

**A DASH THROUGH LIFE**  
**Baraca Radio Sunday School Class**  
**First Baptist Church, Anderson, South Carolina**  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Back when we were learning the principles of good writing, we learned the use of some of the punctuation marks.

A Period indicates the end of a sentence — a full stop in expressing a thought.

Commas serve many different purposes, often indicating a pause.

A Question Mark, as the name suggests, means the writer is asking a question.

An Exclamation Point suggests excitement or enthusiasm.

Some years ago, they invented a strange mark that combines the question mark and the punctuation mark. It's called an Interrobang, suggesting a combination of uncertainty and excitement. Then there is the Dash. It has several uses, often indicates a break in thought. Also the Dash inserted between two dates means from the earlier date to the later date. For example, United States involvement in World War Two lasted 1941 —Dash — 1945. That means our nation was in the war from 1941 to 1945. Or someone worked at a job 1988 — Dash — 2014. That means she was there twenty-six years.

The Dash also appears on many tombstones, indicating the date a person was born and the date the person died. Many sermons and devotionals use the Dash to emphasize that the most important things in the life of the deceased was not just the date of birth and the date of death, but the Dash gathers up all the important things that happened to the person between the two dates.

Today in our lesson, we're going to look at some things that happened during the Dash in the lives of some people in the Bible, some negative, some positive.

We're also celebrating a life that is still in the Dash. A life that began one hundred years ago tomorrow. A longtime member of the Baraca Class, Ruby Richardson, will celebrate the centennial of her birth that occurred on November 13, 1917.

Ruby grew up in Anderson and graduated from high school here. She and some of her surviving schoolmates still get together for lunch on a regular basis.

She and Fred were married seventy years, lacking just a few months. They worked together many years in food service. They did this work at what is now Winthrop University in Rock Hill. They also catered special events.

In Anderson, when their only son Larry was in high school, they ran a bakery. Among their many sweets, they sold donuts. Larry would take donuts to school regularly and sell them. This earned him the nickname "Donut," a title some of his longtime friends and acquaintances still call him.

The Richardson family were longtime members of our First Baptist Church here in Anderson. Fred was in our Baraca Class, and Ruby worked with children in Sunday school for many years. In later years, she joined Fred in Baraca. I remember him from the time I started as one of the teachers in the years when we had four men in rotation, taking turns teaching each month in Baraca.

They went semi-regularly to their mountain home in Highlands, North Carolina. They would come home and report that they had listened to Baraca ‘way off up there. Unfortunately, the broadcasting company moved us to a different frequency and our signal does not go that far any more. But she listens each week at Garden House. Her grandson Rick gets her radio tuned in so she can join in along with the many others who are members of our Radio Class.

More recently, Pansy and I have been seeing Ruby when we go to Garden House to conduct Communion on the first Sunday of each month.

We’re dedicating this lesson to Ruby on the eve of her hundredth birthday as we think of biblical examples of some people who lived long lives and one or two who didn’t. We also will look at some people from modern times who made lasting marks on society in their later years.

## **TRANSITION**

We start with some of the ancient kings of Judah from the books of Kings and Chronicles. They record the rule of the various kings of Israel and Judah. You may recall, three kings ruled over the twelve tribes of Israel: Saul, David, and Solomon. After Solomon, the kingdom divided, with ten northern tribes retaining the name of Israel. Then the two southern tribes took the name Judah. The first kings over the divided kingdoms have names that sound sort of alike. Jeroboam reigned in the north and Rehoboam in the south.

You might wonder why I’m throwing all these names at you, and that’s a good question. Well, for one thing, you need to have some knowledge of the Old Testament to have a better understanding of Jesus and the New Testament. Jesus talked and taught about the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. People thought in terms of nations ruled over by kings, such as Jeroboam and Rehoboam. When Jesus preached the Kingdom Jesus didn’t mean that He came to set up an earthly kingdom. He said, specifically, to Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

But let’s get back to these two kings with sort of similar names: Jeroboam and Rehoboam. Jeroboam led ten tribes to break away from David and Solomon’s kingdom, and Solomon’s son and David’s grandson Rehoboam continued the tradition of David.

