

commanded Moses and Aaron to speak words of blessing to Israel so that wherever his people went, they would know that they were blessed by God. God still speaks words of blessing upon you today. I echo his words of blessing now: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee" (Numbers 6:24).

Taking It Home

God's lasting words come straight from his heart, and they are spoken to our hearts. That is, God wants us to take these words to heart and to meditate on them. He wants his blessing to sink deeply into our lives, so that no matter where we go, no matter what the future holds for us, we know that we are blessed. Blessed by God. Blessed for life.

As a way of hearing God's Word and taking God's blessing to heart, receive this gift. Let it remind you of God's lasting words. May the blessing that comes from his heart, go to your heart, and live there forever so that you, child of God, are blessed for life.

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#MBL9DA



Expanding the Impact of Your
Gifts of Encouragement

Blessed for Life

Introduction

Imagine your daughter is starting her first job. What advice would you give?

Imagine your son is getting married this weekend. What would you tell him?

Sometimes in life, we want our words to make a lasting impact. We may share the life lessons we have learned, hoping these lessons will make the lives of those we love somehow easier. Or we may talk about virtues we hope our loved ones will treasure, will cling to, no matter what the future holds.

Conversations like these differ from most of our daily conversations. They aren't like the chitchat over last night's baseball scores or when that next project is due or what to

cook for lunch. No, in these cases, we are speaking something more. We are speaking words we hope will last—lasting words.

Lasting words come from the heart. Sometimes it takes a great deal of time to find and formulate them. We feel a nervous swallow in our throat and a tear in our eye as we speak them to others. Lasting words go to the heart. When your daughter hears your words, she pauses and realizes she will always remember this day. This is the day you spoke from your heart to her heart, and this is the day you gave her those words to hold on to.

Yes, in conversations with our children and other loved ones, there are times in life when we speak what could be called lasting words.

Getting to the Heart

Just as we speak lasting words to our children, so too, God speaks lasting words to us.

Think about it. You are a child of God. Though you may look at your life and see times when you have failed God; though you may have memories that trouble you—times when you have been less than God called you to be; because of Jesus Christ, God looks at you and calls you his child.

It's not that your failures and sins don't trouble God. They do. He wants what is best for you, for your family, and for those in the world around you. He has designed a life that is good for you and for others, and it tears at his heart when you turn away from his words and follow a path you choose for yourself. Your sins and failures hurt others; they hurt you; and they hurt God. They trouble his heart.

But his love for you is so great that he sent his Son, Jesus, to suffer the punishment for your sins, to bear the brunt of your failures, and to experience what it means to be cut off from God so that God might never cut himself off from you. For the sake of his Son, Jesus, God promises to be your heavenly Father. He forgives you your sins (even the sins you have a hard time forgiving yourself). God knows these sins, and he forgives them. He makes you a child in his kingdom, and he has some lasting words for you as his child.

These words come from his heart. He has spent eternity in a relationship with you. Whether you have believed for a long time, or have only recently come to the faith, God has known and loved you much, much longer than you have known and loved him. (*Read Ephesians 1:3–4.*)

Did you really hear what the apostle says in these words? Even before he began to create our universe, God chose you. He has loved you for a very long time. God knows everything about you. As the psalmist says . . . (*read Psalm 139:1–4.*)

This God, who has loved you from eternity and who knows you better than you know yourself, has words that he wants you to hear. Lasting words. These words come from his heart. They arise from the depth of his love that spans eternity.

What are they, these lasting words? They are words of blessing: “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee” (Numbers 6:24). Or as the apostle Paul put it (*repeat Ephesians 1:3–4, stressing the “bless” words each time they occur.*)

Paul praises God because God has blessed us. In Christ, he has given us every spiritual blessing. When God created the world, he called it “good.” When God created humans, the Bible tells us that he placed his blessing upon them. (See Genesis 1:28.) That blessing has lasted for ages. God