

One Month To Live
Living Passionately
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(Mark 12:28-31 NRSV) One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" {29} Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; {30} you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' {31} The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Last week I introduced to you the ONE MONTH TO LIVE concept, and I have to admit, I have been impressed by the numbers of you that have ordered the devotional book and are attending on Wednesday night. I hope that you are reading the devotional material every day, writing about it, and talking with others about what you are experiencing.

If we want to experience the power of ONE MONTH TO LIVE, we need to begin by asking ourselves everyday day : "What would you do, if you knew that you had only one month to live."

On Wednesday night, it was pointed out that this concept is awfully simplistic, and that life is much more complicated than they want to make it.

And I agree → HOWEVER, the advise that Kerry and Chris Shook offer, while it is overly simplistic and at times can seem almost trite, does have great power. Learning to live our lives to the fullest should be each of our goals – it certainly is what Jesus came to teach us.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10 NRSV

Today we are going to begin to look at what we must do to have life
ABUNDANTLY.

And to have abundant life is not about believing certain things – it is about living passionately.

And, nothing great ever happens without passion.

The driving force behind all great art,
 all great music,
 all great literature,
 all great drama,
 all great architecture is passion.

Passion is what makes things great.

Passion propels athletes to break records.

Passion pushes scientists to discover new cures for diseases.

Passion is what gives life meaning and purpose.

I am a big Chicago Cubs fan, and what drives me crazy is watching Alfonso Soriano play without passion. Sometimes it seems that he is just going through the motions.

I don't watch NBA games during the regular season because there is no passion until the final 5 minutes of the game.

When Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is, he gives a rather insightful answer. He answers as any good Jewish man would. He replies with the words from the Shema.

(Matthew 22:34-40 The Message)

When the Pharisees heard how he had bested the Sadducees, they gathered their forces for an assault. One of their religion scholars spoke for them, posing a question they hoped would show him up: "Teacher, which command in God's Law is the most important?"

Jesus said, "'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

Jesus tells us the most important thing is to love God, and to love God passionately!

It is not easy to live with passion. Too often we fall into the same old, same old routine.

Howard Thurman said, "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

When we live passionately we come alive!

Dr. Richard Swenson in his book "Margin" says margin is the difference between your load and you limit.

The less margin you have in life the more stress you'll experience in your life.

It is kinda like trying to read a book with no spaces between the words and no margins on the page.

A life without margin is just like that.

Without margin, without space, sentences are chaotic and incomprehensible and a life without margin is chaotic and incomprehensible.

When I put a little margin and space in my life it all makes sense again. But most of us live our lives without any margin at all.

We have no margin physically.

We don't get enough rest.

We don't eat right and exercise.

We have no margin in our schedules.

Our calendars are crowded.

We have no margin in our finances.

We just live from paycheck to paycheck.

We have absolutely no margin in our lives and we wonder why we feel so stressed and lose our passion in life.

We get so busy in the details that we miss the most important things in life.

I want to offer four suggestions on how we can live a more passionate life.

1. Do something drastic.

This is not my strong suit.

I like to follow the rules.

I don't generally like to take short cuts.

But there is a great story in the bible about some guys who did something drastic.

(Luke 5:18-19 NRSV) Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; {19} but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus.

These guys were so desperate to connect their sick friend with Jesus, that they cut a hole in the roof of the house to get him in.

Can you imagine being so passionate about something --- doing something as drastic or crazy?

I want to challenge you to ask a drastic question every day.

If you knew you had one month to live how would you live your life?

What would you do?

What would you not do?

When people find out that they have a short time left to live on this earth, they suddenly realize what matters most → and more often than not it's relationships.

Suddenly people are set free and they say the things that they wish they would have always said.

They do the things that maybe had been on their to do list for years that were important to them, but they never got around to it because life was too busy.

Well, guess what?

Now they make time. They ask for forgiveness from others and they give forgiveness freely to anyone who asks.

Their lives are revolutionized in their last days.

They do the things they wish they would have always done.

If this is what happens to when they find out that their days are numbered then why don't we live this way all the time?

We all know our days are numbered.

Why don't we start living like that now?

We need to identify what is really important.

Unfortunately we tend to focus on things that don't last – things that will be broken or forgotten in just a couple of years → instead of focusing on the things that are truly important.

When we recognize what is truly important, we can begin to become passionate about it.

Then we can start removing the obstacles to achieving those things.

So, cut out those things that don't matter.

And I know that this is hard.

As I put my list together, I might have a list of a couple of dozen things to do – and the truth is, they are all good things.

There is really not a bad thing on that list.

But if I'm going to really do well and really be focused I'm only going to get a few things done right. So, how do I decide? How do I choose between all these things I have to do?

I want to give you a little trick to figure out what's the most important thing in your life.

How do you focus in on the most important thing?

The really important things in your life, the things that you would focus on if you knew your time was limited are not the things that come with bells and whistles.

They aren't the things that have a deadline.

They aren't the things that you'll be rewarded for if you do.

In fact, almost certainly they will go unnoticed and unpraised if you do choose to do them.

They are things like taking the time to tuck your kids in to bed at night.

Taking the time to really listen to them when they talk.

Spending that time having coffee or taking a walk with your spouse.

Not to try to figure out your calendars, not to figure out when you are going to have repairs done on the house, but just to connect, to tell each other how much you mean to one another.

There are things that don't have a deadline and for that reason we rarely get them done because our schedules are always full.

So what I want to encourage you to do and what I am trying to do in my own life is to figure out what's really important, and cut out everything else.

And while we should do this drastic thing of identifying what is most important in our lives we also need to:

2. Expect the unexpected.

You prioritize your life based on what's important.

You come up with your plan, but things don't always go as planned.

Life interrupts you.

There will always be things that come into your life that are crazy and hectic.

That's when you have to lighten up your attitude and just go with the flow.

3. Create space for God

In the middle of our crowded, over-scheduled lives we have to create a space intentionally to meet with Jesus.

The problem is, we begin to say things like –

when things settle down we'll get around to that.

When I'm not so busy I'll take care of those important things.

Unfortunately that doesn't work!

This is our life. This is it.

What we're living right now is our life and we can't fall into that old habit pattern of saying well, when things slow down, I'll get around to the important things.

If we're not doing the important things now they are never going to get done.

And one of the best things that we can do, when we feel overwhelmed with all kinds of things pulling at us – vying for our attention, is to slow down and spend some time with God.

It's amazing when I do that how God begins to clarify everything and everything begins to fall in place.

It seems like I just have more time in my day to get things done.

Sometimes I feel like I'm too busy to stop and spend time with God, but I'm too busy not to.

When I stop and I give God 15, 20, 30 minutes in the morning before I rush off into my busy day somehow it makes the day go better and helps me get done then things that really matter.

Finally, I want to suggest again that you take the time to journal every day. By doing that you will force yourself to deal with the question: what would I do if I knew that I had only 30 days to live?

You can live passionately.

A life of complete fullness and peace.

Not crowded and rushed and hurried and always scared that we are missing out on something, but the fullness and peacefulness that comes from a life well lived.

Psalm 46 reminds us to:

"Be still, and know that I am God"

Maybe today you feel like you've forgotten who you are and whose you are. Life can become so crowded and rushed that you can't even remember what's important or why you are even living.

The way to start remembering is to be still and remember who God is.

As we get ready to come and share in communion, I hope that you will take this opportunity to center yourself in God's love, and slow down so that you can begin looking at what really matters.

Begin to live a life full of passion!