

Genesis 5

This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind, God made them in the likeness of God. Male and female God created them, and God blessed them and named them 'Humankind' when they were created.

When Adam had lived for one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth... [And] Seth... became the father of Enosh... [And] Enosh... became the father of Kenan. [And] Kenan... became the father of Mahalalel.[And] Mahalalel... became the father of Jared. [And] Jared... became the father of Enoch. When Enoch had lived for sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah for three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.

John 14

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' . . .

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' . . .

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. . . .

Rise, let us be on our way.

A Good Word for Ray Honeycutt
February 9, 2013

And Ray ... *walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.*

I'm not suggesting that Ray Honeycutt was a gilded saint. He had his faults like the rest of us... I suppose. I can't tell you what they were, and none of you has ever complained about his shortcomings, and when we talked with his family there were no dark secrets being carefully hidden in that conversation, either. I do know that Ray Honeycutt was not perfect, just because I know that none of us is. But in the thirteen years I have known him, I know of no one who better fits the biblical description of old Enoch: *he walked with God...*

The story is told of a wise old professor, whose students knew him as good and kind, and the model of Christian piety. One of his students got curious about how such a man would pray, so he went to old man's house one night and crept quietly up to the bedroom window. He knelt there and waited, and when the old man came to bed, the boy watched anxiously. He was a bit surprised to note that this man of faith didn't kneel at the bed or fold his hands, nor take out his Bible. He simply got in the bed, and as he pulled up the covers and reached for the light he just said, simply, "Good night, Lord."

Ray was that kind of man. No pious pretense. No puffed up self-righteousness. Ray just walked with God, and he knew the peace that came by taking confident but measured steps of consistent, steady, honest faith.

Ray was raised in a musical family, and was an avid fisherman and golfer, an excellent tennis player. Like many folks of that Greatest Generation, Ray was industrious and creative – the clay tennis court he built in his yard as a young man, was a testimony to that. And Ray

Honeycutt was a man after my own heart – because he loved a boat! Bette says they had one for years. Ray never skied, but he sat patiently for hours in the driver’s seat, and taught everyone else. It seated 10, and it was often full – of friends and children and excitement. And now it holds the memories of good times, down at the lakeshore. Everybody needs a boat. I don’t know any better way to pull a family together, and enjoy the beauty of God’s world.

Years before that boat, though, Ray left Kannapolis bound for a college degree, but that plan was upended by a war, and Ray found himself in the cockpit of a C-146 supply plane, instead of behind a desk at Clemson University. Appropriate to his character, Ray spent those years flying dangerous missions in the South Pacific, carrying the most important cargo: soldiers, wounded in battle. You will find at the reception a picture of the pilot with his plane. Ray is the handsome young man leaning out of the cockpit window. It is a huge plane, but I have no doubt which stood taller, the machine or the brave young soldier at its helm.

After the war, Ray spent a career in sales – where an engineering mind and a heart for people made him good at what he did, and where his basic character made him faithful to his work, for many years. He raised a family, but tragedy took away his first love. After grieving her untimely death, the painful loss of the mother of his two children, a colleague caught Ray’s eye in the office workroom one day. It was not love at first sight, Bette says, but it was the beginning of a 44-year relationship that I wish we could reproduce many times over. You see, it all started at the copy machine.

Ray started asking Bette to go to lunch. She was not interested. But he kept on. And he kept on. And one day he said, “I want to take you to my house for lunch.” Bette smiled when she told us. “Yeah, I bet you do,” she laughed. Well, that meal was the first – the first of many, that

he would cook for the two of them, and then for the seven of them, when they brought their Brady-bunch gang together. (His two and her three, from 11 to 21... what a challenge.) And then Ray cooked for the grandchildren and the great-grands... Now, they didn't say he was a great cook. They just said he loved to be in the kitchen. I think it was because Ray knew food could bring them together. Bette says, "I would have missed a good thing of he had not persevered." All those family gatherings, all those meals, attest to the grace of God in persistence. The grace of God in finally saying yes. The grace of God that brings us together in surprising ways.

Bette's daughter, Ricki, tells me he was a patient father, always a gentleman. When she started dating, he insisted her boyfriends come to the door, as gentlemen always do. You did not blow the horn from the curb at Ray Honeycutt's house! Ricki told me that Ray "wanted to build a family out of broken pieces," and on the back of persistence, hard work, gentle strength, desire, and steady faith... he did just that. He and Bette built a family out of the broken pieces. I cannot think of a more important accomplishment in this life. After that day at the copy machine, they spent more than four decades together, making a life out of the broken pieces. And Bette was there, to the end. Faithful. Steady. True. *In sickness and in health... till death us do part...* Well done, good and faithful servant.

Ray was born into a religious home, the kind of strict, southern, old-time religion that is mostly a thing of the past these days. It was one of those no-card-playing, no-dancing, no-drinking homes. They even looked at the local YMCA as a danger to your soul. Then a new pastor came to town and introduced Ray Honeycutt to athletics. That pastor also introduced Ray to a new God. A God who knew that playing sports was no sin, and that all people were of "infinite worth, inherently." My conversations with Ray over the last dozen years convince me

that it was this God with whom Ray walked so confidently. It was this God who called Ray Honeycutt to be steady in his faith even beyond the days that he was steady on his feet. And on Monday, after all those years of walking, he was at peace. What a compliment to his life. He lived so confidently that he was ready to go... no fear... no regrets... no looking back.

Ray Honeycutt... *walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.*

For a life of faithful walking. For Ray Honeycutt, thanks be to God!

Amen.