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had nineteen kings before the kingdom fell to the Assyrians, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah had twenty kings before they fell to Babylon.

In our Scripture reading from First Kings, we heard *there was war between Rehobo'am and Jerobo'am continually* (1 Kings 14:30). Then the colorful expression, *And Rehobo'am slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David*. That does not mean they put him in a common grave with his ancestors. It really just means Rehoboam died and was buried, just as his predecessors on the throne died and were buried. Then we're told, *And Abi'jam his son reigned in his stead*.

In Kings, we're told five things in short, short order about Abijam during the time covered by the Dash: First, he reigned only three years. Second, his mother was Ma'acah. Third, and most significant: *And he walked in all the sins which his father did before him; and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father*. Fourth, that expression again, *he slept with his fathers*. And fifth, his son Asa reigned in his stead.

With Asa, we have a much more positive and longer record during his Dash: He ruled in Jerusalem forty-one years, and *Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done*.

We're told three positives: He got rid of male cult prostitutes in the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. One thing more: He his mother from her role as queen mother because she set up an idol to a pagan god. In that regard, then he had the idol cut down and burned.

Along with all those constructive actions, we learn one thing he did not do that he should have done: His mother had set up lots of false gods on what are called *high places*. These often were on hilltops, but some were in valleys (Couturier). Despite Asa's neglect of the *high places*, we're told, *Nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly true to the LORD all his days*.

We've looked at three of the twenty kings who ruled the Southern Kingdom as David and Solomon's heirs — two not so great and one whom the biblical writer praised. Abijam left very little positive in his Dash, but Asa's Dash lasted forty-one years and were mostly positive. However, the passage showed as many other Bible passages do, that these ancient kings were like modern rulers and modern everyday men and women. They had their shortcomings.

## NEW TESTAMENT

Now, let's consider three older people in the New Testament — a couple who were childless into old age and a devout grandmother.

The old couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, we're told, *were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were*

*advanced in years*. Elizabeth felt disgraced because she could not have children (Luke 1:25).

Zechariah was a priest, and he and his fellow priests took turns sharing the responsibilities of the temple ritual. One day, Zechariah had the opportunity to burn incense, perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The importance of that assignment was enough to get him excited. But to top that off, the angel Gabriel stood by the side of the altar of incense.

Then, when he heard what Gabriel told him, Zechariah found it completely unbelievable.

And Zechari'ah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechari'ah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John."

This John born to Zechariah and Elizabeth turns out to be John the Baptist. So Zechariah has lots happening in his Dash. Of course, so does Wife Elizabeth. She says her disgrace has been removed when God granted the prayer she and her husband had prayed all these years. Her story goes on to let us know that Elizabeth has a younger cousin named Mary. And, in case you haven't put it all together, that young cousin Mary becomes the mother of our Lord. So Elizabeth, an older godly woman, gives encouragement to this younger pregnant woman.

Let's look at one other godly woman from the New Testament. We are told very little about this woman named Lois. But the twenty-eight words we have really tell us a great deal. In the opening verses of Second Timothy, Paul writes words of encouragement to Timothy, his young associate in the ministry. He calls the younger man his *beloved child*. And he bids him *Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*.

Then as Paul commends Timothy for his faith, he cites this older woman, Lois, for her part in nurturing Timothy in the faith. He says, "*I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you.*"

So Timothy was blessed with two devoted Christian women in his heritage, his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. This tells us that Lois was, first, a godly mother who raised her daughter in the faith. Then, the two of them influenced Timothy to faith in Christ and further provided the atmosphere that led him to feel a further calling in his Christian experience to become a minister. So in her years as a grandmother, Lois put a lot into her Dash.

These few words about Lois and Eunice speak to me in two personal ways. I had similar influence in my life. I've told many times on this broadcast how my Daddy was a farmhand who moved frequently from job to job. But in those frequent moves, we often wound up living with Grandma Roberts, my Mother's mother.

So I could paraphrase Saint Paul and say of my faith: a faith that dwelt first in my grandmother Edna and in my mother Vandelia. And, to whatever extent I am a man of faith, those two women were my earliest exemplars. My Grandmother's years were 1888 — Dash — 1963, seventy-five years. My Mother's years were 1908 — Dash — 1986, seventy-eight years.

