks that seem to call out, “The mountains are calling, and I must go!” Their grandeur has a way of capturing your heart and wrapping your soul in wonder.

Sometimes, it's the abundant wildlife that catches your eye as you round an unexpected bend, reminding you of the freedom to live and roam in the beautiful world God created.

This summer, without warning, a gorgeous sunny day could turn into a torrential squall, sending you running for cover. Then, just as quickly, the sunshine would return, revealing a breathtaking rainbow stretching across our big Montana sky.

But there's one sight along our highways that can humble your spirit in an instant: the white wooden crosses marking places where precious lives were lost. They remind us how suddenly life can change and how important it is to remember those who are no longer with us.

My friend Jan was one of those precious lives taken too soon. Her memory now lives on among those honored with a cross.

But Jan's life was so much more than a small roadside memorial. What she left behind is what I'll always remember: her deep, endearing passion for Jesus and her love of music. Her life was like an open Bible, revealing God's love through the way she lived.

In the first ten verses of John 10, Jesus speaks about His role as the Good Shepherd. In verse 10, He declares His purpose: "I came so that they could have life — indeed, so that they could have life to the fullest."

So, how do we live life to the fullest?

It begins with accepting God's incredible love and receiving Jesus as our Redeemer. From there, with God's help, we can take seven steps toward living a life filled with purpose, faith, and joy:

- Choose faith over fear.
- Trust God's goodness during difficult times and cling to His Word.
- Tap into the power of the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen you.
- Train your thoughts toward what is good and uplifting. I love the timeless wisdom found in As a Man Thinketh.
- Discover who you are and what you have in Christ so your joy can overflow into the lives of others.
- Stand against evil and choose what is right, even when it's difficult.
- Pray expectantly, trusting God to hear and answer according to His wisdom and perfect timing.

What we leave behind is beautifully illustrated in Randy Travis's moving song, "Three Wooden Crosses." Named the 2003 CMA Song of the Year, this powerful story of a midnight bus bound for Mexico invites us to reflect on how deeply our lives are intertwined and how one person's life can influence another in ways we may never fully understand.

One line captures the heart of its message: "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind, it's what you leave behind you when you go."

Those words remind me of Jan. Long after someone is gone, the love they shared, the faith they lived, and the lives they touched continue to make a difference.

May we each live so fully in Christ that the legacy we leave behind points others toward Him.

And if you have the opportunity to give someone a Bible, share God's Word. You never know how one small act of love might plant a seed of faith that continues to grow long after you're gone.

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