

The List That Matters Most

By

Bryan Craig

“Attai was the father of Nathan, Nathan the father of Zabad, Zabad the father of Ephlal, Ephlal the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jehu, Jehu the father of Azariah, Azariah the father of Helez, Helez the father of Eleasah, Eleasah the father of Sismai, Sismai the father of Shallum, Shallum the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah the father of Elishama.” 1 Chronicles 2:36-41

Can you name the last 10 winners of the Best Actor award at the Oscars? How about the last 10 MVP's in the NFL? Or the last 10 Nobel Peace Prize winners? These individuals were all very significant in our culture in some way, listed among the top of the top. At the time of their accomplishment, you thought you would never forget them. But time has a way of fading these temporary acclamations out of our memory. However, if I asked you to name 10 of your closest friends, 10 people who had an influence on your walk with Christ or 10 people you admire, you would have no problem.

What if I asked you to name all the people in your family? I'm not talking about your immediate family, but all your cousins, aunts and uncles. I don't come from an unusually large family, but if you add up the family tree and the 4 or 5 generations I've witnessed in my life, it adds up to quite a few people. If I started writing down all these people, the names come quickly into my mind. I haven't even talked to some of these people in years, yet they are a part of who I am. They are my family.

As I was reading through the book of Chronicles in my efforts to read through the whole Bible, I reached a long list of names, just like the one referenced above. The temptation for me was to skip over this section, but I am someone who believes EVERY word in Scripture is there for a reason. I would feel like I was shunning God by ignoring a word, even a name of a Hebrew whose name I cannot pronounce. So I kept reading, searching for a hint of a meaning for my life today. I read about men who only had daughters, which struck a chord with me since I only have daughters. I read about men who had concubines and children with those concubines, which was interesting to note. I read about some families who were known for their singing, which seemed like a neat heritage for a family to possess.

I continued to read, and I prayed, "Lord, show me what I am to see here." All of the sudden, a clear thought entered my conscience. These were lists of families, and though I don't know these people and history is limited on most of them, they really mattered to each other and most importantly, to God. Each of these people had a journey through life. They had struggles, they had jubilations, they had laughter, they had pain, they enjoyed marriage, they experienced the joy of having children and grandchildren, they had to work, they worshipped God and saw Him work in their time. I believe, also, as you read scripture, you understand that families of that day were close. They lived together, worked together, worshipped together, fought battles together. Helez might have been the one in the family who was very organized and planned all the family events. Shallum might have had a great sense of humor. Sismai might have been the sensitive one, crying every time the kids put on a play. We don't really know, but each one of them added some unique contribution to this world, and they were loved by their family.

I believe God is a family man. He started the first family with Adam and Eve and was pleased to multiply generation after generation so the world would be full of families. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be part of the families of the world. He sacrificed Him so that He could adopt us into His heavenly family. He has written this desire for family into each one of us. We care about our families. No doubt Satan has been out to wreck families for centuries going all the way back to Cain and Abel, where he used jealousy to tempt Cain to kill his brother. And it seems dysfunction works its way into most every family in some capacity. Nevertheless, it is our families we rely on in times of need or crisis. When one part of a family hurts, the whole family feels it. When families are broken, peace is hard to find.

So, as we walk with God and abide with Him, searching for His will for our lives, I believe He would have us look to our family first. There is a reason that you were born into to this time in history into your particular family. He has a ministry for you right in the midst of your family. Write down a list of all the names in your family tree, all of them that you can name, and start praying for them. Ask God if there is anything you can do for these people or how you can be a positive influence on them. In your list of genealogy, these are your people. These are your Clan. How will your family be remembered?

A few months ago, my daughter got a temporary membership to Ancestry.com and began to research the "Craig" side of our family. I had always thought our roots went back to Scotland, and sure enough, it wasn't long before she traced my family back to

William Craig, at least 10 generations back, who lived in Scotland. In the midst of her research, she learned that the Craig Clan had a motto, "Vive Deo Et Vives." It means, "Live for God and You Shall Have Life." Wow! This was who I am! I never knew this was imprinted upon my heritage. I went to my office the next day, eager to look at the Craig Family crest I had purchased in Scotland 7 years ago. There were those words, "Vive Deo Et Vives" etched on the bottom of the crest. All these years, I never even knew what they meant.

Not long ago, my Dad's long, lost cousin contacted him. His mother was a sister to my grandfather. As it turns out, he lives here in Tulsa and has been a missionary for most of his life. On his mother's deathbed, when he was only a young man, she told him she was concerned for the spiritual state of the Craig family. As I met my 2nd cousin, and he learned of my work with Influencers and my heart for God, tears filled his eyes as he saw his mother's dying prayer being answered, and he never knew it.

Family matters, and YOU matter to your family. Influencers, as you Live it Out, never forget that the first place you live it out is with your family! If we all did that, imagine the impact on the world.