The name Lois also speaks to me in another personal way. My parents had seven children, six of us living to “ripe old ages.” Mother and Daddy gave every one of us first names that begin with the initial “L.” We were Leta Joy, Lee Roy, Lloyd Wayne, Lawrence Eugene, Lois Marie, Leonard Morris, and Lewis Ray. All of us have used our first names throughout our adult lives — all except Lois Marie. When she became a teenager, in an act of expressing her individuality, she declared she no longer wanted to be called Lois. Instead, she wanted to be known as Marie. And Marie it has been the rest of her long life.

She and her husband Don birthed three sons, all of whom are men of faith. So, with our Christian mother and Christian sisters, I could revert to my younger sister's name of Lois and say the faith in her sons was first in their grandmother Vandelia and in their mother Lois and in them as well.

I recorded this lesson ahead of the rest of the regular early Sunday morning time, and when I did this lesson, my dear sister Marie was lingering at the point of death. She has had Parkinson's and memory loss. Pansy and I were with her and her sons and a host of relatives and friends a week ago, celebrating her eighty-first birthday. But we learned, just after we returned to Anderson, that she was taken to the hospital in Cleburne, Texas, and placed in ICU with double pneumonia in a coma. In her weakened condition, her sons did not expect her to live. She had specified that she did not want any kind of life support. Her sons have honored her expressed wishes, and as one of her sons said, they thought she would “pass soon thereafter.”

Marie —or Lois Marie, as I still think of her from childhood — was a woman of faith who served alongside her husband Don, who was a preacher-pastor. So I place her in our gallery of the faithful and think of the decades of service she gave in the name of Christ through most of the years in her particular Dash, presumably 1938 — Dash — 2017, just past her eighty-first birthday.

## **CONTEMPORARY**

Now, I'd like to move us to a broader look at modern times and consider some public figures who made significant achievements late in life. And there have been many.

I'm thinking of a man in Kentucky who was a failure who got fired from a dozen jobs before starting his own restaurant, and then failed at that when he went out of business and found himself broke at the age of sixty-five. He drove around in a Cadillac with his face painted on the side before anybody knew who he was, pleading with the owners of run-down diners to use his recipe and give him a nickel

commission on each item they sold. He slept in the back of the car and made handshake deals. His first marriage was a difficult one, so he divorced his wife after thirty-nine years. But his second marriage was much happier. He once shot a man in a gun battle, but was never charged as the other guy started it. He was a lawyer who once assaulted his own client in court. He was a Rotarian and a Presbyterian. Two governors in his home state named him a Kentucky Colonel, and he eventually made good with his chicken recipe. You know Harland Sanders for that Kentucky Fried Chicken. He also was a mentor for Dave Thomas, the man who originated the Wendy's Hamburger chain (Burke).

## **BEN FRANKLIN**

Looking back a couple of centuries, Benjamin Franklin helped Thomas Jefferson write the Declaration of Independence, and in 1776, at the age of seventy. He was the oldest person to sign the document. At age eighty-one, Franklin signed the Constitution of the United States of America. He scored success in the printing and publishing business, famous for Poor Richard's Almanac. He invented the Franklin Stove and the lightning rod.

(Franklin and all the following thumbnail sketches are from Weiss in Sources.)

## **BRITISH ADVENTURERS**

Some old folks from Great Britain deserve attention for their achievements late in life.

Champion runner Fauja Singh, from Ilford, Englan, has a British Empire Medal and a telegram from the Queen. At 100 his marathon time was a little over eight hours so he's slowed down somewhat since he was 92 when he could do the 26 miles in five hours, 40 minutes.

Or what about running a marathon at 71 or a 156-mile run across the Sahara desert? Or Mount

Everest at 65? That would be Sir Ranulph Fiennes. He is a great inspiration for the senior adventurer because he doesn't make it look too easy. Health problems? Heart surgery, diabetes, frostbite and bereavement, he's had the lot. He proves that you can keep achieving even if health and family life don't give you a smooth ride.

Still another Brit: At 72 Margaret Ringenberg completed the Round-the-World Air Race.

