An Intergenerational Witness

“Ah, the decisions of life! As I look back on my life, I want to be able to describe God’s hand in it but am having trouble laying it out so that it might benefit a young follower of Christ. With so many young people falling away from the Lord later in life, I really feel strongly about delivering such a message.”

This is how Adam started his conversation with Peter. Adam, a good friend and fellow believer, is meeting with Peter in their regular Wednesday breakfast and fellowship time. The main base for his thought this morning is Adam’s recent meeting with a young student athlete named Jack. Jack is in Adam’s college-age church group. Knowing that Adam was also an athlete in college, Jack was initially curious about how athletics influenced Adam’s life. Specifically, since Jack was a sophomore with three years of eligibility remaining in his chosen sport of basketball, he understands the commitment needed for him to reach his potential as an athlete at the division 1 college level.

In his conversation following the college Sunday school class, Jack commented to Adam, “I have to admit that basketball has been my life since I was in middle school. People who know the sport and have seen me play say that I have a future in professional basketball, but that future will require it to be my top priority in life. I am just not sure that is what I want.”

What really stuck with Adam is what Jack then said: “Adam, you have been through a similar place in your life; how did your faith influence your life decisions even after your athletic career?”

Adam recalled to Peter, “I was really impressed with the question on two levels. First, that this young man was sufficiently mature and grounded in the Lord to ask such a question. But, also, it dawned on me that I have never systematically thought through my life in the context of sharing it with another.”

Adam’s early path was familiar for young people with the athletic ability and desire to go to the next level. His primary goal was ultimately to play professional basketball. Going to college was just a means to this end. With this goal, Adam bounced around in his chosen college major, starting out in pre-med but then moving into business administration. However, all along the academics were secondary.

This all changed following a major injury which forced Adam to sit out a year. Faced with his first doubts about a professional career, Adam became increasingly torn between staying focused on athletics and re-focusing on other interests.
Ultimately, he decided to leave the basketball team because he realized that it was taking up too much of his time and energy when he needed to be more motivated on class work and broader career aspirations. Leaving basketball also had an unexpected result. Since back in high school, Adam’s faith had been developed through his involvement in Fellowship of Christian Athletes and, later, Athletes in Action. Both of these groups were great, but seemed to also tie his faith back to basketball in his conversations with his peers. Following his decision to leave basketball, he became involved in Navigators which kick started this growth as a Christ follower because he had to wrestle with questions that did not directly relate to his athletic performance.

Adam’s perspective on life changed following his commitment to non-athletic pursuits. He developed strong friendships with people who didn’t know anything about his athletic ability. For the first time, he engaged in conversations about life, social issues, and God’s role in the world. Adam found himself surrounded by people who would hold him accountable and challenge him on actions that seemed selfish and inconsistent with living for Christ.

Following college, Adam’s worldly focus was reinvigorated as he began to climb the corporate ladder at a Fortune 100 firm, taking on more responsibilities and growing his bank account. Adam, who had once spent countless hours volunteering to teach young basketball players how to play, found himself working 70-80 hours per week and forgetting to show up at the gym to coach and at church to worship.

However, good friends from his time with the Navigators helped him reset his priorities. Based on this advice, Adam decided it was time to make a career change. While he knew his career was not sinful, he also knew that it was a struggle for him to balance his life and keep God first.

Adam continues, “I was grateful for my friends and their help in holding me accountable. I was especially thankful that they pointed me back to Christ. They knew that they didn’t have all the answers, but that I needed to spend more time with the Lord.”

After listening to Adam, Peter responds, “Your interaction with Jack raises the issue that has plagued ministry for a long time – how to engage in intergenerational witness. We often ask how our experiences could influence a young believer. Rather than just chatting about this, let’s put our heads together to determine how we could use scripture to frame your witness to Jack. In particular, how has God influenced you at your stages in life? Let’s each research the Bible for such scriptural insight. We can discuss our findings and scripturally based advice for Jack at our next breakfast.”
ASSIGNMENT

First, read through Adam’s life story. Find verses from the Bible that could be used to frame this life story in the context of God’s guidance. Finally, how should Adam respond to Jack using this Biblical understanding?