

## **Live Like You're Dying!**

*Presented by Mary Lowman*

Air Dates: Sept. 23 - 27, 2024

### **Day One**

How do you want to be remembered? I wonder, do you ever think about how you want to be remembered? Another way to ask that question is what epitaph would you want on your tombstone? That may sound like a depressing topic, but actually thinking now about how you want to be remembered could make a huge difference in the way you live.

Most of us shy away from talking about our death; it feels morbid. But one thing is for sure—unless Jesus comes again soon to rapture his church—all of us will face death and all of us will leave behind a legacy. It's not morbid or depressing to think about how you want to be remembered; it's smart, and it's life changing. That's why my title this week is "Live Like You're Dying."

I wonder how we would live if each of us knew exactly when we would die. Have you ever thought about that? If God revealed to you the day, month, and year when you will pass from this life into eternity, how would it affect the way you live?

Psalm 90 is titled "A prayer of Moses the man of God," and here's part of that prayer:

*Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).*

And King David prayed:

*Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is (Psalm 39:4).*

They were on the same page, even though centuries apart. They were not asking for a gift of prophecy, but rather, they were asking the Lord to help them live like they were dying—to live in the reality that their days were numbered, and their life was fleeting.

How often have you prayed such a prayer: Lord, show me how fleeting—how brief, how short, how transient—my life is? Suppose we began each of our days with this prayer, asking God to help us number our days. We would then begin to live like we were dying—live in the knowledge that this world is temporary, but eternity is forever. If you're like me, some days you think about it but most days not so much. I want to encourage you as I do myself to give regular thought to the truth that you will leave this life one day and enter eternity. Are you living with eternity's values in mind? That's a good question for all of us to consider.

### **Day Two**

I am asking the question: How would your life be different if you lived like you were dying? I decided in my early thirties to live for myself, and my life's priority was to find a husband and get married. That was what I was living for. I went to church and was involved in church, but I lived for me. I didn't number my days, as we read in Psalm 90; I never thought about how fleeting my life was. I lived only for the here

and now, wanting what I wanted and wanting it now. It looked at the time like the road to happiness, but it was just the opposite. It was the road to despair and disappointment and failure.

God in his incredible grace has redeemed me, forgiven me, and given me new purpose and joy. But how much better had I numbered my days, recognized this life is short and been willing to do God's will and not my own. That's why I'm talking this week about living like you're dying. Living for eternity.

Think about this: If God called you home today, what would you be remembered for? Some years ago, God showed me I would be remembered as being busy. In fact, it became clear to me I found my identity in being busy, showing the world how much I could do, and then getting the recognition that came my way.

I actually had a vision of my tombstone, and on it was written, "Here lies a busy woman!" Now, understand, it was not wrong for me to be busy—to be doing what God had given me to do and using my gifting in his service. But my motivation was suspect; it was not pure. I wanted—and still do at times—the praise of people.

So, what would be written on your tombstone if today were your last day on earth?

- Here lies a successful business person
- Here lies a good dresser
- Here lies a good singer
- Here lies a great organizer
- Here lies a very creative person
- Here lies a really smart person

Or maybe:

- Here lies a worrying woman or man
- Here lies a fearful person
- Here lies a lazy person
- Here lies a person who had no vision
- Here lies a person who refused to be disciplined

Think of the possible tombstones for some people in the Bible:

- The Apostle Paul: Here lies a man who fought the good fight and finished the race and kept the faith.
- Moses: Here lies the humblest man who ever lived.
- Esther: Here lies a courageous woman who was willing to risk her life for others.
- Mary Magdalene: Here lies a woman who lived her life for Jesus because he rescued her from her sin.
- Deborah: Here lies a woman who stepped way out of her comfort zone—way out of traditional roles—to do what God called her to do.
- Mary, the Mother of Jesus: Here lies the most blessed woman who ever lived.

Think about the people who have influenced your life. For example, on my mother's tombstone I could write:

- Here lies a woman who loved the Word of God.
- Here lies a woman of total integrity.
- Here lies a quiet, simple woman who blessed everyone in her life.

It's really important you live like you know this life is not the end-all or be-all. You're living for eternal values—you're living like you're dying.