Yet sometimes adventure comes unsolicited. Jessamine Skuse smelled smoke from her neighbor's flat in Bristol one evening, forced her way in and dragged him to safety before the fire could take hold. She was awarded a Royal Humane Society bravery award at the age of 92.

## **SCIENTISTS**

In science, Physicist Sir William Crookes invented the first instruments to study radioactivity when he was 68.

James Parkinson identified Parkinson's disease at 62.

At 63 Polish countess Rosa Branicka helped to develop surgical techniques for breast cancer by operating – on herself.

### **Gladys Burrill Ran a Marathon, at Age 92**

Burrill earned the Guinness Book of World Records record as the oldest female to complete a marathon. At age 92, she finished the race, which took place in Honolulu, in nine hours, 53 minutes and 16 seconds. It was her fifth Honolulu finish in seven years.

### **Grandma Moses Started Painting, at Age 76**

Grandma Moses, the spry, indomitable "genuine American primitive" who became one of the country's most famous painters turned out her first painting at the age of 76. She took up painting because arthritis had crippled her hands so that she no longer could embroider. Three years later, her art was hanging at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

### **Teiichi Igarashi Climbed Mt. Fuji, at Age 100**

In 1987, Teiichi Igarashi, a former lumberjack who had been climbing Mt. Fuji every year since he was 89 years old, became the first centenarian to climb Japan's tallest mountain. Igarashi attributed his accomplishment to eating raw eggs and all the encouragement he received from his supporters

### **William Ivy Baldwin Tightrope Walked Across a Canyon, at Age 82**

On July 31, 1948, his 82nd birthday, tightrope walker William Ivy Baldwin did his last walk over a canyon in Eldorado Springs in Colorado. He made his first walk there in 1907 and did it 88 times until his final endeavor. Baldwin's daughter strung a special wire for his final walk.

### **Dorothy Davenhill Hirsch Went to The North Pole, at Age 89**

In 1980, Davenhill (a former soldier), along with her husband and daughters, began extensive world travels. In August 2004, at age 89, she reached the North Pole and was designated by by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the oldest person to reach the remote destination.

### **Diana Nyad Swam from Cuba to Florida, at Age 64**

In 2013, on her fifth attempt and at age 64, Diana Nyad became the first person confirmed to swim from Cuba to Florida without the aid of a shark cage. The journey was 110 miles long and took her 53 hours straight.

### **John Glenn Went to Space, at Age 77**

The first American to orbit the Earth, John Glenn made history again when, at the age of 77, he became the oldest person to travel in space. He rode the space shuttle Discovery, and, over the course of nine days, the shuttle orbited Earth 134 times. Glenn served as payload specialist, participating in various experiments to test how his 77-year-old body responded to the weightless environment.

### **Peter Roget Invented the Thesaurus, at Age 73**

Peter Roget began keeping lists of words as a young man, but didn't publish the thesaurus until he was 73. His collection of synonyms and antonyms was not the first to appear, but his was far better organized than others' previous efforts.

### **Theodor Mommsen Received The Nobel Peace Prize in Literature, at Age 85**

Theodor Mommsen was a German classical scholar, historian, archaeologist, and writer, generally regarded as one of the greatest classicists of the 19th century. His work regarding Roman history is still of fundamental importance for contemporary research. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1902 for being "the greatest living master of the art of historical writing," with special reference to his monumental work, *A History of Rome*.

## **CONCLUSION**

Well, Ruby Richardson, you haven't scaled Mount Everest or run the marathon, but your hundred years that you will attain tomorrow have been years well-lived as a wife and mother and grandmother, a Christian lady, a businesswoman, and a friend to many.

Again, we salute you for a life well-lived. We thank God for your long life. We love you and pray God will continue to bless you for as long as you live on this earth. And we are proud that your Dash is still open.

## **BENEDICTION**

Now, for each of us, as we contemplate the Dashes in our own lives, I challenge each of you, each of us to make those Dashes more meaningful to your fellow men and women and to our God as we claim these promises:

God's love that will never let us go.

God's grace that is greater than all our sin.

God's peace that passes all understanding.

These are yours and mine through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



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