

## Bruce Bonini: Leaving a Legacy of Heart

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In the past few years, I have studied about and met some truly amazing people and looked at the legacies they left by their lives, impacting those around them and their descendants. We don't often see first-hand the influence one person has had on the lives of others, but recently some of us were fortunate enough to experience this.

On March 1, 400 people gathered at UTS for a Seunghwa ceremony to celebrate the life and give our final farewell to Bruce Bonini. He was not a major leader in our movement, and I've yet to see an announcement on an

official church site about his passing. What drew so many to his final farewell? It was his heart.

The large attendance of so many young people attested to the fact he had a big impact across generations. Several young men gave tearful testimonies of how just a few wise, kind words from Bruce had life-altering impact on them.



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Bruce was instrumental in the development of Shehaqua Family Camp in Pennsylvania, the Pocono Family Ministries, which has been such a great source of inspiration, education and community. It would take a book to document the impact that Shehaqua has had on the lives of countless families. All of those who started and invested in that camp should be proud of its legacy. Bruce more recently had invested himself in developing a music ministry in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Although some of us shed tears at the thought of his sudden passing and of missing him, the spirit at his Seunghwa was overwhelmingly joyful and almost thunderous. One young man exclaimed to his mother on the way home, "That was the most fun funeral I've ever been to." Much of Bruce's legacy is still in the making as his fourth grandchild was born later that night.

When I see so many incredibly beautiful, brilliant, talented second generation youth I am in awe of Father's legacy. For this reason, I am not as concerned or caught up in the discussions about the difficulties of our movement's current situation. I see a great future.

Another reason I am so hopeful about the future is that studying history has taught me that only by looking back from the distance of time can one truly see what has been accomplished. I have researched early American history because many of my ancestors were here since the early 1600s. I've found that within a person's own lifetime, things may have been miserable and difficult but the investment they made always bore fruit in the future. For instance, there was a couple in Virginia who came to be known as the Adam and Eve of Virginia because so many of their descendants rose to positions of prominence, such as Thomas Jefferson.

One example of an incredible legacy which I have often admired is that of Christian missionaries. One of these is the unfathomable legacy left by Dr. John Scudder. In the words of Dr. Ruth Tucker:

The most renowned medical missionary family was the Scudders who served for generations in India and elsewhere. Dr. John Scudder and his wife served for thirty-six years in Ceylon and India. Of their nine children who survived to adulthood, seven became missionaries, most of them specializing in medicine like their father. In four generations, forty-two members of the Scudder family became missionaries, contributing well over one thousand combined years of missionary service. Among those forty-two was Ida, the daughter of John Scudder's youngest son, also named John and also a medical missionary to India.

Dr. Scudder's granddaughter, Dr. Ida Scudder, is considered one of the great medical missionaries of all time. She was called "The Great Soul" and her accomplishments have been often compared to those of Albert Schweitzer.

Besides all of their great accomplishments, what moves me most is that what the Scudders did by their accomplishments, personal integrity and example were such to make so many of their own children and grandchildren decide to follow in their footsteps and lead the same kind of lives they did. This to me is truly the pinnacle of success!



*Dr. Ida S. Scudder (seated left) with Mahatma Gandhi, 1928.*

Another example of legacy I am often inspired by is that of the Mayflower passengers. They are often regarded almost as mythical characters. When seen from an everyday viewpoint their lives were ones of deprivation, bleakness and suffering. In his award-winning book, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War*, Nathaniel Philbrick says, “We think of the Pilgrims as resilient adventurers upheld by unwavering religious faith, but they were also human beings in the midst of what was, and continued to be, one of the most difficult emotional challenges a person can face: immigration and exile.” It is hard to imagine the harsh reality they faced that caused half of them to die the first winter.

The common thread in all these legacies is that they were devoted to a bigger, higher, loftier ideal and gave their own lives for that ideal.

Sometimes living for those loftier ideals means doing lowly, difficult work. Father said, “I go to the dark corners of the world where problems exist. I feel happy in places that are dark, difficult, and lonely because that is where I’m fulfilling my mission, my purpose, my goals.” In his autobiography, talking about the kinds of people he would like to see for the future, Father said, “I hope to see someone like Mother Teresa who will take care of those wandering and dying on the streets.”

Mother Teresa started on her own picking up maggot-infested, dying people off the streets of Calcutta and loving and caring for them as if they were Jesus himself. Now there are thousands of people all over the world following her example by caring for the poor, sick and destitute. Through them her legacy lives on.

Another favorite group of people who created a most powerful legacy were the founding fathers of the this nation. As William Bennett states, “The founders remain inspiring to us today because of what they did for their country and for us. We have much to learn from them. Thomas Jefferson advised a young boy, who had been named after him, to “love your neighbor as yourself, and your country more than yourself.”

Today people all over the world are shedding their blood to try and achieve the freedoms our founding fathers gave us. They were all very diverse people with differing views but they united around a common vision and ideal. The signers of the Declaration of Independence said, “we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” By signing the Declaration, those men were signing their own death warrants. Many signers of the Declaration led extremely difficult lives from that point on. They are not remembered for those personal troubles or their personal flaws but for their accomplishments.

Sir Edmond Hillary is best known as the first man to have climbed Mount Everest, but the work he himself was most proud of was the service work he did afterward. He and others in his circle invested themselves in bringing education and a better standard of living to the Nepalese villagers around Everest. One couple who had spent time starting and running a school in one of the villages was finally leaving to go back to their home country. The whole village came out and wept at their departure. Hillary stated that we should all live so that when we depart, an entire village will weep for us.

As we see from these examples, through loving God and serving others, they each planted seeds that have yielded incredible, incalculable results as time passes. The bigger the tree, the longer it takes to grow. The full result of Father's work and legacy may not be seen in our own lifetime. So also we cannot see the value of our own lives and work from the context of the present.

We need not be concerned about our fame, fortune or any external measure of our success. Our lives will be measured by the ideals we lived for and the amount of heart we invested in them and in those around us. Bruce Bonini, like these other great people mentioned, set the bar very high. Bruce's was a legacy of heart. He was loved by many and will be missed by them all.

And that's what leaving a legacy is all about.

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