### Day Three

I've chosen a rather somber but really important topic for this week, and that is to live like you're dying. What does it mean to live like you're dying? It simply means you are intentionally and daily aware that

this life is temporary, every day is a gift, and as a Christ-follower, you are going to be accountable for your priorities, your life's focus—the footprint you're leaving.

Imagine you have a jar of marbles on your desk. There is one marble for every week you will live, if you live to be 100. Now, suppose every week you take a marble out just to remind you that your days are numbered. And then suppose you ask yourself as you remove each marble: What kind of footprint did I leave this week?

The jar would gradually become less full, and it would continually remind you that you're dying, your days are numbered, and if you're not intentional about leaving a godly footprint that inspires those who come behind you, you won't. This jar of marbles would be a visible and intentional way to help you to live like you're dying.

There's a short parable in Matthew 13 that holds some really good news for us.

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field (Matthew 13:44).*

Get the picture. This person finds a treasure in a field that is not his. He recognizes the treasure to be very valuable. He starts figuring out how he can buy this field. He doesn't have much, but joyfully—note that word—he sells all he has so he can buy that field.

Imagine what his wife or friends may have said to him? You're selling everything you have—your home, your car, your computer, your clothes—to do what? To buy that field out there? Why? What's there? You're crazy! That is not a good bargain!

He ignores their ridicule and buys the field because he knows the treasure there. A treasure hidden to the eyes of others, but is very clear to him. And that treasure is worth giving up everything he owns, everything he's worked hard to get, to get that treasure.

Why did he do it? Because he found something worth losing everything else for. That's what living like you're dying looks like—living for Jesus is more important than anything else, and you give up whatever you need to live for Jesus because he is worthy.

## Day Four

I'm exploring this week about living like you're dying. Yesterday we looked at the very short parable about the man who found a treasure in a field and then sold everything he had to buy that field and have that treasure.

Here's the truth of that parable: Jesus is worth losing everything for. Jesus is the treasure we have, and he is worthy of everything. And when we get just a glimpse of how valuable this treasure is, giving up anything for Jesus is not a sacrifice. We do it with great joy, because we have a treasure that is unlike any other, so whatever we give up for that treasure is small in comparison. It's not a sacrifice; it's a smart transaction.

As Jim Elliot put it: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

We cannot keep our days here on this earth. They pass one by one, and they are numbered. And nothing you do can change that. Your days and my days are fleeting. But what we do with our time and our efforts can last for eternity. We can send on ahead of us treasures of all kinds; we can have crowns to cast at Jesus' feet when we stand before him in Heaven; we can leave behind us a legacy that leads others to believe.

Toward the end of his very short three-and-a-half-year earthly ministry, Jesus said:

*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do (John 17:4).*

*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work (John 4:34).*

*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me (John 6:38).*

Why did Jesus leave the greatest footprints ever? Because he came to do the Father's will, not his own. He was totally submissive and obedient to his Father.

If it's true—and it is—that as believers we are in the process of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus with ever-increasing glory, then it should be true of us that we are here to do the Father's will. We're living for eternity; living like we're dying to this world and sending treasures ahead to our eternal dwelling place.

## Day Five

I've been examining what it would look like if you and I, as Christ-followers, determined to live like we're dying. That will look very different in all our lives. I think of a friend who had a difficult boss, and she could have filed a legitimate discrimination claim against him. Others urged her to do just that. But God showed her for the time being to simply let it go. She obeyed. God used it in her life to transform her more into the likeness of Jesus, and no doubt, as a testimony to her co-workers. She was leaving a Christ-honoring footprint there on her job.

I think of a friend whose marriage was anything but ideal. She chose through many years to stick it out, to insist he get help, and to work through all kinds of baggage. They're still together, and it's better, much better. She has obeyed what God told her to do concerning her marriage. She's leaving behind a legacy of a godly woman who told God she wanted to do his will, whatever the cost.

Living like you're dying means you simply walk through your everyday life totally dedicated to doing God's will. It means you hold everything in open hands and give God permission to change your plans at any time.

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming (2 Peter 3:10-12).*

Living like you're dying produces holy and godly lives, and that kind of life leaves a footprint that cannot be missed, that is priceless and eternal.